

The University of Cape Town's Department of Historical Studies invites you to join us for a seminar!

Speaker: Tara Weinberg

Seminar Title: Making Collective Property: Land Buying Syndicates and the Native Farmers Association of South Africa in early 20th century Transvaal

Abstract: Under colonialism and apartheid, successive white-run governments sought to actively exclude black South Africans' land rights from legal recognition. For most of the 20th century, the South African state imposed a racialized legal division: chiefs and communal areas for black people; individual title deeds for whites. This paper addresses how black farmers and lawyers in rural South Africa in the early 20th century developed imaginaries of collective property ownership that could offer an alternative to the narrow kinds of property law recognized by the state. The paper is based on dissertation research, involving oral history interviews and research in both official and family archives. It examines the history of two communities in the former Transvaal where black farmers formed syndicates to purchase land as groups prior to the 1913 Land Act: Driefontein and Daggakraal. In these places, where farmers had bought into a land-buying scheme run by lawyer and ANC founder Pixley ka Seme, vociferous debate broke out about the kind of land ownership that would best suit the community and its aims. The clashes between Seme and the buyers offer fascinating insights into the debates about property and law taking place amongst black farmers in the early 20th century. The debates suggest that black farmers tried to build property forms from the ground up, with an awareness of how broader systems of power and recognition, particularly in law, also exercised control.

Seminar Date:

Wednesday, 28 April 2021

Seminar Time:

5pm SAST (GMT +2)

Venue:

Zoom (online)

[Click here to access the seminar via hyperlink](#)

Alternately, enter the following into your Zoom app:

Meeting ID: 996 8927 9015

Password: 258346

Tara Weinberg is a doctoral candidate at the history department, University of Michigan. She is interested in questions of law, activism, political economy and gender in 20th century southern Africa.

By focusing on a history of collective land holding structures, her current project aims to examine how politically marginalized people in rural South Africa have contested issues of property, authority and identity in relationship to each other and the state. Tara is particularly interested in how black farmers carved out alternative forms of property and land law, despite the confines of apartheid. These traditions of political thought about property are largely overlooked both in scholarly literature and in current public debates about land reform.

She has previously worked as researcher on land reform at the University of Cape Town's Land and Accountability Research Centre (LARC).

