



University of Fort Hare
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The Department of Sociology and Anthropology

FRIDAY SEMINAR SERIES

WEB-SEMINAR- A Rightful Share of What, for Whom? Views of universalism and deservingness from the South African unemployed

The idea of the deserving and undeserving poor – those who should and should not be helped with welfare and social protection – dates back at least to the Victorian and the colonial era. Perhaps the most puzzling aspect of this discourse of deservingness is not that it is enforced by policy makers, development professionals and the wealthy, but rather the lack of opposition it has received from ordinary people. My long-term fieldwork with the unemployed poor in inner-city Johannesburg, South Africa, demonstrates that worthiness through labour plays an ongoing and crucial role in my interlocutors' understandings of wealth creation and accumulation, and thus their political demands around distribution.

This paper explores the ways the universal distribution of certain goods, particularly jobs, land, housing and natural resource wealth, is seen to be universally 'rightful', while other forms of social protection, particularly through cash, is understood to be something that must be deserved through hard work. I argue that such demands are defined by a moral grammar which continues to link labour and a capitalist work ethic with income, mobility and prosperity – both in its promises to the poor and its justification of wealth accumulation.

The event is part of the popular [Fort Hare Friday Seminar Series](#) – a partnership between the University of Fort Hare (Department of Sociology and Anthropology), and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung South Africa – FES-SA.

You are warmly invited!

Date: Friday 29 April 2022

Time: 12:h00 – 14:h00

SPEAKER



Dr Liz Fouksman is a Lecturer in Social Justice at the Centre for Public Policy Research at King's College London, and a Research Associate of the Society, Work and Politics Institute (SWOP) at the University of the Witwatersrand. Liz's current research revolves around perceptions of work, deservingness and the redistribution of wealth in relation to both popular imaginaries and policy interventions around the future of work, with a regional focus on South Africa and Namibia. Liz also conducts research with the global movements advocating for radical forms of redistribution, particularly for universal basic income. Recent publications include 'The Moral Economy of Work' in *Economy and Society* (2020), and, with Hannah Dawson, 'Labour, Laziness and Distribution' in *Africa* (2020).

Moderator: Professor Sonwabile Mswana

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For inquiries,
please contact Elmon Mudefi at emudefi@gmail.com

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