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# The “Marikana Massacre” and the Reactions of South Africans

Isabelle Soifer  
*SIT Study Abroad*

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**The “Marikana Massacre” and the reactions of South Africans**

**Isabelle Soifer**

**Shifra Jacobson, Activist**

**In partial fulfillment of the requirements for South Africa: Multiculturalism and Human Rights**

**School for International Training**

**Cape Town**

**Fall 2012**

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**Abstract:****The “Marikana Massacre” and the reactions of South Africans**

Isabelle Soifer

Cape Town: Multiculturalism and Human Rights, SIT Study Abroad, Fall 2012

This paper seeks to convey the wide array of perspectives of South Africans regarding the Marikana strike, one of the bloodiest and most violent of mineworker strikes since the end of apartheid. The author sets out to determine the factors that mold and shape the views of the interviewees as they express their opinions regarding the strike; more specifically, the actions of the strikers and the police who sought to contain them. The methodologies utilized include research regarding the historical context of mineworkers and strikes in South Africa, interviews with a diverse group of individuals residing in Cape Town, and the incorporation of media as another focal point from which to view the Marikana strike's significance. The individuals interviewed are from a variety of neighborhoods in Cape Town, including Bo Kaap, Langa, Gugulethu, and Observatory, as well as Stellenbosch. Among them, one interviewee is a political science lecturer from the University of Cape Town, and another is a police officer. The findings also include one case-study interview with a woman directly impacted by the strike, as her relative was a participant at Marikana. The common themes discussed in the interviews include their initial reactions to the strike, the reasons behind the strike, legal issues surrounding it, its portrayal in the media, and finally the aftermath and consequences resulting from the strike. The author's findings indicate that the perspectives of the interviewees involved were influenced greatly by their social, educational and occupational backgrounds.

## Introduction:

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of August, 2012, two weeks before I left for South Africa, I received an email from my mother with a link to an NBC news article entitled “South Africa Police fire on striking miners, killing 34” (Davies P 2012). My heart dropped to my stomach, a lump filled my throat as I opened the link and began to read the blood-chilling description of what had taken place: mineworkers (specifically rock-drillers) gathered together on top of a hill at one of Lonmin’s platinum mines, wielding sticks and machetes. Policemen fired at them with live ammo, leaving 34 men dead and 78 injured. Beneath the text were several photos of the incident, progressing from the images of when the strike first began, to the aftermath when police cautiously proceeded forward and examined the people they had just shot down. I watched the videos of the scene numerous times, taken by several different news organizations, and attempted to comprehend what exactly happened in the 30 seconds when the police fired at the workers. I observed a line of policemen, smoke rising in front of them, and then a group of mineworkers emerging from it. From there, a few policemen started shooting, followed by the others, firing away in what seemed like an indiscriminant manner. After a few calls to cease fire, the gunshots quieted down and the police slowly proceeded forward to examine the situation as the other mineworkers stood by and looked on. Some of those shot down were still moving. The next video I watched was of Police Commissioner Riah Phiyega as she addressed the press regarding the strike which had just taken place: she claimed that since the strikers were wielding dangerous weapons, the policemen had to treat the situation systematically and thus were forced to use the maximum force to defend themselves.

This was when I first learned about the Marikana strike, one of the most violent and bloody strikes since the end of apartheid in 1994. I was struck by shock as well as outrage: how could such an event occur in South Africa, a country with one of the most progressive Constitutions which explicitly asserts the rights of workers to strike? I also began to question the right of the security forces to exert lethal force against striking workers, as opposed to the rubber bullets they used in the past to deal with striking workers.

Throughout the course of our stay in South Africa, I began taking note of the alarming number of newspapers which were filled from cover-to-cover with further details regarding the strike, depicting the causes and effects of the strike. Everyday there were television news reports re-playing the same scene of policemen lined up in a row and releasing gunshots as a group of mineworkers ran towards them. A heart-wrenching webpage was created by the blog “Media 24 Investigations...news that makes a difference,” entitled “Faces of Marikana: The stories of victims of the Lonmin tragedy.” On it, one is introduced to

each victim of the strike with a photo and their biographical description. The creators included such descriptions as the dreams each of these individuals had and the immensity of despair the family was experiencing due to the loss of their family members. Many media forums from around the world expressed their deepest sympathies for the deaths at the Lonmin mine.

This tragic event appeared to have shaken the country to its very core, and it reminded many people both from within and outside of South Africa of the violent clashes between police and citizens during apartheid. As we moved between home-stays and the images of the strike flashed across my families' TV screens, I was fascinated by the variety of responses they expressed when it came to what happened at Marikana. I spoke with them as well as other individuals I met around Cape Town about the strike: everyone had something different to say in regards to whether the strikers were justified in bringing *pangas* and other weapons to the strike, as well as whether the police were justified in using real bullets rather than rubber bullets to disperse it. From these experiences, the topic of my ISP paper emerged: to what extent do socio-economic, cultural and educational backgrounds impact the ways in which South Africans perceive the Marikana strike and its aftermath, and in what areas do they agree and oppose one another?

Thus the objectives of this paper are threefold: firstly I will present the historical context, both globally and locally, of the Marikana strike, including its economic, political and social significance as a major addition to South Africa's history. Secondly, I will present my findings from interviews with individuals from various parts of Cape Town and the Western Cape. This includes individuals from Langa, Bo Kaap, Stellenbosch, academics from the University of Cape Town, as well as one casual interview with an individual I met from the Eastern Cape. Thirdly, I will incorporate into my findings the information and opinions I gathered from a variety of media forums, including newspapers, blogs and television broadcasts. In this way, I will portray the impact of the Marikana strike, focusing specifically on its significance in the minds of people and discovering the aspects of the tragic event which matter to them the most.

The ISP consists of four sections. The first contains the literature review, in which I present the background research I conducted prior to forming my ISP argument. In this section, I introduce the pertinent issues surrounding the history of mineworkers in South Africa and the economic, political and social transformations which impacted the lives of the workers as well as the mining industry. The second consists of my methodologies: this includes the methods I used in gathering the information to support my argument, as well as an introduction to all of my interviewees. The third contains the findings and analysis



of the evidence I collected throughout the course of my project. I split it according to the various themes discussed in the interviews regarding the Marikana incident, as well as one case-study of a woman whose family was impacted by the strike. The fourth section consists of the conclusions which I established based on the data I collected. I then present recommendations for further study of the topic of mineworkers and policemen in South Africa, specifically when it comes to social unrest, mineworkers, policemen and violence.

### **Limitations of Study**

The limitations of the study included the number and range of interviews I was able to conduct. While I would have liked to interview more people from a wider variety of backgrounds (including people from Johannesburg, closer to where the incident occurred), I still managed to attain a sense of how peoples' perspectives of the strike were often aligned in accordance with their educational backgrounds as well as socio-economic statuses. Another obstacle I faced was the poor timing of my search for academics to interview: it was nearing the end of the semester at the University of Cape Town, and thus many of them were too busy to interview with me. As a result, I did not get the interviews with experts in areas such as economics and history which I initially set out to find. Another hindrance I came across was lack of access to a library: I was somewhat hard-pressed at times finding books and other sources which I could utilize to research for my project. While the books I got a hold of were very excellent and helpful, I would have liked a wider range of sources from which to collect information and develop my argument. Another limitation included my own emotional investment in the topic: I came to South Africa with my own biased perspectives in that I empathized with workers completely without ever acknowledging how others might have been affected by the strike, including the policemen and their families. However, as the project progressed, I learned a lot about how to set my biases aside in favor of keeping an open mind during interviews. Despite the short duration of my ISP time, I was still able to interact with a diverse group of South Africans successfully- I learned about the perspectives of people who, as far as I could tell, provided me with more straightforward and honest answers than those which I could ever hope to find in newspapers and other media forums.

### **Background:**

With the discovery of the Kimberley diamond mines and the Witwatersrand gold mine in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, South Africa was placed on the map of the world as one of the major sources for mineral wealth. In his article "History and Structure of the South African Economy" in the book *Visions of Black Economic Empowerment*, Duncan Innes argues that these discoveries "had a decisive impact on the

subsequent form and structure of the South African economy” (Innes 2007, p. 51). As global demand for these minerals rose, so too did the need to design a system of labor which would be efficient and cheap enough to extract the minerals on a large-scale. This need led to the establishment of the migrant labor and compound systems. Black rural cultivators and peasants were thus “forced off their land by the state and into contract labor on the mines” (Innes 2007, pp. 52-3). All of these recruits were to leave their families behind and were accommodated in single-sex, poorly-equipped compounds, separated into different housing based on their “ethnicities” (Lekgoathi 2012). To ensure they had a sufficient “supply” of cheap labour, the government passed various pieces of legislation, including pass laws, poll taxes and the Natives’ Land Act of 1913, which placed the laborers into ‘reserves’ and thus led to many of them seeking out work on the mines (Innes 2007, p. 52). These pieces of political and legal legislation ended up being highly beneficial for the white-dominated economy, all at the expense of the black mineworkers themselves. Meanwhile, the system of migrant labour and closed compounds was to stay very much intact until the 1970s.

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, mineworkers received very little of the wealth accumulated by the mines, and thus protests and strikes became common-place. Grievances were expressed by them regarding significantly lower wages than white workers, as well as being forced to live in single-sex compounds away from their families. In order to protect the rights of mineworkers in opposition to the Chamber of Mines, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) was established in 1982 as the main representative of the oppressed (mainly migrant) mineworkers. They achieved their aims to an extent, including family housing and somewhat higher wages, as well as contributing to the dismantling of apartheid. However, up to the present-day, mineworkers still struggle with issues of inequality and poor working/living conditions, as well as lack of representation and forums in which to express their grievances.

This became particularly apparent on August 16, 2012, when the nation witnessed the Marikana strike: mineworkers gathered at a Lonmin platinum mine demanding higher wages and wielding machetes. Police officers opened fire on them, claiming that they had no choice as they felt threatened by the weapons. Reports the day after revealed that 34 workers were shot dead and 78 were wounded. This strike was the result of workers feeling that they lacked representation within the NUM whilst they battled for adequate housing and decent wages. Gavin Hartford, reporter for the *Mail & Guardian*, claims in his article “Alienation, paucity and despair” that the workers “had been the victims not only of severe economic and social hardships, but also of a wage bargaining practice that had left them deeply alienated

from their union leadership and the company” (Hartford 12 October to 18 October 2012, p. 15). Senior employees dominated the leadership of the NUM, earning three-times more than the average worker, as well as having a greater amount of influence on the Union’s decisions. This led to anger amongst workers, who believed that their needs were not being met and their voices ignored. The strike was the result of miners receiving such low wages that they could barely even afford bare essentials for everyday living. After the example of Marikana, a whole wave of strikes occurred in other mines as well, some more violent than others. According to many scholars and journalists, the Marikana incident was a hauntingly familiar scene, reflecting the violent strikes of the past and perpetuating the narrative of deadly encounters between the police/security forces and striking industrial laborers.

## **PART 1: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

Emerging from this background information, my main goal in the course of my research became firstly to learn even more about the history of mineworkers and their unions. I specifically focused on determining the circumstances under which black mineworkers became so severely disempowered that even today the inequality between the mainly black, under-ground workers and senior workers is so blindingly apparent. I also wanted to discover the similarities between the Marikana strike and the strikes of the past, particularly the 1946 and 1973 strikes (two of the most significant mineworker strikes during apartheid). As I progressed in collecting historical background, I began to recognize the need to familiarize myself with both the economic and political circumstances which shaped the decisions made by the government ever since mining became such a major source of revenue for South Africa.

The main sources in my research included a collection of articles in a book entitled *New South African Keywords*, edited by Nick Shepherd and Steven Robins. In this collection, they provide the writings of authors concerning a variety of issues and themes, including “Market & Economy,” “Race,” “Crime,” etc. This source was extremely helpful to me in terms of organizing the information in my own research in a way which made sense and helped make these complex concepts easier to grasp. Another major source in my research was the book *Visions of Black Economic Empowerment*, a collection of articles edited by Xolela Mangen, Gill Marcus, Khebla Shubane and Adrian Hadland. This book proved to be a pertinent and extremely valuable source, as it provides the history of black disempowerment/empowerment throughout the course of South African history. It also provides a variety of perspectives, critiques and occasional endorsements of the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) program, which was established by the ANC government to encourage the establishment of a black

middle class. Learning about the BEE programme proved to be very vital to my research, as it remains a very controversial topic and has emerged in a variety of dialogues regarding Marikana and the disempowerment of mineworkers.

### **A History of Disempowerment**

In his article “History and Structure of the South African Economy,” a chapter in the book *Visions of Black Economic Empowerment*, Duncan Innes presents a historical guide to the successes and struggles of black mineworkers in South Africa as they fought against the NP’s disempowering, oppressive economic legislations (presented on p. 9 of this paper under “Background”). He then proceeds to depict the major waves of strikes which occurred from the start of apartheid, both within a global and local context. The first erupted during World War II, when demands for exports of South African minerals grew around the world, and thus the demand for a larger mining workforce increased. This gave miners more negotiating power and they proceeded to establish their first official and powerful unions (up until that time, miners occasionally formed unions, which soon after fell apart). In 1946, they participated in one of the biggest strikes in South Africa’s history, when “the African Mineworkers’ Union, which had been established in 1941, launched a strike of almost 100 000 workers against low mine wages, which was followed by calls for a general strike” (Innes 2007, p. 57). However, the strike was brutally suppressed and they did not achieve any of their demands. According to Innes, the movement collapsed due to the combined effects of the “Suppression of Communism Act of 1950, police brutality, the Sharpeville massacre and the banning of the ANC and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC)” (Innes 2007, p. 57).

The next major wave of black worker strikes occurred in 1973, when the demand for labor in manufacturing and construction sectors increased. According to Innes, black workers were the major beneficiaries of this phase of job creation: “By 1968 they comprised 75 per cent of the total employed in manufacturing and 81 per cent in construction.” However, he claims that despite the rise in employment among black workers, “the apartheid system ensured that black wages at this time did not rise commensurately with the increasing demand for labour” (Innes 2007, p. 59). The workers thus united to protest both the “starvation wages” which they were being paid, as well as the “ruthless exploitation throughout the boom of the 1960s” (Innes 2007, p. 62). This mass movement led to the re-establishment of unions as a legal force, and black workers began to form trade unions, which combined in 1985 “to become the largest and most powerful trade union federation in South Africa’s history- the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu)” (Innes, p. 62). From then on, Cosatu came to play a major role in terms of expressing the needs of industrial workers. The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) was

established as a subdivision of the Cosatu union, and up to the present day it works as a medium between the mineworkers and the mining authorities.

### **The South African Communist Party Has Their Say: the 1946 Strike**

In their booklet entitled *A Distant Clap of Thunder: Fortieth Anniversary of the 1946 Mine Strike*, the South African Communist Party (SACP) presents a very close and personal perspective regarding the lack of mineworkers' rights, the struggles to unionize and the significance of the 1946 strike. They commence with a 1914 tribute by Sol Plaatje, first Secretary General of the ANC, to the mineworkers who risked their lives working in mines and living in labour camps: "*two hundred thousand subterranean heroes who day and night, for a mere pittance, lay down their lives to the familiar 'fall of rock' and who, at deep levels ranging from 1 000 to 3 000 feet in the bowels of the earth, sacrifice their lungs to the rock dust*" (South African Communist Party 1986, Introduction). Throughout the booklet, they portray the strikes as a "class battle" between "those who own nothing but their power to labour and those who exploit their labour because they own everything—our mines, our factories and our land" (South African Communist Party 1986, Introduction). The majority of these workers were rural men who moved away from their families to live in compounds near the mines. Most of them were not South Africans, but rather "Mozambicans, Tanganyikans, Angolans, Nyasas" as well as people from other countries. The SACP claims that workers shared "neither a single language nor a single political creed," and also brought with them "many old tribal animosities and rivalries." As a result, the divisions were "assiduously fostered by employers who lived by the 'divide and rule' maxim." In order for the mineworkers to build a miners' trade union, they had to merge these divisions of men into a single body capable of fighting for improved living conditions and higher wages (South African Communist Party 1986, p. 2).

By the 1940s, the black mine workers successfully established their first union (South African Communist Party 1986, p. 1). At this time of worsening social and economic conditions, mining companies were "intensifying the rate of exploitation, reducing rations, and allowing standards of services, recreation and welfare to fall" (South African Communist Party 1986, p. 5). In 1944, the mineworkers began to demand a minimum of ten shillings per day, as well as improvements in their living conditions. The Chamber of Mines deemed this to be a "fantastic and irresponsible dream" and thus refused to negotiate with the workers, leaving miners no choice but to fight back (South African Communist Party 1986, p. 7-8). In 1946, the mineworkers engaged in one of their first major strikes as a unified force, which the Rand Daily Mail deemed as being similar to a "war." According to the South African Communist Party, the police came equipped "like an army," while the black mineworkers were

reported to have brought “choppers and iron bars, none of which have ever been alleged to have been used” (South African Communist Party 1986, pp. 17-18). The strike ended with a reported five deaths and 900 injuries, the demands for the higher wages were lost and the union itself fell apart. The SACP sums up their booklet by claiming that while the immediate demands of the miners were lost and the workers driven back to work, the mineworkers learned of their ability to successfully unite and fight for improved living conditions and higher wages.

### **Ethnic “homelands” as a source of migrant labor**

In James Ferguson’s book, entitled *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*, he depicts in Chapter 2 (“Paradoxes of Sovereignty and Independence”) the history of Lesotho during apartheid as a “bogus ethnic ‘Bantustan,’” as well as how it came to be its own country separate from the Transkei “homeland.” He begins by presenting the historical background of the apartheid-era ethnic “homelands” or “Bantustans,” which were established in the old “Native Reserves” originally set up by the English. These formally established areas were created under the terms of the Land Act of 1913, which set aside about 7% of South Africa’s land for Africans, separate from the whites (Ferguson 2006, p. 55). These rural areas were regarded by the NP government in 1948 as the new “Bantu states,” which meant that “African” citizens could enjoy political rights only within the boundaries of those “states.” They also became a major source of “migrant laborers”: “Citizens of the Bantustans might, of course, be allowed within ‘white South Africa’ as workers...but they would be no more entitled to political rights there than are foreign workers in other countries” (Ferguson 2006, p. 56). However, according to Ferguson, these “separate nations” would never be recognized as legitimate by outside nations: “In spite of vigorous lobbying, no nation outside of South Africa ever extended formal diplomatic recognition to the supposedly independent states” (Ferguson 2006, p. 57). In 1975, at the Black People’s Convention, they declared that “The so-called independence is nothing but yet another maneuver to ‘legalize’ the alienation of the people of the Transkei...so as to give the denial of their rights in Azania a legal and constitutional backing.” Steve Biko himself argued that the Bantustans were “the greatest single fraud ever invented by white politicians.” He went on to claim that “These tribal cocoons called ‘homelands’ are nothing else but sophisticated concentration camps where black people are allowed to ‘suffer peacefully’” (Ferguson 2006, p. 59).

He goes on to depict the government’s attempts to depoliticize poverty and the disempowerment of rural Africans by sending them off into their own “independent states.” He claims that in the case of Lesotho, the government insisted that poverty within this “nation state” was really due to their being a

“developing country” (Ferguson 2006, p. 60). Ferguson presents a quote by Hlaku Rachidi of the Black People’s Convention, who observed that “The so-called dummy black states now envisaged will have no elaborate industrial infrastructure calculated to give jobs to the millions of Blacks who are supposedly their citizens.” Rachidi goes on to claim that the Bantustans “will serve as convenient labour reservoirs without the other complicating factors arising out of having to recognize the permanence of black labour in metropolitan South Africa” (Ferguson 2006, p. 62). Ferguson compares the implications of “nation states” being responsible for their own poverty with the discourse between the U.S. and Mexico. The latter has been the former’s source of labor, utilizing a similar idea of “separate development” to justify rampant poverty: “After all, is it not precisely by *acknowledging* Mexico’s sovereignty...that the United States manages to contain the political implications of the massive poverty of *its* labor reserve within the ideological borders of ‘Mexico’s problems?’” (Ferguson 2006, p. 64). Ferguson ends the chapter on an anthropological note, claiming that the concept of “separate cultures” parallels with the “concept of separate economies” (Ferguson 2006, p. 68). Thus, through the concept of “separate development” in Bantustans, such as those established in the Transkei and Lesotho, blacks were in the end disempowered both politically and economically due to being regarded as foreigners as opposed to true citizens of South Africa.

### **Post-Apartheid Economic Programs**

In his article “Market and Economy,” Thomas Koelble provides a concise and comprehensive overview of the economic theories of liberals and Keynesians (as well as corporatists and Marxists), and then proceeds to explain how these theories have over time shaped South Africa’s economic policies. He begins with the liberal and neoliberal economists, who argue that markets are “self-regulating institutions and will, if left to their own devices, find the most efficient ways of satisfying demand” (Koelble 2008, p. 158). They believe as well that the state should “play a minimal role as both employer and provider of welfare to its citizens, because public enterprises tend to squeeze out private investment and encourage dependence on welfare hand-outs.” Keynesian economists, on the other hand, argue that the state should play a role of interference when necessary, “particularly when the economy finds itself in a major downswing.” Both sides agree that the economy is driven by a business cycle and that the state should avoid interfering in the working of the marketplace (Koelble 2008, p. 158). According to Koelble, Keynesian economists differ from liberals in that they believe the “state institution can be used to overcome the tendency in capitalism towards inequality between the social classes by mechanisms of redistribution” (Koelble 2008, p. 158). The author argues that during apartheid, the National Party

encouraged a liberal economy, but also followed the examples of nationalist economies such as Russia or Germany, with a corporatist rather than liberal model (Koelble 2008, p. 159). Thus, while the NP government associated itself with Western, capitalist economies, it was in fact more of a “political and rhetorical gesture.” Koelble claims that the economic structure of South Africa was really based on “‘racial capitalism’ since it functioned to benefit whites at the expense of the non-white communities” (Koelble 2008, p. 160). However, by the mid-1880s, “racial capitalism” as well as economic isolation from the rest of the world forced the government to change its economic strategies, as “it had become abundantly clear to the large South African corporations that if they did not join the international marketplace they would not be able to compete effectively in the future” (Koelble 2008, p.160). According to Koelble, the South African economy has always been in large part driven by “responses of the international and domestic markets and perceptions of the new government’s behavior in relation to the regulation of the economy” (Koelble 2008, p. 161). Hence, by the time apartheid ended and the ANC took power, the government took on a more neoliberal economic approach and commenced establishing programmes which would work to dismantle the previously dominant narrative of “racial capitalism.”

One such programme was the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), the goal of which was “to address the legacies of the apartheid regime through a targeted set of social and economic policies that would deal with the exceptionally high levels of inequality between black and white, rich and poor, skilled and unskilled” (Koelble 2008, p. 161). By 1996 the government proceeded to enact another strategy known as the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) programme: its aim was to reduce inflation and the budget deficit, as well as liberalize the economy through “a commitment to privatisation of the state sector and loosening of exchange control” (Koelble 2008, p. 162). Koelble concludes his article by presenting the various perspectives in regards to the successes and failures of the government’s attempts to alleviate poverty and reduce unemployment. He claims that the government has succeeded in implementing a system which places the economy on the right track macro-economically; on the other hand, issues of unemployment have yet to be effectively addressed as unemployment remains at a high of over 26% of the active working population (Koelble 2008, p. 163).

### **The Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) Program**

Innes discusses in his article one of the most-debated and criticized programmes created thus far by the ANC government: the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) programme. The aim of this program was to redistribute wealth and income to previously disadvantaged groups, establishing a black middle class. In order to enact this change, the program put in place legal frameworks that “required companies



and organizations to reflect the composition of the population in their workforce and management and to stimulate black entrepreneurship” (Innes 2007, p. 63). However, since its inception, the BEE program only succeeded in empowering a small section of the black working class. As Innes claims in his article, in its early stages the BEE program resulted in “relatively few individual members of the black community amassing vast fortunes” and thus it was criticized as being elitist. Groups such as COSATU, the SACP, and various NGOs claimed that “their constituencies have so far been largely excluded from the government’s empowerment initiatives, resulting in the perpetuation of the gap between rich and poor in the country.” The government retorted that it intended to promote a broad-based BEE process, which would “go much further than just establishing a fabulously wealthy black elite” (Innes 2007, p.70). Thus, Innes presents a strategy which he believes would enable a successful BEE policy, including the following: “Black participation in ownership of the commanding heights of the economy,” “The development of black professionals and skilled people across all aspects of society,” and “Provide more opportunities for workers to acquire a stake in the economy” (Innes 2007, pp. 70-2). In this way, blacks would not only receive higher wages, but would in turn have a greater degree of control over their professional lives and the means to ensure their needs, as well as their co-workers’ needs, are sufficiently heard and met.

### **A History of Unity and Division Among Mineworkers**

The Labour Collective released a series of booklets entitled the *Read, Act and Struggle Series*, one of which was entitled “COSATU, THE SACP, AND THE ANC: The parting of ways?” The booklet’s main argument is that the ANC has not fulfilled its election promises as it failed to “deliver meaningful social improvements and benefits to the working class,” due to its being “clearly orientated towards big business and the emerging black bourgeoisie” (Labour Left Collective 1998, p. 1). They claim that COSATU’s struggle against apartheid “was part of the struggle against capitalist exploitation,” and that ever since the 1990s, the union has had a rightward shift (Labour Left Collective 1998, pp. 2-3). The evidence they provide includes the fact that in 1992, COSATU spoke of nationalizing the economy and fighting for “an economy based on workers’ control.” This in turn was “ditched in favor of seeking an accommodation with capital and the state in tripartite institutions like Nedlac” (Labour Left Collective 1998, p. 4). As a result, the value of trade unions was replaced by COSATU’s determination to improve international competitiveness. These movements led to the neglect and ignoring of workers, who decided that they were left with no choice but to begin establishing their own splinter unions. The Labour Left Collective does not support these unions, claiming that they were only playing into the hands of right-wing

bureaucratic union leaders, who could “point towards the opposition and show their members that it is in fact the opposition who do not take the interests of members seriously,” thus undermining the unity of workers (Labour Left Collective 1998, p. 6).

The authors of the booklet then move on to South Africa’s economic policies, claiming that the transformation of its economy (from Keynesian to neo-liberal economic principles) has had the effect of “abandoning protection for domestic industry in order to enhance ‘competitiveness.’” Thus, in the government’s attempts to enhance the country’s competitiveness in the global market as well as pay off bail, it ended up making “the working class pay and suffer greater exploitation and oppression” by means of “taking back the economic and political gains made by the working class over decades of class struggle” (Labor Left Collective 1998, p. 9). By the end of the booklet, the authors claim that now that COSATU is in alliance with the ANC, it raises the “need to rebuild working class politics and a working class orientation within COSATU” (Labour Left Collective 1998, p. 16). They argue that the only way out of the undermining of the working class by COSATU and the ANC is through opposition to capitalism and the establishment of a socialist policy. This in turn would build up a working class party which can stand up for its own interests (Labor Left Collective 1998, p. 18). However, to this day there remain major tensions and occasional outbreaks of violence between mineworkers, whether due to ethnic, racial or union affiliations.

### **Divisions Among Mineworkers Today**

In their article “Union Solidarity under Stress: The Case of the National Union of Mineworkers in South Africa,” Sakhela Buhlungu and Andries Bezuidenhout discuss the post-apartheid divisions of mineworkers in the NUM. The NUM is the single largest trade union in the history of South Africa, and is famed for being one of the main leaders in the battle against apartheid. The NUM’s formation was the result of a 1982 mineworkers strike, as they were “protesting for unilateral implementation of a wage increase by the industry” (Buhlungu 2008, p. 266). The union’s job thus became to unite these workers, utilizing a “unique organizing model to deal with the large concentration of migrant workers in single-sex compounds.” According to the authors, for more than a century employers “used tradition to control workers by dividing them along ethnic lines.” This occurred by means of allocating them in living quarters by their “tribal groups” (Buhlungu 2008, p. 267). As of late, the authors claim that while the mining industry restructured itself and became integrated into the world economy, the NUM’s successes of the past in turn placed stress on solidarity in the present democratic and mainly capitalist South Africa.

Thus, the authors chose to investigate the divisions which remain between workers within unions

today, in order to “make sense of the consequences of the transition to democracy for the NUM.” Their research method consisted of drawing “on a survey of 724 members of NUM, supplemented by forty-four focus group interviews, as well as fifteen interviews with regional and national office bearers and officials” in eleven of the union’s regions (Buhlungu 2008, p. 270). According to a worker in Klerkdorp, the NUM members “sing one song, that of the ANC.” While there remain high levels of union and solidarity, the authors claim that careerism has led to “severe division and disillusionment with the union in certain branches” (Buhlungu 2008, p. 272). Accordingly, their research highlighted the fact that “the legacy of racial discrimination has remained extremely intractable. At several of the mines we studied, NUM members felt that the apartheid workplace regime was still partially in place and that whites were still using informal mechanisms to exclude blacks” (Buhlungu 2008, p. 272). Members felt that the NUM has failed to enforce the implementation of laws such as the Employment Equity Act and Skills Development Act, and thus there were few promotions for the majority of mineworkers. According to a President Steyn worker, “You only go somewhere if you know someone. Whites still use race for promotion possibilities. When you seek out a promotion they say: ‘Go paint yourself white’” (Buhlungu 2008, pp. 272-3). Despite this, many union members felt positive about BEE in that with new ownership structures, the program could “have a positive effect in the workplace by closing down the space for white managers to victimize black workers and discriminate against them” (Buhlungu 2008, p. 273). However, thus far the NUM has not taken steps towards fully implementing the BEE programme, as ethnicity continues to remain a major factor in determining whether a mineworker may move further up the business ladder and receive higher wages.

### **The Royal Bafokeng Nation: A Success Story**

In their article “Ethnicity,” John L Comaroff and Jean Comaroff argue that ethnicity has often been treated as a concept separate from politics, economics, ethics and aesthetics. However, as of late, it has been used as a means of economic empowerment, as ethnic groups “act like corporations: as enterprises in which genetic ascription confers shares and by which culture may be produced, possessed, purveyed as ‘naturally copyrighted’ property” (Comaroff et al. 2008, pp. 91-2). They refer to those who utilize the strategy of commodifying their cultures as “Ethnicity, Inc.,” using the Bafokeng people as a prime example. They claim that since the dawn of the Age of Platinum, the Bafokeng utilized their land, specifically platinum underneath their land, to empower themselves, eventually becoming one of the most wealthy platinum producers (Comaroff et al. 2008, p. 86). Mokgatle, one of the nineteenth-century forebears of this strategy, recognized that

“to protect their territory from settler predation, his people ought to purchase their land...[he] sent regiments of young men to the diamond fields in the late 1860s and 1870s as labourers, had them deposit a portion of their wages in a special fund, and used the cash for its designated purposes. Fearing dispossession if the Bafokeng bought the land in their own name, however, the chief elicited the help of a German missionary who acquired it in his; later, to avert problems of title after his death, the real estate was transferred to the colonial government in trust for the ‘tribe’” (Comaroff et al. 2008, p. 85).

Over the years, the Bafokeng persisted despite various attempts by other mining companies to expropriate their land and the rights to minerals. However, they succeeded all the way up until the end of apartheid in 1994; as one journalist put it, “‘their traditional weapon [became] the law, not the *knobkerrie* [club]” (Comaroff et al. 2008, p. 86). Eventually, the Bafokeng’s platinum mining enterprise emerged as an “‘ethnic corporation’ in the wake of the recognition and renegotiation of its rights to the proceeds of platinum mining on its real estate,” which the authors claimed to be “‘nothing short of breathtaking.” The nation consists of 300,000 shareholders, and “has substantial stakes in or else benefits from a complex network of companies. Their interest in Impala alone yielded R80 million in the financial year 2001/2,” and by December 2005 the Royal Bafokeng Nation was chosen by Impala Platinum as an “‘empowerment partner’ under the national policy of black Economic Empowerment (BEE), a 3.4 billion cash deal that gave the Bafokeng 49% of Impala Refinery Services” (Comaroff et al. 2008, p. 86). According to the authors, the Bafokeng have become primarily concerned with “the material conditions of a sustainable future as laid out in Vision 2020, an ambitious plan to develop Bafokeng into a ‘self-sufficient’, fully employed, globally oriented nation by the second decade of the new century” (Comaroff et al. 2008, p. 87). Thus, through their ardent determination to keep their land, the Bafokeng empowered themselves to such an extent that they were able to maintain control of their platinum resources, from before apartheid was first established all the way to the present day.

## **PART 2: Methodology:**

My primary methodology in this project was the interviews I conducted, both formal and informal, with individuals from a variety of neighborhoods and educational/social/economic backgrounds. I believe that this method was ideal for my project in that I could look into the eyes of my interviewees, ask questions of them directly, and establish a connection which I could not form in any other setting. My interviews with the academics were a bit more formal and structured whereas my interviews with other individuals were for the most part casual (most of my interviews were captured on my audio recorder). I

molded my questions to fit each individual who I interviewed, depending on the questions I wanted answered. However, all of the interviews involved questions regarding where the individuals came from, what their initial reactions were to the Marikana strike, and whether they were staying up-to-date with the aftermath of the strike. My goal was to determine whether individuals of differing backgrounds have absolutely differing opinions or if they have more in common than I initially thought. The weakness of this method included at times not coming prepared with enough questions: while some individuals had strong opinions and thus dialogue flowed smoothly, others did not have much to say regarding the strike.

Another major methodology was reading primary and secondary sources. I read many sources regarding the history of mineworkers/mines, as well as sources which aided me in understanding the social/economic/political circumstances which molded and shaped the experiences of mineworkers. I read the *Constitution of South Africa* in order to understand the legal issues surrounding the strikes, strikers, unions, and policing. Other sources included the websites of the NUM, Cosatu, the mining company Implats and other groups which were impacted by the Marikana strike. I also looked at the South African numerical statistics of unemployment, employment, and the profits made from platinum and other minerals by companies such as Implats and Anglo, specifically focusing on the data which was collected post-apartheid.

Other methodologies I used included collecting newspapers such as the *Mail & Guardian* in order to keep up with the news. I also watched TV news reports and read blogs, all in order to ensure that I was up-to-date on what was happening in terms of strikes and the Farlam Commission hearings. I also wandered into jewelry stores (specifically in Stellenbosch and the V&A Waterfront) and collected brochures in the hopes that they would contain information regarding the origins of their raw materials and the role of mineworkers in their extraction. I occasionally asked the people working at them if they knew where their materials came from, and at times got rather interesting responses. Through this methodology, I hoped to gain a sense of how informed people are regarding where diamonds, platinum, gold and other minerals actually come from and the extreme difficulties and dangers that come with extracting these “timeless and beautiful” pieces of rock/metal.

The people who I interviewed expressed a rather wide range of opinions regarding the Marikana strike, including how they felt about the mineworkers’ and policemen’s actions taken at the Marikana strike, the rights of mineworkers and policemen, as well as the role of the mining authorities, unions, and the government in handling the unrest at Marikana and other strikes. I chose interviewees primarily based on where they live, their educational backgrounds, and their occupations.

My first interview was with Ms. Lulama Marhwanqa, who was born and raised in the Eastern Cape and now resides in Langa as a single-mother, raising her (and her siblings') four children. Growing up, her parents' jobs included farming and sowing for the community. In terms of her education, she passed grade 11, then went on to nurse training for two years at a hospital in the Eastern Cape. Afterwards, she came to Cape Town in 1989 for a job as a staff nurse. In 1997, she began training and studying while working to become a professional nurse. She currently works as a professional nurse in the Gugulethu Trauma Unit and is part of a union (the Democratic Nursing Association). Ms. Marhwanqa kindly introduced me to her colleague Mrs. Andiswa Fana as another wonderful interviewee.

Mrs. Andiswa Fana was also born in the Eastern Cape, is married and has four children. She grew up in a home where her father worked for a company in another city and occasionally sent her family money, while her mother was a housewife responsible for raising her and her seven siblings. She dropped out of school in grade 12, after that started looking for a job, then returned to grade 12 to complete her grade school education. She took courses for HIV and AIDS in order to become an AIDS counselor, and every week she and the NGO she works for go to work with the community and give people HIV tests: "By doing this outreach, we are trying to get close to them and get them the information and get them comfortable with the clinics" (A Fana 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). Her male relative participated in the Marikana strike, though fortunately he was one of the strikers who survived.

I also had a joint interview with Mr. Kolade Arogundade and Mrs. Emma Harvey-Arogundade, a middle-class, married couple with a toddler son. Mr. Arogundade was born in Nigeria and raised in Trinidad, where he received a mainly British education in a private school. From Trinidad, he eventually moved to Cape Town to earn a PhD in Land Economics. He initially started as a UCT professor, teaching land economics while specializing in evaluation. His current job is as a free-lance consultant in evaluation. He was interested in being interviewed as an immigrant coming to this country and representing his own personal experiences. I inquired as to what his first experiences were like moving to South Africa: he claimed that at the time of his arrival in 2002, there existed austerity towards foreigners, but it was not until the years 2007/8 that it really "exploded." He received a visa which depicted him as being exceptionally skilled, and in popular narratives he would be described as an "ex-patriot because [he] has an education" (K Arogundade 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). When he was first seeking a job, Mr. Arongundade approached a real-estate practitioner, looking for a part-time job to make some extra money: "I went to them and said 'I am a valuer, I have a PhD and was wondering if you could give me part-time work.'" Their response was "'First of all you must learn how to speak English.'" This was based off of the

assumption that because he spoke with a different accent, he must not know how to speak English; however, in Trinidad that is the only language they speak there (K Arogundade 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). He is married to Mrs. Arogundade, who was born in Bloemfontein, moved to Kimberly when she was three, Lesotho when she was 6, and Cape Town when she was 9. Her mother was a primary school teacher and her dad worked in a variety of capacities in the motor industry; eventually he ended up owning a panel beating business. She and her older brother were her families' first generation to attend University. Prior to receiving her Masters in 2012 in Diversity Studies (focusing on intersectionality and identities), she worked as a bookshop manager and eventually took on various positions in NGO's dealing with gender, gender violence, HIV, human rights, municipal delivery.

My next interview was with Mr. Zwelethu Jolobe. He grew up in Durban and spent a few years in Zimbabwe; his parents were activists and left due to conflict in the country. In Zimbabwe, he and his siblings went to primary school, and then they went back to Durban in 1990. He went to school at UCT, and afterwards did his post-graduate studies in Dublin, Ireland. Mr. Jolobe's first job was in the private sector, where he worked for a mining company firm called Anglo Gold Ashanti. He worked for their regulatory phase, and proceeded to depict what his duties entailed: "You work within the context of not lobbying per-say, but looking at the ways in which legislation affects the general operations...at the time it was around debates about black empowerment laws, which obviously affect the shareholder competition of the firm" (Z Jolobe 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). He claimed that while he was not specifically looking into joining the mining business, he enjoyed working there because the work he was doing was "at the fore of the agenda of the country at that time, so it was nice being in the heat of the moment, it was fun" (Z Jolobe 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). However, after a year of working at the firm, he realized it was not for him. He then switched to being a lecturer in politics at UCT, and currently teaches courses such as introduction to politics, Third World Politics, and a post-graduate, theory-heavy class (including development theory).

On my way to my Stellenbosch interview, as we were seated in a train, I had a casual conversation/interview with a man named Mr. Xolani Cakata. He is from Queenstown, Eastern Cape, and was visiting the Western Cape for the first time on a vacation with his wife. He works as a Parole/Probation officer for the Department of Correctional Services, in a component called Community Corrections, where he helps criminals to start their lives over again. He graduated with a Diploma in Journalism and is currently studying towards a Diploma in Human Resources Management.

My interview in Stellenbosch was with Mrs. Marida van der Merwe, who was born in

Namaqualand, a part of the Northern Cape Province. She was raised by parents who were both teachers: her father was a science and biology teacher, while her mother was teaching grades 1, 2 and 3. Her mother's parents were also teachers, whereas her father came from a farmer's past. Her parents raised her to believe that one should not judge another on the basis of their skin color, and they never supported the Nationalist Party. She moved away from home in order to study at Stellenbosch University, where she earned a degree in sciences (BAC). After she received her diploma in diametric, she went into data analysis. After some time, she married Mr. Herman van der Merwe, and eventually had to leave her job to take care of her kids. She currently teaches math to children, on-and-off.

In Bo Kaap, I had the pleasure of interviewing Mrs. Salama Kimmie. She was born in Salt River, and attended school up to matriculation. Afterwards, she worked at a bridal shop and still works at one to this present day. She is now married and has two children.

My final interview was with a police-officer, who requested that his name not be utilized in this paper. He is from Cape Town, studied in school up to matriculation, and is currently ranked a constable. He chose to become a police-officer as he feels that certain parts of Cape Town have deteriorated, and thus he wants to help improve life in the city. He was part of a union at his previous job, but never participated in any strikes.

By interviewing this diverse group of people, both those who I initially set out to find and those who I met along the way, I managed to get a very clear and broad image of the variety of reactions and opinions which have been formulated regarding the Marikana strike, which is not only one of the most violent strikes since the end of apartheid but also a representative of where the country and its workers currently stand.

## Glossary

- 1. The Kimberley and Witwatersrand mines:** The Kimberley diamond mine was developed in 1871. Witwatersrand goldmine was discovered in the 1886 as one of the first goldmines ([www.sahistory.org](http://www.sahistory.org)).
- 2. The De Beers Monopoly:** A family of companies dominating the diamond trade. Founded by Cecil Rhodes. Has recently joined operations with Anglo American ([www.debeersgroup.com](http://www.debeersgroup.com)).
- 3. Anglo American:** One of the world's largest mining companies. Founded in 1917 by Sir Ernest Oppenheimer. Minerals it produces include iron ore, thermal coal, platinum, and diamonds ([www.angloamerican.co.za](http://www.angloamerican.co.za)).
- 4. NUM:** National Union of Mineworkers. Established in 1982 as a unifier of several different mineworker unions. A sub-division of Cosatu ([www.num.org.za](http://www.num.org.za)).



- 5. COSATU:** Congress of South African Trade Unions, the biggest trade union federation in South Africa. Founded in 1985 ([www.cosatu.co.za](http://www.cosatu.co.za)).
- 6. SACP:** South African Communist Party. Founded in 1921, “has always been in the forefront of the struggle against imperialism and racist domination” ([www.sacp.org.za](http://www.sacp.org.za)).
- 6. The Tripartite Alliance:** A political alliance between COSATU, the ANC, and the SACP. Established after political organizations were unbanned. Centered around the National Democratic Revolution, “the establishment of a democratic and non-racial South Africa” ([www.cosatu.co.za](http://www.cosatu.co.za)).
- 7. Chamber of Mines:** Formed in 1887. A prominent industry employer organization, promoting the interests of its members in the South African mining industry ([www.bullion.org.za](http://www.bullion.org.za)).
- 8. AMCU:** Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union. Formed in 1998. A breakaway faction of NUM (South African Labour Guide).
- 9. BEE:** Black Economic Empowerment. Program created by the ANC in 2003 as an initiative towards decreasing inequality between “races” and establishing a black middle class (Innes, 2007).
- 10. Marikana Strike:** Occurred on August 16; began as a wildcat strike at a mine owned by Lonmin, close to Rustenburg, consisting mainly of rock-driller mineworkers demanding higher wages. The mineworkers gathered on a hill at the mine wielding *pangas*, sticks and other weapons. The policemen were called in to disperse the strike: ended up using sharp ammunition to end it, leaving 34 dead and 78 injured (Polgreen 16 August 2012).
- 11. Lonmin:** A producer of platinum group metals, operating in Bushveld Complex. Formed in 1909 ([www.lonmin.com](http://www.lonmin.com)).
- 12. Implats:** Originally established north of Rustenburg in mid-1960s, major producer of platinum ([www.implats.co.za](http://www.implats.co.za)).
- 13. Farlam Commission of Inquiry:** Began shortly after the Marikana strike. Includes inquiry into whether Lonmin exercised its best to resolve disputes between Lonmin and its workforce, as well as among its laborers. Also investigating if Lonmin responded appropriately to the threat/outbreak of violence, and if the company created an environment of tension, labour unrest, and disunity among workers. Another area of investigation is if it established sufficient safeguards to ensure safety of its employees/property. ([www.lonmin.com](http://www.lonmin.com)).
- 14. Pangas:** According to [encyclopedia.com](http://encyclopedia.com): “a bladed African tool like a machete.”
- 15. Platinum:** A silvery-white metal; one of the most precious of metals. One of the densest and heaviest metals known to man, remarkably durable (can stand high temperatures). Used in a wide variety of

markets, from technical applications to jewelry. ([www.implats.co.za](http://www.implats.co.za))

**16. Rock-drill mineworkers:** Under-ground workers, responsible for operating a hand-held machine rock drill. They drill horizontally into the rock face (Stewart 2012). Temperatures underground average more than 40 °C with air-conditioning. They are paid R4000 a month. (Stavrakis 2012). According to Keith Breckenridge in his article entitled “Revenge of the Commons: The Crisis in the South African Mining Industry”: The men who “do the miserably dangerous but indispensable work of driving the heavy pneumatic drills deep in to the quartzite rock that encases the gold and platinum” (Breckenridge 2012).

**17. SAPS:** South African Police Service

### **PART 3: Findings/Analysis**

As I embarked on my ISP adventure, the primary question I posed was: *To what extent do socio-economic, cultural and educational backgrounds impact the ways in which South Africans perceive the Marikana Massacre and its aftermath?* I based this question off of the assumption that each individual’s perspectives regarding the strike would vary according to their class, occupation and other social distinctions. My hypothesis was correct in that depending on which neighborhood/town I visited and the people I spoke to, opinions varied to a great degree. They differed in terms of what individuals viewed as being the most important aspect of the strike, whether it be the economic, political or social effects. Some believed that the impacts of this strike would be lasting, while others claimed this was simply a bump in the road, as the workers would have no choice but to go back to work and give up in their struggle. One difference which I did not previously anticipate was the way in which academics and other people regarded the strike and its significance: the academics for the most part distanced themselves and viewed the strike through a logical and contextual scope, whereas others were more emotionally invested, all of which came out through the way they answered questions. When I approached each interview, I came anticipating certain answers from each individual based on what I knew about them. Emerging from this experience, I found that the major differences of opinion among those I interviewed was not due to culture, but rather according to educational, professional, and social backgrounds (where they come from, where they live, and who they were raised by).

### **Organization of Findings**

The organization of the findings will consist firstly of a depiction of the platinum industry, both by those who produce platinum and those who sell this highly valuable mineral. I will then proceed to present a few statistics regarding mineworker employment and earnings between the years 2007 to 2010. After these initial overviews and statistics, I will present my interview findings, beginning with one case-

study, then proceed to discuss the common themes in my discussions among all the interviewees.

Intertwined with the interviews, I will also include quotes from various newspaper articles, blogs, and TV news castings regarding the Marikana strike. In this way, I will portray a fuller picture of the impact the Marikana strike had on people in Cape Town, including those who I met as well as those who expressed their opinions through a variety of media forums.

### **Shimansky, Platinum and the Implats Company**

*South Africa produce[s] over 80% of the world's platinum. For the first time in a decade the price gap between platinum and gold is at its lowest due to the lack of demand from the auto-catalyst industry. This is music to the ears of all brides-to-be and [jewelry] lovers. Platinum is the superior metal of choice when setting diamonds and gemstones due to its unique properties, it is hypoallergenic and highly durable...Being the purest metal of all, it is the obvious choice when expressing your love and commitment..."* (Shimansky: The Art of Diamonds/South Africa's Platinum Specialists Brochure)

As I wandered between jewelry stores in Cape Town and Stellenbosch, I collected numerous brochures in my bag- I felt rather self-conscious and somewhat worried at times about how materialistic I might appear in the eyes of those around me. However, the information I gathered from them was quite enlightening: this is how platinum is presented to the world, to those who are looking to please their lover/fiancé/partner with the glitz and glamour of this increasingly popular metal. Yet rarely do these companies describe where their raw materials came from, how they were taken out of the ground and who were the key individuals involved in the process (mineworkers). When I asked those selling the jewelry where they get their platinum and other materials from, very few of them had even the slightest idea- one told me "Obviously from the De Beers company mines."

According to the Implats website, the second largest PGM (platinum group metals) producer in the world (25% to be exact), South Africa is the "world leader in platinum and PGM production, having produced around 4.7 million ounces of platinum and 8 million ounces of PGMs in 2011" ([www.implats.co.za](http://www.implats.co.za)). They depict the use of platinum as not being restricted to jewelry; it can also be used in numerous other markets, from the automotive industry to the medical field. In terms of their business vision and values, they claim that their aim is to be "the world's best platinum producing company delivering superior returns to shareholders relative to our peers." They also strive to be a good corporate citizen, foster honest and open communication within the workplace, be accountable for their actions, and promote teamwork as a responsible employer which cares for the development of workers'

abilities (www.implats.co.za). They work alongside the Royal Bafokeng Nation, now known as the Royal Bafokeng Holdings (Pty) Limited (RBH), who “subscribed for 75.1 million Implats shares giving them a 13.4% holding in Implats. An Employee Share Ownership Programme (ESOP) was implemented during the same period, giving some 28,999 lower level employees the benefit of the appreciation in value of 3% of the group’s equity” (www.implats.co.za).

The more I read into the platinum industry, specifically the Implats Company and their implementation of programs such as ESOP, the more confused and curious I got as to why the mineworkers felt the need to strike in the first place. However, as I conducted the interviews, the answers emerged: lack of representation was the biggest reason of all, as workers’ frustrations built up over time, eventually leading to Marikana.

### **Mining Industry Statistics**

These statistics were collected from the South African government’s website, under the “Mineworkers Stats, mining and quarrying industry” sections. They range from 2007 to 2010. According to the website, from March 2007 to March 2010, the number of employees rose from 484 000 to 491 000 workers. The gross earnings rose in the last four years, from 11 506 000 to 17 104 000, indicating a rising demand for minerals globally. Average earnings have risen as well: In February 2007, the monthly earnings were 8 071, whereas by February 2010 the earnings rose to 11 707. According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey, Quarter 1, 2012, “employment increased by 2,3% since 2011, unemployment increased by 3,7%, the number of discouraged work-seekers increased by 5,0% and other (not economically active) decreased by 0,8%” (Statistics South Africa 2010). Overall, the statistics appeared to point to an overall improvement in employment of workers as well as earnings by the mining industry.

### **A Case-Study: The Pain Hits Close to Home for Mrs. Andiswa Fana.**

#### **Interviewed November 14, 2012:**

As Ms. Lulama Marhwanqa and I stepped out of her car, I was confused as to why we had stopped by what appeared to be a primary school. However, it was soon revealed to me that this was in fact the location of an NGO program, conducted by a group of nurses and other medical professionals, which provides free HIV testing and counseling to members of the Gugulethu community. Every week for two days, they go out into the community and provide these services to people who would otherwise have to spend hours waiting in a queue at the hospital clinic, simply to get a 15-minute HIV test. It was incredible watching them work so hard, running about and making sure everyone was taken care of. It was

exhilarating as well when one man emerged from a testing room shouting with joy and excitement. Ms. Marhwanqa introduced me to several of her colleagues before introducing me to Mrs. Andiswa Fana. We waited for a little while as she finished up with a few clients. When it was time to interview, we sat on a bench and watched as people passed by and greeted her on occasion.

I began by asking her some basic background information about where she was from, what education she received, and what she currently does. She was born and raised in the Eastern Cape until the age of 22, then came to Cape Town for a job. She grew up in a home where her father traveled to the city to work while her mother stayed at home and raised Mrs. Fana and her six siblings. She proceeded to describe her mother: “It was not easy to grow with a mother when the father is far away in the city, giving us the money sometimes. It was not easy for my mom because we are seven [children]. It was not easy, but as a mother she was trying her best” (A Fana 2012, pers. Comm., 14 Nov). In terms of education, she attended grade school up to the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, dropped out in 12<sup>th</sup> grade, and then returned as she recognized the need to complete her schooling. She currently does HIV counseling and adherence, teaching people about ARVs and HIV testing.

I then asked her about her experience having a family member who lives in Marikana and participated in the strike there. It was a very emotionally charged interview, but she was very much willing to open up to me, which I was very grateful for. She said that it was fine because “it is better to talk about it while you feel it all. Because really it's hurt, I got one of my family members, but actually he is still there and working.” She provided me with some biographical information about him: he is a 40 year old man, and has a wife and five children in the Eastern Cape. He is the bread-winner for the family as his wife is unemployed. He stays alone at Marikana in a compound near the mine, and has been working at that mine since the year 1990. He is currently part of the splinter union AMCU, which was one of the reasons why he participated in the strike. Mrs. Fana described the dire situation regarding the low wages he receives for his hard, risky work: “It's scary and painful because they are working hard for nothing.” She claimed that she didn't see why it should be so difficult to negotiate with the mine managers, as they see that “this person here we are working together, and he deserves this money...they know that there is money, but they can't pay them that amount of money that they want. So it's ended up making a very huge mess which causes suffering for so many people” (A Fana 2012, pers. Comm., 14 Nov).

When we first started the interview, she immediately claimed that when it came to her relative surviving in the strike, “I'm not going say that I'm happy, but at least he's still alive.” I asked her about her

initial reaction when she heard about the Marikana strike: she claimed that she saw the news right as it was being broadcasted on the television, and immediately took the phone and called other people to see if they heard about it. She requested that they phone him to make sure he was still alive, and they responded that “he said that he is still safe.” She claimed that her family has since been suffering from too much stress, and that “We are struggling to even sleep, we are scared even when the day goes to the evening. We are still going straight to the television: what did they say today, what's happening today? All the time we are just scared. So it is stressing us.” She proceeded to say that she simply couldn't imagine if it was her brother who participated in the strike: “I just don't want to go there, to think about it. Because it was very, very strange.” I asked her if her relative went back to work with some of the other mineworkers after the Marikana strike: “They took their time to go to work, they keep on meeting...they go to the yard of the mine, but outside the mine, and they meet there together.” They continue to meet despite managers claiming that they can't. (A Fana 2012, pers. Comm., 14 Nov). I asked a question which I later realized was ethically wrong and insensitive. However, it was not until I asked it that I recognized this fact: I asked her how she felt about the way the police handled the situation. She said that she didn't want to talk about the police.

She explained to me how day and night, the mineworkers at Lonmin remain on top of the hill, and that sometimes if there are “50 or 100 there, someone they are going to come there again, they do take the food to eat there at the hills.” Those who chose to leave the hill and go home were regarded as cowards; those who chose to go back to work were looked down upon as well. I asked her if he would ever consider getting another job, to which she replied that there was no way, as “I think that is the only skill that he have is doing that job, because if you are uneducated, you're supposed to learn some skills. If you have no skills, no job” (A Fana 2012, pers. Comm., 14 Nov). By the end of the interview, she described her views regarding the roles of the mining managers, the unions, and the government in dealing with the strike and its aftermath. She claimed that the government should establish a committee which will look into the management of the mines. Regarding COSATU, she claimed that they are “supposed to work with them [the government] before they are heavy on the strikers. They are supposed to make things easier even to the government, but I think there is a failure somewhere there.” She argued that the mining companies are supposed to make things right for the workers and provide them with benefits. I asked her if she had more she wanted to say regarding the Marikana strike. Her response was: “Nothing else for Marikana, I'm going to just pray, just pray for it” (A Fana 2012, pers. Comm., 14 Nov.).

## Analysis

### I. Introduction

“We are very, very hurt. I have also worked in the mines, now I’m retired, but we have never seen anything like this, killing of children who have not done anything wrong...I blame the mine, the very same company that hired them and neglected them. They could have resolved the situation. If they had failed, they could have let our children go back home and shut the mine. Yes, we are grateful that they have given them jobs, but the most painful thing is that they can’t bring our children back” (Telegraph website, Interview with Baba Goloza, father of 2 miners killed at the massacre).

Witnessing stories such as this tug at the heartstrings of many individuals, including myself; thus we often did not see the reasons why one should bother listening to any other perspectives regarding the strike at Marikana. The reason why I chose to study this strike was due to the way in which it struck such a major chord in the minds of South Africans as well as the rest of the world: many claimed that this strike was reflective of a dark past of apartheid. Everywhere one looked, different people told different stories of what happened on that fateful day- some referred to it as a “massacre,” others referred to it as simply another strike out of many. By asking people to describe what they saw in the videos of the strike from a variety of news programs, one immediately sees the stark differences in the way people tell the tale of the Marikana strike. After interviewing/speaking with eight individuals in four different neighborhoods of Cape Town, as well as two individuals in Stellenbosch, I can safely say that when I asked them about Marikana, everyone had different stances regarding its economic, political and social significance and implications. I noticed that these differing opinions often coincided with their various educational, professional and social backgrounds.

### II. Initial Reactions to the Marikana Strike

Among the answers to my question regarding the interviewees’ initial reactions to the Marikana strike, I found that there were two types of answers: one in which the interviewees immediately expressed their concern, worry and at times fear for the mineworkers and their struggle. On the other hand, there were those who expressed a more objective stance: they chose to look at the strike and the protestors more critically, as well as consider the impacts the strikes had on the policemen. Ms. Marhwanqa claimed that when she first watched the strike on her television, her first reaction was worry “because of the people who lost their families’ members because of the strike” (L Marhwanqa 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). Mrs. Fana immediately phoned her family to ensure that her relative, a mineworker, was still alive. Mrs. van

der Merwe claimed that when she first witnessed the strike, she was worried but also “irritated because the people who are supposed to handle it were not doing their utmost, and everybody is not working on the problem” (M van der Merwe 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). However, not everyone who I interviewed responded in an emotional manner; for example, when I asked Mr. Arogundade what his reaction was, rather than beginning with the miners who died at the Marikana strike, he proceeded to describe what had happened the week before, when miners “killed six people, killed eight people, killed ten people, bombed them alive...” He claimed that while he did not know who initiated the attacks in Marikana, the question which resided in his mind was that “something needed to be done, that it’s not only the lives of the miners that are precious. They killed security guards; they killed policemen, neck-laced people” (K Arogundade 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). One response which truly stood out to me was the policeman’s, who claimed that when he watched the strike, he was curious as to why the mineworkers were striking: he determined that this was due to the fact that they simply wanted attention, part of a trend which he claimed South Africa is famous for (Policeman 2012, pers. comm., Nov.).

### **III. Why did the mineworkers strike in the first place?**

#### **1. Low Wages**

##### **a. The extreme exploitation of mineworkers to reduce labor costs- Mr. Jalobe’s take on it**

In my interview with Mr. Jalobe, I received an immense amount of background information and detail in regards to the circumstances leading up to the Marikana strike. One of the areas which he spoke about extensively was what he believed to be the two points of conflict which brought about the strike: “firstly the pressure on the underground (rock-driller) workers to perform, and secondly the organization of labor and trade unions.” He claimed that the underground workers include the semi-skilled rock-drillers, who engage in a job which is “high risk, low-skilled, and labor intensive.” Combined with the mining companies who are under constant pressure by the shareholders, Mr. Jalobe argued that the rock-drillers were expected to perform quickly and efficiently, while at the same time having to accept the lowest of wages. He proceeded to discuss the trade unions’ roles regarding low worker wages, claiming that labor relations changed between the apartheid era and post-apartheid, and thus unions such as the NUM became “more corporate, and as they [got] into this tripartite-ism, the trade union also [changed] with it, becoming more formal.” As a result, he argued that they began to only organize permanent workers, meanwhile leaving out migrant seasonal workers such as rock-drillers. Thus, they were forced to work for “ridiculous amounts of hours, and they are exploited to the core” (Z Jalobe 2012, pers. comm., Nov.).



Mr. Jalobe expanded on the idea of the exploitation of mineworkers and their low wages, this time in the context of mine management seeking to reduce costs of labor in general. He depicted the differences between fixed costs in the mining industry and variable labor costs. Fixed costs result from the major expenses which come with embarking on a mining operation: “because this country has got low-grade oil, it means you have to dig deep... That is a very expensive operation and the machines you need for that are imported and they cost a lot of money.” The best machines for safety cost the most amount of money, and thus they invested in them because “you want to get the rocks out and you want to make sure people are safe within that.” As a result, employers chose to minimize labor costs by making their pay variable; thus, “semi-skilled means that you can be chewed up and you are spat out at the end” (Z Jalobe 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). Thus, Mr. Jalobe’s argument was that exploitation became common-place today largely due to mining managers seeking to reduce labor costs and make the most for their buck.

#### **b. Hard work not being reflected in salaries**

When it came to determining the motivations for the mineworkers participating in the Marikana strike, it was obvious to all of my interviewees: lowest of the low wages. Ms. Marhwanqa argued that the mineworkers work hard and under risk everyday at the mines in order to provide for their families, yet receive low salaries which “are not living wage[s] for their families.” She proceeded to describe the situation of families back home, who depended on their relatives working in the mines to earn a decent wage. She claimed that the majority of mothers in the Eastern Cape are unemployed house-wives; thus, they are struggling without the men who were killed in the Marikana strike. This in turn had an impact on access to food, as well as access to education for their children. She depicted a scene of a little boy who will not be able to go to school as a result: “their little boy was crying that his father died and then he is about to go tertiary. Who is going to be there for him to pay the school fees so that he can get on with his studies?” (L Marhwanqa 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). Mrs. Arogundade argued that the mineworkers are struggling for higher wages while dealing with the even larger ordeal of their country’s struggling economy: “The thing that I think is motivating the mineworkers... is that the people at the top, you know there’s all that stuff about skills, but they get obscene salaries, obscene raises. So how can they get 22% but the mineworkers don’t? I think it’s an important part of it as well: the cost of living in South Africa is spiraling hugely.” She brought up the example of the rising costs for commodities such as petrol and groceries, as well as paying rent. She asserted the fact that even she as a middle-class woman struggles to make such high payments: “I go to the grocery now, the packets are like R400. I can’t sustain that and I’m not a poor person in any shape or form. I think the strikes are also being motivated by the fact that

actually our rent goes up 10% every year but our salaries don't" (E Arogundade 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). In my interview with Mrs. Kimmie, she presented her own experience working at a bridal shop and the struggles she had when requesting higher wages. She began by stating that both she and mineworkers receive "pathetic wages" from their employers, who she claimed simply did not care for their workers. For example, when she asked for higher wages, she was ignored by her boss: "When I asked for higher wages, I was ignored. The guy was nice, but he just didn't seem to process it. So I quit." Mrs. Kimmie argued that paying decent wages is a sign of respect: thus when she pays her maid, she gives her more than others to show respect for her as a human being, who works hard yet is often unappreciated (S Kimmie 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). The policeman who I interviewed asserted that the mineworkers do in fact receive very low wages; however, he claimed that they were asking for far too much considering that they "have no education. They are expecting to be paid as much as teachers" (Policeman 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). In the majority of responses by interviewees regarding their initial reactions to the Marikana strike, I was surprised to find that everyone expressed a sense of empathy (to varying degrees) for the mineworkers who went on strike. What's more, they often brought their own personal examples into the picture; I believe that this is due to the majority of people in South Africa being adversely affected by their country's struggling economy.

**c. Differences in pay between mineworkers and those higher up in the mining hierarchy**

Mrs. van der Werwe presented another side to the story: she focused on the fact that the trade union leaders are rich people who "*love* to get the money to make them more rich. And they don't use everything that they get in back to the workers. But the workers don't have the savvy to take on their own leaders. It just builds up anger, distrust, and frustration" (M van der Merwe 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). In terms of differences in pay between mineworkers and their chief executives, the numbers are even more dramatic. According to an article by Charles Molele and Matuma Letsoalo in their *Mail & Guardian* article entitled "Pay disparity blamed for mine unrest," chief executives in the mining sector earn about 150 times the amount of Rand than an ordinary worker earns. For example, "the former Lonmin chief executive, Ian Farmer, earned R24-million, Gold Fields executive Nick Holland got R32.6-million and Anglo Platinum chief executive Neville Nicolau's pay was R21.5-million. An ordinary mine worker earns less than R70 000 a year." However, when mineworkers demanded R12 500 a month, the mine bosses accused them of making "unreasonable wage demands" (Molele C & Letsoalo M 14 September 2012). To me, this reflected the reactions of the Chamber of Mines prior to the 1946 strike, where they too claimed that the meager raise in wages which the miners were requesting were a "fantastic and irresponsible

dream” (South African Communist Party 1986, pp. 7-8). Hartford also argues that one of the mineworkers’ core frustrations was a factor of differences in earnings: “Once workers become shop stewards they are graded to C1 level and typically earn three times as much as the average worker. They are removed from production or underground work.” According to him, they also receive many perks and benefits, “including significant time off for external union duties.” Thus, as workers make their way higher in terms of rank, so too do their influences within the unions and the management. Hartford thus asserts that the average worker is left with no representation, as inequalities between workers become more entrenched in the mining sector: “In an environment of scarce resources, deep inequalities and limited options for black economic empowerment for employees, the office of the union becomes a sought-after place to secure and retain” (Hartford G 12 October to 18 October 2012). Such circumstances led to disdain by the majority of mineworkers, who continued to face fierce exploitation, low wages, and a lack of representation by fellow employees and their unions (the main one being the NUM).

In my interview with Mr. Jalobe, he discussed the concept of low wages within the context of international economic relations, claiming that the South African mining companies will not change their ways in terms of the low wages mineworkers receive: “For the moment, I think that the solutions that the mining companies are going to look for are the ones that are going to maximize them making money, and the government wants mining companies to make money because South African mining exports account for over 50% of foreign exchange.” He proceeded to claim that through their current system of worker exploitation, the earnings of mining companies are extremely high; thus “they are not going to try to tamper with that” (Z Jalobe 2012, pers. comm., Nov.).

## **2. Lack of representation and the splitting of unions**

### **a. An ineffective bargaining process**

Mr. Jalobe expressed what he believed was the primary issue surrounding Marikana: representation. He claimed that AMCU was created by the mineworkers due to the fact that “you had people who are *extremely* exploited, who had no avenues to air out their grievances.” Thus, it was clear that when workers were not given the opportunity to “air out their views, or they’re not given a right to speak, they will take it to the next level all the time, that’s history.” He proceeded to depict the differences between the bargaining system in the platinum industry and that of the gold industry: “In terms of the way in which this dispute manifested was also a function of the bargaining system in the platinum industry, which doesn’t use a centralized bargaining model. For example, in the gold industry wage talks happen through the Chamber of Mines, it’s more formalized and institutionalized...so you don’t have this

problem.” He claimed that the main players in the platinum industry chose not to become part of the Chamber of Mines as they “want to deal with their labor in their own way.” Thus, the strike which occurred in the gold industry was much easier to manage, because “when your system of bargaining is more formalized, there are rules which are agreed upon that affect workers across the board” (Z Jalobe 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). According to Ms. Marhwanqa, during the bargaining process, the NUM dragged their feet in terms of addressing the needs of the workers, who wanted a raise of 22%. As a member of the union Democratic Nursing Association, she claimed that “even the union sometimes they are not good for us.” She stated that unions and mining authorities do not respond to the demands of workers until “there is damage because people are killed” (L Marhwanqa 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). Her answer corresponded with the argument made by Hartford, as he depicted the drawn-out decision made by the NUM to enact a “unilateral adjustment.” This meant that in the process of adjusting the wages of workers, they “preferred uniform increases across all employee bands.” He argued that the drill operators would have “felt a wage settlement of 10%...compared with the miners who benefited from the additional 18% adjustment within a month of the wage agreement being settled” (Hartford G 12 October to 18 October 2012).

#### **b. Disenchantment with NUM and the emergence of AMCU**

Mr. Jalobe claimed that as a result of not being listened to, the rock-drillers recognized that they were a category of exploited workers and thus attained a sense of political consciousness. According to him, the problem emerged when the workers wished to form a union which “has a legitimate right to bargain over wage issues for their workers.” As the *South African Constitution* claims in the section labeled “Labour Relations,” “Every worker has the right to form and join a trade union.” However, the NUM did not wish to recognize AMCU, as it did not reflect their interests and was established as a rival union. This in turn could lead to “a power struggle on that level” (Z Jalobe 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). The result was that while the mine management and the NUM eventually chose to recognize AMCU, the mining management asserted that “You can be a union, that’s fine, but when it comes to the bargaining chambers, we negotiate with the NUM...raise your issues with them.” He proceeded to explain another two reasons why the NUM as well as Lonmin refused to recognize AMCU as a legitimate union:

NUM doesn’t want to recognize AMCU because it (the NUM) is ‘in bed’ with management and with the government... Lonmin does not want to recognize AMCU because it’s easier to deal with NUM and make sure that they reign in workers and that they do what they’re supposed to do, which is minimize the labor cost of the mining company” (Z Jalobe 2012, pers. comm., Nov.).

He also claimed that if the NUM were to now recognize AMCU, which purely represents the interests of workers, this would in turn undermine the legitimacy of the NUM. Due to the ANC being the “core rump of the working class,” Mr. Jalobe argued that the NUM could conceivably fall apart, followed by COSATU and the ANC, similar to a “pack of cards” (Z Jalobe 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). There have already been major collapses in terms of the solidarity of the NUM: according to a letter Implats sent to the union, its membership at the mine “had dropped to 13% (from a peak of 70%)” (Hartford G 12 October to 18 October 2012). Kwanele Sosibo (reporter for the *Mail & Guardian*) claims in his article “NUM bleeds workers, lives” that “Many workers simply turn to independent strike committees to help them without officially resigning from the union. At Lonmin and Implats, though, disgruntled workers have joined the Amcu fold. The NUM has lost at least 20 000 members at these two mines alone” (Sosibo K 12 October to 18 2012).

### **c. Mineworker on mineworker violence: reflection of past divisions?**

Mrs. van der Merwe claimed that she believes the problem of mineworkers’ being ignored was not the only issue, but also that the NUM was seeking to create trouble amongst the mineworkers, possibly splitting them even more in the process: “I wouldn’t say it’s only that the trade union leaders who were not listening to what they said, I think they instigated them. One aspect of it was that the big trade union (NUM) was starting to lose their cliental to another smaller one (Amcu) who is doing more for their workers. For that reason, those trade union leaders said ‘Oh no, we’re going to lose our power, let’s instigate some trouble” (M van der Merwe 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). One aspect of current mineworker division, violence, and emergence of alternative unions which Mrs. Arogundade focused on was its reflection of the historical “ethnic-based violence and union-based violence which were part of the mineworker experience for years and years. If you’re in competing unions...or opposing ethnic nationalities, you are housed in different sections, and it was fanned by the apartheid government, but what you did was you went out and you killed each other.” She claimed that this is part of the mineworker-on-mineworker violence which has been left out of discussions regarding Marikana (E Arogundade 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). In his article “Revenge of the Commons: The Crisis in the South African Mining Industry,” Keith Breckenridge claims that most accounts of the Marikana strike stress the importance of ongoing inequalities since the end of apartheid, meanwhile ignoring the fact that much of the violence has to do with divisions among mineworkers. He claims that the “violent protests on the mines have been prompted by very dramatic changes in the distribution of power on the mines, changes that have brought about conditions of civil war within the mines’ unionized work force” (Breckenridge,

K 21 October 2012).

#### IV. Law and Order

##### 1. Was the Marikana strike legal?

“Assembly, demonstration, picket and petition: Everyone has the right, *peacefully and unarmed*, to assemble, to demonstrate, to picket and to present petitions” (*The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996, Chapter 2: Bill of Rights, Assembly, demonstration, picket and petition).

Throughout the course of my interviews, I witnessed several general trends in regards to whether each individual believed that the Marikana strike was legal and if the strikers were justified in their methods of striking. While the interviewees claimed they could understand the reasons for the mineworkers wanting to strike, the general consensus was that the bearing of weapons was illegal and unnecessary. Mr. Arogundade claimed that his primary concern was that the strikers had “taken the law into their hands. I’m not saying the miners should have been killed, but while we are interrogating why the police shot them and the legality of the shooting, we also should be looking at why miners killed people.” He questioned the reason for carrying arms to a protest, claiming that “for me, if I must strike, I just refuse to work. There are many kinds of strikes. There are strikes which you stay away from work entirely, there’s a strike that you go to work and refuse to work” (K Arogundade 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). I inquired as to what the mineworkers should have done, considering that their grievances were not being listened to despite peaceful protests of the past: he claimed that the path which they had chosen was too extreme, as they engaged in a “spectacular, like you know the concept of protests? Where there’s the spectacular, there is sabotage, there is guerilla, there is terrorism. And when you do the spectacular, the whole world suddenly notices you” (K Arogundade 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). The policeman I interviewed shared a very similar opinion, claiming that the mineworkers were simply attempting to draw world-wide attention to themselves. He argued that there were other avenues in which the strikers could have chosen to express themselves, including peaceful protests and negotiations, which “people use all over the world to get what they want.” He claimed that apartheid itself ended with the help of peaceful demonstrations (Policeman 2012, pers. comm., Nov.).

In contrast with Mr. Arogundade and the policeman, Ms. Marhwanqa argued that when the strikers gathered at Lonmin and protested with *pangas* and other weapons in hand, “those people (the strikers) were just carrying *pangas*, they were not going to damage, they were not going to kill people because they were just protesting for their rights.” She claimed that the police were not going to be killed with the *pangas* because firstly, the workers were too far away to kill, and secondly, that it is in the workers’

culture and tradition to carry *pangas* as a form of expression (L Marhwanqa 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). After my interview with Ms. Marhwanqa, I did a bit of research as to whether this was in fact a tradition; in the booklet by the SACP, regarding the 1946 miners' strike, I found a very relevant quote from an article in the *Rand Daily Mail* they quoted: "Armed with choppers, iron bars, knives and an assortment of other dangerous weapons, 4 000 strikers forming a six-mile long procession attempted to march on Johannesburg...They were intercepted by the police near Brakpan. When they refused to turn back they were attacked by police. Three of them were seriously injured and scores received minor injuries" (SACP booklet, p. 14). In this march, there was no clear evidence that the weapons were going to be utilized for violent purposes in the strike. This has been a major issue at the hearings at the Farlam Commission, which has yet to determine whether the strikers truly did use their weapons for violence during the strike.

## **2. Were the police justified in their actions?**

One of the biggest areas of contention among the interviewees was whether the police were justified in using lethal force in order to bring an end the Marikana strike. Through the incredible insights of the interviewees, I came to realize the wide range of factors that each individual took into account when critiquing the reactions of the policemen. Most of them recognized the commonly negative narratives of policemen, poor training practices, and the recent trigger-happiness that emerged as a result. Some believed the policemen were justified in the way that they dealt with the Marikana strike, while others found it to be excessive and uncalled for. I found it fascinating how certain individuals insisted that we see the policeman's side of the story, rather than immediately labeling the mineworkers as the only victims. In all my research throughout the project, I had a difficult time finding this side of the story in any books or media forums.

### **a. Background information about the police: past narratives meet new democracy**

Mr. Arogundade placed the negative narrative of policemen in South Africa into its historical context, proceeding to depict a generation in South Africa which is raised to dislike the police:

"It's actually an African thing because a lot of our soldiers and our policemen came to be, they were off-shoots of the colonial system, an oppressive system. And so you'd have a hard time finding Africans who like policemen because of the history of where they came from...There are children in South Africa where if they are crying, you say 'I'll call the police' and it keeps quiet. So you're training the child to dislike the police (K Arogundade 2012, pers. comm., Nov.).

Mr. Jalobe also placed emphasis on common perceptions of policemen today, claiming that policing in South Africa has not been very good since it was always used as an instrument of oppression:

“there’s a very important historical institutional culture about the nature of policing generally: it’s not been a service, it’s about how do you enforce law and order?” While there have been attempts made in terms of changing the institution of policing since the end of apartheid, he argued that such a process is similar to “trying to change a church. It takes 100 years to change, shape new ideas. Police, after 1994, are under an enormous amount of pressure” (Z Jalobe 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). He claimed that policing in a democracy is more difficult than in a dictatorship, in that “Police have to know the law, they have to be like lawyers, but lawyers with guns... You have to actually know where the limits of your powers are.” However, the combination of widespread small arms, rising crime levels, and “people who can create mayhem is a recipe for disaster. It’s easier to adopt an iron fisted approach to it, but in a democracy you can’t do that” (Z Jalobe 2012, pers. comm., Nov.).

### **b. Police training**

In the eyes of several of my interviewees, the lack of proper training of policemen led to a prevalence in “trigger-happiness” and “incompetence” among policemen (some of the major factors blamed for their conduct at the Marikana strike). According to Mrs. van der Merwe, the South African police are currently not trained very well: “In the past, pre-1994, the police were very well-trained. I have this feeling that police are currently very incompetent in general. Again, there are exceptions, but in general I think they... also lack integrity. This is still a thing coming from apartheid’s time...apartheid broke down a lot of integrity in people” (M van der Merwe 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). Mrs. Arogundade claimed that part of the reason why the policemen acted the way they did was due not only to incompetence, but also sheer fear: “you’ve got hundreds of people running at you with *pangas* and machetes, right? Somebody gets nervous, the trigger finger goes -poof-, and because there’s a shock then everybody’s just like -boom, boom, boom-!” (E Arogundade 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). In Kwanele Sosibo’s (*Mail & Guardian* journalist) article “Photos a product of police chaos,” he depicts the scrutiny the police service was placed under during the Farlam Commission when they allegedly tampered with the crime scene. The issue taken up with the Commission was that “Two sets of photographs [were] taken at different times showed miners with and without traditional weapons.” The national police commissioner, General Riah Phiyega, was deemed by Johan Burger (of the Institute for Security Services) to be inexperienced and unfamiliar with procedures in terms of how the law deals with crime scenes. Burger claimed that “the problem with the police force was not its militarization, but rather poor oversight and command control that, when taken together, create a picture of a police force in total collapse and unable to function professionally” (Sosibo, K 9 November to 15 2012).



### c. A policeman's perspective

In simply and clearly stated terms, the South African Constitution expresses exactly the role of policemen and other social security services: “The objects of the police service are to prevent, combat and investigate crime, to maintain public order, to protect and secure the inhabitants of the Republic and their property, and to uphold and enforce the law” (*The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996*, Security Services, Police service section). However, the means by which policemen are expected to maintain public order are not described in explicit terms, leading to much confusion as to what policemen must do in extreme cases such as Marikana. According to the policeman I interviewed, the police at Marikana engaged in a reasonable reaction to the dire situation. He argued that the strikers were acting in a way which was threatening towards the lives of those policemen, who were simply following their orders and doing their jobs: “It is our job as policemen to protect people. If people are being violent, we must stop them.” He claimed that the policemen didn’t want to shoot at the miners, but were forced to take these extreme measures. I asked why the police did not use rubber bullets in this instance, the typical method used in the past to disperse strikers: he asserted that “the police at Marikana were initially using rubber bullets, but due to the situation at hand they switched to sharp ammunition.” He also asserted that several people among the strikers were using fire-arms. He himself had dealt with a strike in the past, but never felt the need to use lethal force. He claimed that if he were in the same situation as his colleagues at Marikana, “I would have possibly responded the same way, but you can’t really know unless you are in that situation” (Policeman 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). In Phillip de Wet’s article (*Mail & Guardian* reporter) “Mine security forces ready to open fire,” he quoted members of the security force who claimed that after the Marikana strike, policemen have been afraid to use lethal force against strikers. In preparation for future strikes, security forces have thus asserted that they “now place greater emphasizes on having live ammunition at the ready, though with less lethal means such as rubber bullets and pepper spray—and keeping security staff safe behind barbed wire.” According to Brad Wood, one of the only police associated with mine security who would speak with de Wet, in situations such as Marikana “You have to be calm and collected, but also a little bit aggressive. You don’t want these guys to think you are a pushover and they can do whatever they want” (de Wet, P 7 September to 13 2012).

### d. Other interviewee's reactions

Ms. Marhwanqa provided a starkly different perspective regarding the reactions of the police during Marikana. She claimed that she does not like the policing style, and that even the minister at one point said to the police that “they must shoot to kill, which was totally wrong for the minister of police to

say so. That's why the police were there...That's why those who were left behind, who were not dead, they said we are going to go carry on the strike because our colleagues already died." She argued that the policemen were supposed to be disciplined, and that those who were responsible for killing miners at the strike should be suspended for a certain period of time, or else "maybe you can just give them a warning if they can't suspend them...so that those Marikana people can say at least somebody is supporting us, not just letting the police go without a warning" (L Marhwanqa 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). Mrs. Kimmie aligned with the claims made by the policeman, arguing that the workers were intentionally aggravating the police, throwing stones at them and making them "very angry. So they use rubber-bullets, use tear-gas. Police are constantly risking their lives, and are also paid pathetic wages." She presented her own experience of witnessing a strike near her home in Bo Kaap, claiming that people were "breaking into stores, throwing stones, lighting tires on fire and rolling them at the police. And yet they don't expect to be arrested, they just get upset with the police." Thus she claimed that while the number of deaths and injuries among at the Marikana strike were unnecessary, it was indeed understandable why the policemen would be upset and react in the manner that they did (S Kimmie 2012, pers. comm., Nov.).

Depicting the perspective of residents of Marikana, Gillian Schutte presents in his article "The World Sees Us as Boys and Savages," the police violence which continued after the strike. In an interview with a Marikana community member, mineworker and activist named Tsepo M, he claims that there is a "psychological and physical warfare being waged on the participants by the police." He describes one incident in particular, when 40 residents were returning home from the Farlam Commission: upon returning to their village, "they were ambushed by a group of armed policemen who forced them all to lie on the ground. What followed after was what seemed like an hour of taunting and abuse as policemen threatened them by holding guns to their heads and whispering in their ears that they would end up like those massacred in September." He proceeds to depict such horrors as women being raped by the police in Marikana, establishing a "community of shame." He claims that these actions taken by the police were all enacted in order to weaken the resolve of the residents of Marikana (Schutte, G 6 November 2012).

**e. What about the policemen who suffered?**

Throughout my interview with Mr. and Mrs. Arogundade, they emphasized the fact that in discussions regarding Marikana, seldom was it mentioned that policemen had died the week before. According to Mrs. Arogundade, "the moment that 34 people had been killed by the policemen, the killings which had happened before then were just dropped out of the consciousness of people completely...suddenly the miners are completely innocent victims in the narrative. And the police are bad,

which is part of our historical narratives as well, right?” (E Arogundade 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). Mr. Arogundade proceeded to claim that in this country, “we get really angry that 34 people have been killed. Where were we when 10 people had been killed? That’s my own issue...because nobody spoke up, nobody talked about anything. Everybody was just ‘Oh, it’s another day’” (K Arogundade 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). He proceeded to discuss the Farlam Commission/hearings, arguing that the police arrested 200 people and tried them for the murders of 34 people. However, the commission “never brought anybody (miners) and accused them of the murders of...the policemen and security guards...There’s nobody talking about that, they’re just talking about the policemen who are under investigation for killing 34 people, and the miners are not under investigation for killing 10 people.” He asserted that in his own opinion, the reaction of the police towards the miners was an act of vengeance for their colleagues who died (K Arogundade 2012, pers. comm., Nov.).

#### **IV. Portrayal of Marikana in the Media**

With the media’s help, Marikana became one of the biggest issues of discussion and debate in South Africa, as many of its citizens followed the strike’s coverage and formed their own opinions in terms of what had presided at Lonmin. According to Mrs. Arogundade, the reason the strike received so much attention and struck such a big chord in South Africa was that for many people, witnessing such a scene on TV “has such echoes in South Africa’s history of police and army shooting down anti-apartheid activists...I think that’s the core of the emotion that attached, and I think that’s why it got such an incredibly strong reaction.” She brought up the example of the 2011 service delivery riots in Limpopo, where a film crew captured footage of a man who the police “pulled out and started beating him up and somebody shot him. One of the policemen shot him and he died right there and they showed it on TV.” The government responded not in terms of “This shouldn’t have happened!” but rather that “They shouldn’t have shown this on TV!” She claimed that such scenes were not often made public, but that Marikana was different in that it was made very public and thus caused a very emotional reaction among viewers (E Arogundade 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). Mr. Jalobe explained the significance of the media very much along the same lines, arguing that while Marikana was not the first of strikes that resulted in so much violence and destruction, this strike gained importance due to the fact that

“It has happened live on television when cameras were rolling and for the first time the media actually followed this dispute. From the moment those people were burnt to death, to the moment the cops were killed...it was all there for you to see. Usually we only see the end part of it, when people are firing rubber bullets. The other thing is that most violent protests haven’t ended in

death. People just getting arrested” (Z Jalobe 2012, pers. comm., Nov.)

According to Ms. van der Merwe, when one witnesses the coverage of major events such as Marikana, “what one is reading in the papers is not all the perspectives, and like truth has many sides to it. Depending on where you’re standing, what you see is the truth.” She proceeded to explain her own experiences keeping up with the media: she claimed that while newspapers have improved in terms of presenting differing viewpoints, she still is very skeptical. In the past, she claimed that people often read papers such as the Afrikaans paper, *Die Burger*, and they believed “it’s always from the bible. It’s the whole truth and nothing but the truth. It was an open joke because people tend to believe it. What I wondered was ‘Why do you believe it? Why do you think that’s the whole truth?’” (M van der Merwe 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). When I asked the policeman about what he thought of the media’s portrayal of the strike, he claimed that they were simply providing the miners with the attention that they wanted, and that he thinks “too much attention has been given to that event rather than to the core issues.” According to him, the media displayed a major bias in expressing empathy towards the strikers, meanwhile undermining the policemen’s actions and portraying them in a poor light (Policeman 2012, pers. comm., Nov.)

## **V. The Aftermath**

### **1. Consequences for the miners**

According to Ms. Marhwanqa, the employers must see the damage that was done, and should provide money to the families who were impacted by the strike: “To my understanding, those people who died, they’re supposed to be given their money.” In her opinion regarding what the mining authorities should do next, Ms. Marhwanqa claimed that “they’re supposed to learn a lesson. Whenever the people are just striking, they’re supposed to listen to the people and then answer them in time before they kill each other” (L Marhwanqa 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). Ebrahim Harvey presents an alternative perspective towards the strikers in his commentary entitled “Wildcat strikes have left a bitter legacy,” as he claims that the strikes in which the workers participated risked being extremely counterproductive. He argues that “unless striking workers seriously assess the prospects for success in winning demands, they can end up with many setbacks and even defeats.” Such defeats include mass dismissals, as “the weapon of the law is a powerful instrument in the hands of mine owners...” He claims that now is the time for a “fundamental review of these strikes,” aimed at reaching a “deeper and more informed understanding” (Harvey, E 9 November to 15 2012).

## 2. Impacts on the mining industry

Mr. Jalobe claimed that while the Marikana strike was a super tragedy, it would not have much of an influence on the future of workers' rights strikes: "an issue like this is probably seen as a bit of a crisis but in the long-run it won't affect things." He proceeded to focus on the bigger picture of South Africa's mining industry and trade with other nations. He claimed that the management of the mines will not change their ways (exploiting workers), due to the fact that they want to maintain their competitiveness in the world-wide mining industry: "Minerals are at the heart of economics, whether it's oil, platinum, etc. Chances are you won't go wrong in the next 100 years, depending on how you milk it. People go to war over it, because minerals, that's what builds things, that's what's the cornerstone of everything. So they probably won't want to tamper with it." Instead, he claimed that they will find other means of exploiting workers: "Capitalists, that's how they think, and that's the tragedy of it" (Z Jolobe 2012, pers. comm., Nov.). In the very fascinating discussion I had with Mr. Cakata, he presented his own views regarding the capitalist system in South Africa, which he claimed was responsible for perpetuating the major gaps between the rich and the poor in the country. He argued that communism "is the best system, as everyone gets a share. Prior to the end of apartheid, the ANC supported communism. Yet since they got into office, they became supporters of socialism and capitalism." He argued that these changes were what led up to the problems which exist today in terms of the exploitation of workers as well as South Africa's being one of the most unequal societies in the world (X Cakata 2012, pers. comm., Nov.).

From another business perspective, Francis W Petersen (reporter for the *Business Times*) discusses in his article "Mining needs to remain competitive" the need for the mining business in South Africa to remain on top in the global economy. He asserts that recently the market conditions have not been favorable in the mining industry. He claims that while it has been said that the transformation of the mining sector has been slow, "specifically in the areas of broad-based economic empowerment," the country cannot afford to support the violence in these "illegal strikes." Petersen argues that the strikes pose a "major risk of disinvestment. Rating agencies have already downgraded our credit rating." Thus, he argues that it is vital that the government "supports and/or partner in ensuring that the mining sector remains competitive" (Petersen, F W 28 October 2012). In her article "Mine unrest comes home to roost," Chantelle Benjamin displays some of the statistics of losses in platinum production since the Marikana strike. She presents a quote by Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan, who declared in October 2012 that the estimated "total value of production lost to the platinum and gold sector since the beginning of the year [was] at R10.1-billion. But one fund manager estimates that the figure is a lot higher, with at least R10-

billion lost in production by the platinum sector alone.” According to Impala Platinum (Implats), in August “its annual profit had dropped by 38%” (Benjamin, C 9 November to 15 2012). Thus, after the Marikana strike, many losses were felt both in terms of the lives lost as well as the blasts on the profits on one of the country’s most major industries: mining.

### **Ethical Reflexivity**

When I first began the process of interviewing individuals, I was concerned about how I would ensure that they were comfortable throughout the process and that they were fully informed of what their responses were being used for. The biggest of my concerns was that the interviewees were sacrificing their valuable time and effort to meet with me for an interview: I wondered how I could ever repay them, even though there really was no way. However, I did my best to inform them of how grateful I was that they took the time to meet with me. After a couple of interviews, I recognized the steps which I must take in terms of setting up an interview (at a time and place most convenient for them), making sure they had my contact information in case they had any further questions an/or concerns, and following up the interview by thanking them again for their participation. In the beginning of each interview, I immediately presented the interviewee with the “Consent Form for Adult Respondents,” ensuring that they knew what their responses were being used for, that they understood their participation was voluntary, and that they had the option of keeping their identities anonymous. This was particularly important when I interviewed the policeman, who preferred that I not reveal his identity. I also asked how much time they would be willing to allot to the interview, as I wanted to show that their time was being both appreciated and respected. Since I brought my audio recorder to every interview, I made sure that they were both aware of it and fine with having their responses collected in this manner. I tried my best to make the questions clear and understandable: there were times at which I struggled in that I did not bring enough questions or the interviewee did not understand the question. However, these hiccups for the most part did not halt the interviews’ progress.

Another major issue, perhaps the most difficult, was acknowledging my own biases and standpoints during the interviews, particularly when I first started out. I recognized that my empathies leaned a great deal towards the mineworkers, and thus I had to work especially hard to ensure that I approached each interview with an open mind. This helped me immensely, as I began to learn much more than I ever would have anticipated; I learned that no issue is ever black-and-white, and that there are a wide range of influences and factors which one must always take into account when setting out to learn about any given topic.

#### **PART 4: Concluding Remarks**

Watching the videos of the “Marikana Massacre” in the comfort of my home in the United States, I never imagined there to be any other opinions regarding the strike other than the one I initially formed: that the Marikana strike represented the remnants of apartheid which persist to this day, and that the mineworkers were blameless and complete victims of police brutality. As I flew over to South Africa, I presumed to know everything that there was to know about the strike and its impacts on the citizens of the country; my initial goal was not truly to learn about other peoples’ opinions, but rather to assert my own as well as those which I read in newspapers such as the *New York Times*. However, upon arriving and speaking with South Africans, I realized that there was so much more to the story of Marikana, the mineworkers, the mining authorities, the unions, and the police force. Thanks to the help of my interviewees, as well as other individuals who I spoke to around Cape Town about the strike, my mind was opened to the fact that in any given tragic event (such as Marikana), many people suffer, including those who are not spoken about in the media (in this case, the police officers who were caught in the middle of political and economic disputes which did not directly involve them). Thus I became interested in looking further into the issues surrounding Marikana for the following reasons: I was fascinated by its historical significance as being the worst strike since 1994, as well as the largely emotional reactions I witnessed both within the media and among those who I met prior to and during the ISP month.

In setting up this project, my hope was that not only would I learn more about the strike, but about the various aspects and impacts of the event which mattered most to the individuals I interviewed. My hypothesis was that their perspectives would be based off of their socio-economic, cultural and educational backgrounds- I found that for the most part my evidence supported this hypothesis. However, I found that the most important distinguishing factors were in fact each interviewee’s occupations, as well as their educational and social backgrounds. This became quite evident in that when they discussed their views of the strike, they often brought in their own experiences and expertise into the topic to express their views. I was often caught by surprise in terms of how much the interviewees were united in certain aspects, such as at least a slight degree of empathy towards the mineworkers. However, where they differed tremendously were their opinions of the strikers’ means of expressing their grievances, as well as the reactions of the policemen to the situation at Marikana.

Walking away from this project, I found that my primary goal was fulfilled: I was successful in finding a diverse group of individuals with whom I could speak to about their reactions to the Marikana strike. I found individuals from a variety of neighborhoods as well as a few academics who provided me

with their own deep insights, based on their specialties; the most exciting aspect for me was having the privilege to interview Mrs. Andiswa Fana, who was so kind to open up to me about her personal experience of having a family member working in Marikana. From speaking to these people, I gained a sense of what it means to live in such an immensely multicultural country, in which freedom of speech reigns and the hope for justice and equality are highly valued. I found that if more people had the opportunity to have their voices heard, including the people I interviewed, the mineworkers, and other individuals in South Africa, social change would be rendered more reachable and embraced.

### **Recommendations for further study**

As I progressed through my interviews, I found that there was a much wider array of issues related to Marikana than I had ever anticipated, including the rights of policemen who are impacted by social movements. One could find a wealth of knowledge interviewing policemen about their jobs, including the social stigmas surrounding their occupations and the way in which they determine the correct course of action to take in tense situations. Another aspect one could explore is the Farlam Commission, which has been progressing for several months now and has raised a vast array of issues: suspicions of police tampering, Implats policies and their treatment of workers, etc. One could also study the other strikes which followed after Marikana; one strike in particular which would be most accessible to a student in Cape Town is the strike among farmworkers.



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## **Appendix A:**

### General Interview Questions

1. Where were you born and raised?
2. What sort of education did you receive?
3. What were your parents' occupations?
4. What was your first job? What is your current job?
5. Have you ever been part of a union? If so, have you ever participated in a strike?
6. When did you first hear about the Marikana strike?
7. What were your initial reactions?
8. Do you know anyone who was impacted by the strike?
9. What are your opinions on the strikers' and policemen's actions? What do you think of the way in which the mining companies, unions, and government dealt with the situation?
10. What do you think of the way in which the media portrayed the strike?
11. Have you been keeping up with the Farlam Commission in the news? If so, what are your opinions of the inquiry's progress thus far?

### Interview Questions for Mrs. Andiswa Fana (in addition to those above)

1. How did the strike impact you and your family?
2. How long has your relative been working in the mines?
3. What housing accommodations does he receive?
4. Did he return to work after the strike?
5. Has he ever considered leaving his job in search of another one?

### Interview Questions for Policeman

1. Why did you decide to become a policeman?
2. What is your rank?
3. Have you ever had to disperse a strike/protest?
4. If placed in a situation similar to the policemen at Marikana, do you believe you would have reacted the same way?