

JOURNAL PREFACE

This is the first issue of the *Southern Journal for Contemporary History* (SJCH) under the new mandate, the new board and the new editorial team. But just as we set off on a new intellectual and historiographic adventure, it would both be remiss and churlish to do so without a few words of acknowledgement to the previous editors, who kept the *Journal for Contemporary History* going for more than four decades and the authors who published, leaving a tableau of an evolving historiography and a rich archive for historians of history.

Recently, there has been a heavy preponderance of articles from the fields of international relations and political science. As we imagined the kind of changes we hoped to bring to the SJCH, we took a decision to immediately implement our editorial mandate to publish articles more specifically historical in their framing, approach and methodology, whether or not these came from within the discipline itself. Of course, this meant that the pipeline of submissions was slightly disrupted. We hope, though, that what we have delivered in this issue points to how we would like the *Journal* to develop. In this regard, we look forward to submissions that will both engage different historical subjects and make critical contributions to the discipline. The articles in the issue begin to reflect what we hope will be the dynamic identity of the *Journal* and, can in their own way, add crucial Southern voices to issues in contemporary history.

Leslie Witz leads the issue with an essay that narrates his journey through some major developments in the discipline over thirty-odd years. Never a detached by-stander, Witz actively participated in shifting the trajectories of the discipline, not only locally but globally. This closeness brings liveliness and spark to his paper and leaves the reader with a sense of the impact an individual may have on the discipline. Part of the business of a journal is to build its discipline, and in subsequent issues we hope to publish major pieces (like Witz's) that direct us to developments and issues in history and help us map some of the pathways towards the idea of "Southern histories".

What is especially pleasing is that several of the articles that we carry are written by early to mid-career scholars. This is an excellent indication of what we hope, in part, to cultivate. We look forward to receiving papers from a diverse mix of people at different stages of their careers and from across the global South even as our main site may be Africa. But because of the excellent pool of reviewers from which we draw and the kind of close attention we pay to our submissions, we strongly encourage submissions from young and upcoming scholars to join the conversations and debates that inform developments within the history of the contemporary global South. In this respect, we intend to award an annual prize to the best essay by an early career scholar, defined for these

purposes as a postgraduate, a post-doctoral fellow, or someone in an academic post who has not yet advanced beyond the rank of lecturer (or its equivalent).

We are eager to accept and consider any papers within the *SJCH*'s mandate. In addition to southern African historical conferences, we will also be visiting some of the country's major seminars to learn more about who is working on what topics, and where possible, to solicit articles for the *Journal*. We welcome proposals for special editions (or special sections) in the *Journal*. And we hope that collaboratively, we as an editorial team and you as the historical community may build the *SJCH* as a vibrant forum for engagement around the intellectual, historiographic and teaching possibilities of Southern history.