

https://dspace.org/

Doing research otherwise: critical essays on ‘the land question’, farmworkers and resistance in South Africa

Nkosi, Mbuso

2018

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/27239

Nkosi, Mbuso (2018) Doing research otherwise : critical essays on 'the land question', farmworkers and resistance in South Africa, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, https://hdl.handle.net/10539/27239

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Abstract

This thesis is a collection of essays. It is an attempt to critically focus on how Blacks resisted land dispossession and how the question of land in the current society has re-emerged as a need to redress the injustices of the past. The first argument advanced is that there is a need to rethink resistance and understand the conceptual importance of silence as not that which indicates the inability to speak (to be mute or non-existent). Instead, in certain conditions it reflects a disinterest in shaping the course of power. Secondly, the essays recast the entire focus of dispossession from being an economic problem and focus on other questions, like the ontological and eschatological. The essays, therefore, aim to understand what the meaning of land is, what does it mean to belong to the land and what does it mean to be returned to the land? The two essays that draw on archival material and the farm violence in Bethal from the 1940s-1960s argue that the historical problem of violence, on South African farms, reflects a historical nervousness of those that have termed themselves the 'owners' of the land, the White farmer. In that case, we discover that the land question holds a broader meaning, beyond the economic and it is in the anxiety of the question, 'where will we die' that we begin to appreciate the land as a home. Hence, I argue that the question of land has approached me as a question of death. When all is said and done, whence does salvation then lie in a society torn by this particular past? Salvation is possible only if we move towards those voices that are assumed to be mute or in need of being spoken for. That is why the farmworker or the one who works in the belly of the earth will help in revealing the great secret of the land, which the present seeks to remember only for it to be forgotten again, in empty political rhetoric that assumes that the land can be owned. Thirdly, the essays find the concept of reflexivity insufficient, for it loses nothing while it bends and reflects the conditions of the scholė with their holy trinity: the theory, the field, and themselves. This approach begs the question, what about the ethical? What does it mean to encounter the face of the Other making a demand to be seen for who they are? The critique advanced is that social science research has no conception of the 'ethical' beyond the bureaucratic stamp we get from the University ethics committee. That is why a question emerges as to what it means for a Black student to research their communities as if they are not from those communities. This is why a call is made 'To do Research Otherwise' from a position, that appreciates alterity.