BIO Prepared for ESEH 2023 Board Elections as Regional Representative

Name: Muchaparara (Mucha, in short!) Musemwa
Qualifications: BA Hons. (Z‘bwe), MA (UCT), PhD (Minnesota)

Current positions:
(i) Professor of History and
(ii) Dean: Faculty of Humanities, Wits University, Johannesburg (Jan. 2023 -).

Previous position(s):
(a) Head of the School of Social Science, Humanities, Wits University (2017-2022).
(b) Past President of the Southern African Historical Society
(c) Former Editor of the South African Historical Journal.

Current Service on Boards of Directors:
- European Society for Environmental History
- International Consortium of Environmental History Organisations.
- International Water History Association.

Editorial Boards:
- Water History Journal and
- Environment and History

Recent Publications:


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Statement for 2023 Election to the European Society for Environmental History (ESEH) Board as Regional Representative.

Having served on the ESEH Board for the past three years, I am offering to serve the Society again in the same capacity as a Regional Representative of one of ESEH’s regions, South(ern) Africa. This period, however, coincided with the outbreak of the pandemic such that most of the activities of the ESEH’s activities had to be conducted online. Coordination of scholars via physical workshops became outrightly impossible. This is also true of environmental history scholars in southern Africa. Now that both physical and virtual interactions in blended ways are now possible, I would like to renew my commitment to bringing together a sizable number of young historians at a number of South(ern) African universities who have recently produced fascinating environmental histories on new topics. Some of these works are still locked up in their doctoral dissertations but some of it is being published in the form of monographs, book chapters and journal articles. I intend to continue to nurture their growing interest in environmental history by, among other things, mobilizing them into a disciplinary organizational structure and exposing them to the scholarly networks of ESEH. However, the biggest challenge has been how to ensure that scholars from this region actively participate at the ESEH conferences. It is not that there is a lack of awareness of the presence and significance of ESEH, but the cost of travel (visa, flight, and accommodation expenses) to attend these conferences in Europe has just become well-nigh impossible owing to the high exchange rate versus all southern African currencies. How one navigates this conundrum is going to have to remain a permanent item on the ESEH Board’s meeting agenda for some time to come. I will be seeking ways to work with the ESEH Board to raise funds to enable young scholars to attend ESEH conferences in Europe. As I indicated in my initial expression of interest to become a board member in 2019, I wish to reiterate my idea of arguing for hosting one of the ESEH conferences in South(ern) Africa to ensure that ESEH does not continue to be seen as a Euro-centered disciplinary organization but one that seeks a true global outlook by travelling outside Europe to those regions it has fostered integral linkages. This idea might sound fanciful, but it is one well-worth exploring to ensure that space is created in the ESEH so that it can effectively accommodate and interact with the rich environmental knowledge being produced from this part of the global south.