

CALL FOR PAPERS

12th Mpumalanga Oral History Conference 2026
Mpumalanga Province: Thaba-Chweu Local Municipality
(TBC)
9th – 11th September 2026

THEME: "NARRATIVES OF JUSTICE: ORAL HISTORIES OF HUMANITY, THE RULE OF LAW AND VOICES OF DEMOCRACY"

The Theme foregrounds the powerful role of oral history as a tool for preserving lived experiences, advancing social justice, and deepening democratic engagement. In societies shaped by complex histories of struggle, inequality, and transformation—such as South Africa—oral narratives serve as vital repositories of memory, capturing voices that have historically been marginalised, silenced, or excluded from formal archives. Oral history provides a human-centred lens through which the principles of justice and the rule of law can be examined and understood. It brings to life the lived realities behind constitutional ideals, particularly those enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, by documenting how individuals and communities experience rights, freedoms, and accountability in practice. These narratives offer critical insights into how legal frameworks intersect with everyday life, revealing both progress and persistent challenges in achieving equitable justice.

Central to this theme is the recognition of ubuntu, a foundational value that informs both justice and democracy. Oral histories embody this principle by emphasising interconnectedness, dignity, and collective memory. They allow communities to articulate their own histories in their own voices, fostering inclusivity and participatory knowledge production. In doing so, oral history becomes not only a method of documentation but also an act of empowerment and restorative justice.

The theme also highlights the role of oral history in strengthening democratic processes.

This conference theme, therefore, invites scholars, practitioners, and communities to explore how oral histories can illuminate the intersections of justice, humanity, and democracy. It encourages critical reflection on whose voices are heard, whose stories are preserved, and how these narratives can shape more equitable futures. Ultimately, it positions oral history as a dynamic and essential practice in the ongoing pursuit of justice and democratic renewal.

Presenters from various disciplines are welcome to probe into this epoch of memory and critically reflect on one of the cross-cutting sub-themes below.

SUB-THEMES

- 1. Voices of change: Oral Histories of students' contribution towards democracy.**
- 2. Repatriation and Reburial of Human Remains: The Ethical and Interpretive Challenges of Balancing Empathy and Celebration.**
- 3. Recovering silenced narratives: Stories of ordinary communities.**
- 4. 30 years of the South African Democratic Constitution: Realities and Myths.**
- 5. Reflections on democracy, memory, and people's lived experiences.**
- 6. Building a More Just Society: Equality and Human Dignity.**
- 7. Using Oral histories to strengthen democratic values.**
- 8. Pitfalls of a post-democratic language policy.**
- 9. Indigenous Knowledge, Culture and Constitutional Rights.**
- 10. The role of Culture and Sports as forms of resistance.**
- 11. Oral History in the Classroom.**

Proposals are invited for contributions to the 12th Annual Oral History Conference. Although the conference is primarily academic, case study reports and other contributions are welcome. The contributions must be based on original work and have a clear focus on oral history.

The envisaged end-product of the conference will be a publication of the proceedings through OHASA. Interested contributors are encouraged to bring along photo-ready conference papers for publication.

NB: THIS IS AN ORAL HISTORY CONFERENCE: PAPERS DELIVERED MUST BE BASED ON ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH AND NOT ONLY ON PUBLISHED SOURCES

If you are interested, please send us a short proposal including:

- 1. An abstract of your paper or case study report (100-300 words)**
- 2. The relevant conference sub-theme.**
- 3. A short biography of yourself (50-100 words).**
- 4. Your contact information (name and surname, affiliation, postal address, e-mail address, and phone numbers)**

The presentation will not exceed twenty (20) minutes, followed by a group discussion.

We intend to publish refereed conference proceedings. The papers shall not be longer than 5000 words. It is a requirement that finished papers be submitted by 15 August 2026.

NB: The deadline for proposals/abstracts is on or before 30 May 2026, and the conference organising committee will confirm acceptance or rejection of your abstract by 30th June 2026

Send proposal to: Ms K Sifunda on mashigok@mpg.gov.za

Mpumalanga Archives and Records Management Services

Tel: 0137667753 /0646195009

NB: Submissions should follow the format below:

NAME AND SURNAME:

AFFILIATION:

CONTACT DETAILS:

E-MAIL:

TELEPHONE NUMBER:

CELLPHONE NUMBER:

RELEVANT CONFERENCE SUB THEME:

TITLE OF YOUR PAPER:

ABSTRACT

SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF YOURSELF