

**ANNOUNCING THE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF
SOUTH AFRICA (HASA) BIENNIAL CONFERENCE 2018**

**Miracles and mirages:
The fall of the oldest and rise of the newest South Africa... and beyond**

Date: 20 - 22 June 2018

Host: Department of History, University of the Free State

The 2018 HASA conference wishes to assemble historians and other scholars working on the diverse dimensions of South Africa's contemporary past. Not only are established and emerging scholars encouraged to attend, but also so-called amateur historians. As such, participants and conference-goers do not necessarily have to be affiliated with a specific institution or organization. Conventional, established, but also uncharted, if not peculiar, approaches to the deciphering of South Africa's contemporary history are welcomed.

By the turn of the twentieth century, what would become South Africa was in turmoil. Following the Anglo-Boer War (or South African War) a new South Africa evolved under the Union of South Africa. Soon disunity took hold of the Union as it started to fray at the edges. In 1948, another new South Africa emerged with apartheid as its guiding star. Once more the country slid into growing conflict – and, in due course, international isolation.

By 1976 the apartheid system was beginning to falter, and during the next decade it would tear itself and the country apart. Apartheid, a supposed *man-made miracle*, finally became an *ideologically based mirage*. The 1980s drove South Africa into violence and turmoil within every conceivable sphere of society. Negotiations gave birth to yet another New South Africa. A man-made miracle maybe, but so too dazed and confused. Since the emergence of the post-Mandela era, the miraculous new status-quo has also started to fray at the edges. Expected glitches accompanying any socio-economic and political circumvolution left aside, crises besetting South Africa in nearly every conceivable sphere of society seem unstoppable. Has the man-made miracle of the newest New South Africa turned into another out of reach mirage?

Historians must cement history's relevance in decoding the problematics of current realities. In trying to make sense of the current, there is an urgent need to untangle the past. This is not merely the responsibility of historians alone. Interdisciplinary co-operation and multi-disciplinary insights should combine to map a route through the complex labyrinth facing South Africa.

Historical research must guard against granite methodological purism. To thoroughly grasp past, present and future realities, historians cannot singularly seek cornerstones from fellow historians. Collaboration between historians and researchers in other fields is vital for all scientific endeavour. If not, History may become a thing of the past.

Although the emphasis will inherently be on historical interpretations of the past, the conference aims at creating a multi-disciplinary bouquet of thought, insight, daredevil intellectual critique and scientific exploration. An environment of amiable and energetic investigation combining diverse voices in the search for knowledge by making distinctions between miracles and mirages, will be created.

For further information and details regarding the conference, please visit the
HASA website at <http://www.hgsa.co.za>