

The Rivonia Trial 50 Years On: the Courtroom as a Space of Resistance

18-20 June 2013 – University of Pretoria

2014 marks the 50th Anniversary of Nelson Mandela's historic performance of resistance in the Rivonia Trial, an event widely recognized as "the trial that changed South Africa". Fifty years after Rivonia, law and the courtroom continued to be the prominent, even the pre-eminent, sites of domination and resistance throughout the world. If communism and Nazism formed the spectre that haunted political justice in the second half of the 20th century, terrorism has become its focal concern in the 21st century.

In recent times, a diverse range of thinkers have attempted to rework and reconfigure conceptions of space, resistance, authority, domination, rights, responsibility, justice, and law's own place in practices of domination and subjectification. The courtroom has been a key public space where these discursive formations are resignified, articulated, navigated, displaced, and enforced. In celebration of the landmark event that was the Rivonia trial, we want to invite papers that explore the hegemonic and subversive potentials of the space of the courtroom in the light of emerging theoretical, socio-cultural, and literary interrogations.

We encourage interdisciplinary contributions that explore not only the Rivonia trial, but also other historically and politically significant trials that open up a space for dialogue on the transformative opportunities, communicative or strategic, of the trial. The organizing committee invites proposals that includes but extends well beyond, the following:

- The legacy of the Rivonia trial¹
- The legacy of the Treason trial²
- The courtroom as a site of resistance [specific trials]
- The Courtroom and technologies of domination [specific trials]
- Trials of 'terrorists'
- The trial of rupture
- Performativity, and theatricality in the courtroom

Selected papers will be published as an edited volume on the 'Legacy of the Rivonia trial'.

Please submit abstracts and proposals of no more than 350 words to rivoniatrial50@gmail.com by 20 April 2013.

Organised by Professor Emiliios Christodoulidis (Glasgow), Professor Karin Van Marle (Pretoria), and Awol Allo (Glasgow)



Sponsors

Brown University (Brown International Advanced Research Institute), University of Pretoria, University of Glasgow (Kelvin/Smith scheme)

¹ Nelson Mandela's Speech from the Dock.

² Nelson Mandela's preliminary objection, and his plea for mitigation during the Treason Trial