



SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

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LETTER FROM THE SASA PRESIDENT TO MEMBERS

8 December 2020

Greetings. It has been a challenging year for all, not least for sociologists whose task it is to make sense of the changing dynamics of society. Many of us had to deal with the compulsion to 'save the academic year' which higher education authorities demanded of university staff and students. Few resisted yet some had the courage to wonder out loud such as Nancy Welch who wrote a short article titled 'A semester to die for'. Nevertheless, I imagine many took heart from Arundhati Roy's optimistic reflection in her article 'The pandemic is a portal' in which she concludes thus:

Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.

The SASA Council has approached its work and the attendant challenges somewhat in that spirit. In this letter I would like to share with you the latest developments and key decisions your association's leadership has made in the year of Covid-19. Your comments and feedback are most welcome. It is your association after all.

SASA CONGRESS 2021

As most of you should know, we could not hold our Annual Congress this year. Our Council continues to lead the association on the basis of the 2019 mandate. This development and its constitutional implications were communicated to members in a letter from the President dated 23 March 2020. We cannot afford not to have a congress in 2021. After consultation with the University of the Free State, the host of the cancelled congress, the Council took a decision to hold a virtual congress in mid-2021 hosted by this university. The biggest consideration informing this decision was our unwillingness to put our members at risk of infection. We also want to avoid another possible cancellation in case of another viral flare up. We hope that this decision will be understood and taken in that spirit. Further details of the Congress will be communicated to all members early in 2021.

SASA Council & Executive, 2019-2020:

Trevor Ngwane (President), Chinwe Obuaku-Igwe (Vice-president), Aisha Lorgat (Secretary), Letitia Smuts (Treasurer), Bianca Tame, Jean-Paul Solomon, Tsholohelo Kgosieng, Tatenda Mukwedeya, Anne Wiltshire, Pedro Mzileni, Tawanda Nyawasha, Percyval Bayane (webmaster)

RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP AND FEES

Our professional association relies on subscriptions to fund its activities. Usually members renew their membership just before the Congress. Without the Congress, we have had to review the situation. The Council has decided that for the years 2020 and 2021 membership fees should be paid only once – your annual subscription will cover two years. We think this is fair in the light of no expenses having been incurred by the association for the 2020 Congress. We also want to encourage our members to pay their subscriptions despite the disruption caused by the pandemic.

KEEPING SASA ALIVE

The Council adopted a programme to ‘keep SASA alive’ in the face of the disruption caused by the pandemic. Some of the initiatives taken are the following:

- The student competition for the best essays happened as usual. The 2020 winner in the PhD category is Mr Martin Bekker of UJ. The winner in the Honours category is Mr Lucky Matenge of Stellenbosch. Congratulations!
- Our journal, the South African Sociological Review, will publish a special issue on Covid-19. The guest editors are Letitia Smuts, Chinwe Obuaku and Tawanda Nyawasha.
- SASA will have a series of webinars to discuss topical issues. We held our first webinar on October 16 and the speakers were Professors Nomalanga Mkhize and Ashwin Desai. The webinar coordinator was Council member Pedro Mzileni.
- Our new website sociology.africa has a page which members can use to publicise their events e.g. seminars, book launches, etc. Please share your activities with us. For further details, please contact Percy Bayane, webmaster, bayanp@unisa.ac.za
- We have a Discussion Forum on our website where members can share their views. We invite members to engage with each other through this platform. You can also use Twitter to keep in touch: [@SASA_Sociology](https://twitter.com/SASA_Sociology)
- Our Vice-President Chinwe Obuaku is leading a process of rejuvenating and keeping our working groups active in between congresses. This will include working groups organising events and funding around their thematic issues.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all our members for being part of our association. I am also grateful to my Executive and the Council members for their dedication and team spirit. SASA is indeed a home for sociologists and for all social scientists.

I wish you all a restful and enjoyable holiday break. Please take care of yourselves and avoid infection as much as possible. Cheers!



Trevor Ngwane – SASA President

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