

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BOOK AWARD

Mr Chancellor, I have the honour of presenting to you
Gary Fred Baines,
Professor and Head
of the History Department,

for the **Vice-Chancellor's Book Award.**

One of the core purposes of a University is to produce new knowledge that enhances humanity's understanding of the natural and social worlds.

The Vice-Chancellor's Book Award seeks to recognize a recent book published by a current staff member, that advances knowledge and understanding, and brings undoubted credit to the University by virtue of the contribution it makes to scholarly literature, or the discipline within which it is authored.

Professor Baines's research spans the areas of urban history, South African culture, public history, and memory and war studies. He has spent the last decade writing about how South Africa's Border War is represented and remembered, authoring a range of journal articles on the subject, and co-editing (with Peter Vale) the volume *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late Cold War Conflicts* (Unisa Press, 2008).

In 2014 Professor Baines published the book that we celebrate today, *South Africa's Border War: Contested Narratives and Conflicting Memories*, a 274 page monograph of original research, published by Bloomsbury.

In this book, the author analyses ideological differences in the way that the Border War is remembered, and the struggles that continue to be waged over the meanings that can be taken from it. It does not seek to present new findings about the war itself, but examines the way in which conflicting interpretations continue to inform debates about the war. Baines uses a comparative approach to analyse border war memories against the legacy of other colonial type wars, such as those in Vietnam, Algeria, and Israel, and conflictual dialogue to juxtapose competing memories through the book. His argument positions wars as having a legacy or afterlife because of the persistence of their effect on veterans and society long after the fighting has ended.

One reviewer writes that the book "bears all the hallmarks of superior scholarship: profound thought and careful consideration, engagement with a wide-ranging historiography on memory and cultural studies, as well as firm intellectual engagement."

Another states that "Many, many books on the war have been written, but few are as thought-provoking as Gary Baines's excellent book, *South Africa's "Border War": Contested Narratives and Conflicting Memories*. In this superb, scholarly work he indicates eloquently just how contested South Africa's past ... is"

The words of other reviewers read like this:

“Baines provides a fresh perspective on the aforementioned conflicts ...”

“In post-apartheid South Africa, this book is unique.”

“Baines’ book is a timely reminder of the deep divisions that still exist in South Africa.”

“He does not shy away from making moral judgments, but is careful to avoid elevating a particular interpretation of the past as definitive.”

“... this is an important, intelligent and necessary book on South Africa’s recent complex and contested past”.

A “thought-provoking analysis of individual and group construction and preservation”.

“The book is very well researched and underpinned by a myriad of archival sources.” It is one of the book’s widely acknowledged strengths that it draws from a large range of sources, spanning the disciplines of history, memory, literature, popular culture, politics and international relations.

For his outstanding writing and intellectual contribution, Professor Baines is a worthy recipient of this award.

So, Mr Chancellor, I request you to award the **2017 Vice-Chancellor’s Book Award to Professor Gary Baines.**