



## Time to say...

It is often time to say something significant, and when we do, spatial terms come to the fore: 'This is not a borderline case' or 'Welcome to new horizons' or 'Here's where we draw the line'.

'*This is not a borderline case*'. Women in Science Without Borders (WiSWB) is a relatively new initiative conceived to empower women in science, whether young or older, by encouraging research excellence and impact and challenging gender inequality. It is hoped that WiSWB will attract attention and help to address concerns of women already working, or studying, in the basic and applied sciences. In 2018, WiSWB and the University of Johannesburg worked together to host the 2nd International WiSWB indaba (conference) with the support of the South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).

As the SAJS does not publish special issues or conference proceedings, an agreement was reached that would result in the best conference papers, having gone through the normal processes of Associate Editor and double-blind review, being published in this themed issue, which has been sponsored by the DST-NRF Centre of Excellence in Mathematical and Statistical Sciences. Six papers from the WiSWB indaba – three peer-reviewed Research Articles and three Commentaries – comprise this Women in Science themed issue. Four papers reflect very helpfully on the vexatious issue of the persistent under-representation of women in the natural/basic sciences (with the possible exception of the biosciences). But career challenges, double and equally demanding roles, the need to measure under-representation in, for example, mathematics or computational science, all receive considered attention. Placing the issue of gender into a broader context, one of the papers ends with this observation: '...it is recommended that the African Union champions the setting up of a taskforce to coordinate the collection of a detailed research profile of researchers and research outputs. This initiative will assist in meaningful consolidation of R&D data to understand the status quo, and to identify locations for interventions as appropriate, to provide tangible inputs to help make the African Renaissance a reality.'

'*Welcome to new horizons*'. The second part of this Leader also addresses a matter of gender and – just as significantly – a key change in the editorial team. For the first time in its 115 years, the *South African Journal of Science* will have a woman scholar serving as its Editor-in-Chief. It gives me great pleasure to introduce Professor Jane Carruthers, who will start as Editor-in-Chief from April, and to welcome her warmly to her new position and to the Journal.

Jane is an environmental historian and an Emeritus Professor of the University of South Africa, where she pioneered her discipline. Her book *The Kruger National Park: A Social and Political History* has become a standard reference worldwide. Her research areas include environmental justice and the history of national parks, the origins of wildlife management and game ranching, land restitution issues, landscape design and ecology, heritage, cartography, and transnational history. Jane is widely published in books and scholarly journals. Her latest book is *National Park Science: A Century of Research in South Africa*. Jane is a member of many editorial boards and has been awarded a number of prizes. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of South Africa and a Member of the Academy of Science of South Africa, past president of the Southern African Historical Society, and of the International Consortium of Environmental History Organizations. For her work as the initial chair of the Academic Advisory Board of the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, she was named an honorary Carson fellow

in December 2014 and a publication honouring Jane can be found on their site [here](#). The publication is a notable testimony to her scholarship and contributions to environmental history (and other histories) in South Africa, and also a valuable read. Very best wishes for the years ahead, Jane.

'*Here's where we draw the line*'. This is my 38th Leader and the last I shall write. That line drawn, it is interesting to note the focus of my first Leader, written in January 2013, and what might have changed since then.

The Leader was titled 'Education, training and innovation in the National Development Plan – 2030' (NDP) and considered some of the challenges that education and science faced, at that time, in relation to helping achieve the aims of the newly released Plan. At the beginning of 2013, 2030 was about 18 years away; it is now closer to 10 years away. So what has changed over the past 6–7 years?

In 2013, President Zuma was of the view that the NDP would result in, amongst other things, a society in which '... all will have water, electricity, good health, libraries, good schools, roads, good hospitals and clinics, safety and security, recreational facilities, a growing economy and jobs'. The reality is that almost none of these admirable aims has come close to being realised.

In some instances, things have become worse – starting with the sad reality that very few people even talk about the NDP any longer. It is true that more people have access to piped water than previously, but electricity is often not delivered – even to those who are part of the distribution system. Unemployment remains high, and the economy is not growing in pace with the national need.

The essential drivers of the changes envisioned in the NDP – primary, secondary and tertiary education – have not improved. In South African schools, students perform very close to, or at the bottom of, international math, science and language tests. The real Grade-12 pass rate is not the 78.2% announced for 2018 but somewhere between 37.5% and 40% because about half of Grade-1 entrants never reach Grade 12. Worse, perhaps, is the reality that about 3.2 million young people in the 18–24 age cohort are still not in education, employment or training. Valid historical and related reasons can be (and are) cited to explain these conditions, but former President Zuma and those linked to him also have much for which to account.

Reasons for hope remain, though. We still have 10 years in which to move towards the goals of the NDP. Universities are graduating thousands of students each year, most of whom are able to contribute to development. The possibility of honest government is closer to becoming reality than it has been for some time. Now is not the time at which to abandon hope.

There is one further '*line to be drawn*' – that which links together the people who have worked with and supported me for almost 6.5 years: the Executive Officers of ASSAf, Roseanne Diab and Himla Soodyall; the members of the Editorial Advisory Board and its Chair Johann Mouton; Susan Veldsman, Linda Fick, Nadine van der Merwe and Sbonga Dlamini have been constant and selfless colleagues and friends – as have other colleagues in the Scholarly Publishing Unit of ASSAf. The Journal's Associate Editors have been key to maintaining the Journal's scientific integrity – and a pleasure with whom to work. And then, of course, there are the Journal's readers who even read Leaders. No Editor-in-Chief could survive without the consideration of such an interdependent community – of which it has been an honour to be a part.

### HOW TO CITE:

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