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## Matters of age: An introduction to ageing, intergenerationality and gender in Africa

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“Old age is not pleasant; it buggers up your life” (Khushwant Singh, *The freethinker’s prayer* book, 2012: vii)

“to jump from the ageing body to Death/has suddenly become a cop-out act” (Antjie Krog, *Body Bereft*, 2006: 20)

### Abstract

This introductory essay to this special issue of *Agenda* draws together a wide-ranging, cross-disciplinary literature on ageing, intergenerationality and gender, and locates the significance of writing from Africa within this context. The first half of the essay provides a critical and comprehensive review of available literature in the field, highlighting the significance of research and writing on the ways in which gender mediates ageing and intergenerationality as both process and emotional space. The latter half of the essay engages the significance of the depth of contributions in this issue as critical in the conversation around ageing, gender, and intergenerationality in the context of Africa and the South, and the need for perspectives from multiple disciplines to continue engaging the field through both scholarship and advocacy.

### Introduction

There is something deeply autobiographical to this issue. Crisscrossing a number of intersecting pathways, we believe this edition is reflective of personal histories, social responses to life course matters, and institutional changes in the social life cycle. But at its core this issue is a feminist and gendered view of the subject of ageing and intergenerationality. If we extend the metaphor, *Agenda* itself is an institution that is ageing. Having celebrated a quarter of a century this year, and growing from humble beginnings with the dedication of a small group of feminists in Durban, the journal now has continental coverage and is slowly and steadfastly approaching adulthood even though we are still in a youthful phase. At another level, the theme had a long gestation period since when it was first mooted. This edition grew out of a discussion among Editorial Advisory Board members several years ago about the need to interrogate, more closely, the prospect of ageing (and intergenerationality, precisely because of the temporal linkage to matters of biology































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