

You are cordially invited to the  
**2021 Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) Annual Humanities Lecture**  
on

## **Crisis and Catastrophe: The Motor of South African History?**

by

**Assistant Prof Jacob Dlamini, Princeton University, United States of America**

In 1977, R.W. Johnson published *How Long will South Africa Survive?*, a book that sought to examine the resilience of what the author called South Africa's 'White Establishment.' Johnson challenged the tendency among left-wing thinkers and Afrikaner nationalists to see change in South Africa as being driven solely by the internal dynamics of the country's history. As Johnson elaborated in a 2015 sequel to *How Long will South Africa Survive?* the 'iron law' of South African history was that international developments have always been more responsible for change in the country; that crises generated by South Africa's position in the global economy have always been the key driver of political transformation in the country. In my presentation, I wish to build on Johnson's claim that crisis (and catastrophe) is the motor of South African history. I would like to use his claim to position South Africa as a vantage point from which to imagine a national history not burdened by race, and to tell a South African story that is at the same time a global history of the 20th-century. What happens to conventional accounts of South African history (not to mention global history) when we treat the country as the standpoint from which to examine some of the major crises and catastrophes of the 20th century? That is the question at the centre of my presentation.

**Date:** 5 October 2021  
**Time:** 16:00 – 17:00  
**Platform:** Zoom  
**RSVP:** [Click here](#) to register

(After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.)

### About A/Prof Jacob Dlamini



Jacob Dlamini is a historian of Africa, with an interest in precolonial, colonial and postcolonial African History. He is the author of *The Terrorist Album: Apartheid's Insurgents, Collaborators, and the Security Police* (Harvard University Press, 2020); *Safari Nation: A Social History of the Kruger National Park* (Ohio University Press, 2020); *Askari: A Story of Collaboration and Betrayal in the Anti-Apartheid Struggle* (Oxford University Press, 2015; Jacana, 2014), and the memoir *Native Nostalgia* (Jacana, 2009). Jacob obtained a PhD from Yale University in 2012 and is also a graduate of Wits University in South Africa and Sussex University in England. Jacob held a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Barcelona, Spain, from November 2011 to April 2015, and was a Visiting Scholar at Harvard University from August 2014 to May 2015. He has also held fellowships at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, and at the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study in South Africa. A qualified field guide, Jacob is also interested in comparative and global histories of conservation and national parks.

### Programme

16:00 – 16:05	<b>Opening and Welcome</b> Prof Himla Soodyall, Executive Officer, ASSAf
16:05 – 16:10	<b>Introduction to the Lecture</b> Prof Jonathan Jansen, President, ASSAf
16:10 – 16:45	<b>Crisis and Catastrophe: The Motor of South African History?</b> A/Prof Jacob Dlamini, Assistant Professor of History
16:45 – 16:55	<b>Discussions</b>
16:55 – 17:00	<b>Closure</b> Prof Jonathan Jansen