

Sunday Times journalist Thomas Kwenaité and African Eye News Service editor Justin Arenstein are the joint winners of the 1997 South African Award for Courageous Journalism, sponsored by the Ruth First Memorial Trust.

The 1997 award coincides with the 15th anniversary of Ruth First's assassination in Maputo, and is administered by the Rhodes University department of Journalism and Media Studies. It acknowledges journalism that is: bold, independent, investigative, politically courageous, and personally engaged; characterised as much by the social questions it raises as well as the answers it gives.

Sunday Independent correspondent Blackman Ngoro is runner-up in the contest, and seven journalists were singled out for special mention.

Those receiving commendations are: Benny Gool and Roger Friedman, Cape Times, for brave coverage of the conflict between Pagad and gangs in Cape Town.

Sam Sole, Sunday Tribune, for reports on the military's chemical weapon programme.

Adri Kotzé and Peet Bothma, Beeld, for reports on Wouter Basson, head of the chemical weapons programme, alleged spies in the ANC, and the Smit "RAUTEM" murders.

Stephen Laufer, Business Day, for coverage of the KWV "false champagne" fraud.

Craig Urquhart, for strong coverage of street crime in Johannesburg.

Kwenaité excelled as a journalist by pursuing a major investigation into corruption in football, which led to a government

commission of enquiry into the sport and the resignation of SAFA head Solomon Morewa. Kwenaité continued despite a R45-million lawsuit being brought against him by Awesome Sport International, which his coverage revealed to be absorbing an enormous share of sponsorship monies going to football. For the importance of the story, and the sustained investigation in the face of personal risk, Kwenaité was declared co-winner of the 1997 Courageous Journalism Award.

The award is shared with Justin Arenstein who, despite persistent pressure and being severely maligned professionally and personally, went the extra mile to continue a fine record of coverage by the African Eye News Service, based in Mpumalanga.

Born in 1970, Arenstein has operated with little backing in terms of legal resources over the past three years to dig up stories of major national importance. These include the exposé of Senator Patrick Mogale's involvement with an under-age girl and failure to pay maintenance for the child she bore, and the story of high-flier Eugene Nyati who operated a gravy train consultancy and whose identity and credentials turned out to be faked.

Although threatened with being sued for R8-million, Arenstein has now seen the Heath Special Investigative Unit start to investigate the case of state farms being allocated to National Parks Board chairman Enos Mabuza and the Ambassador to Mozambique Mangisi Zitha.

Blackman Ngoro, a Zimbabwean and a regular freelance contributor to the Sunday Independent, went into the conservative areas of Wakkerstroom and Piet Retief to investigate the treatment of farm workers.

In the course of this, he confronted the alleged ring-leaders, and his subsequent stories exposed part-time members of the SANDF involved in assault and intim-

idation. This resulted in a military board of enquiry being constituted and criminal charges being laid against individual members of the Wakkerstroom commando. The plight of farm workers led Ngoro to the issue of illegal immigrants. Farmers would have these people deported just before pay day in order not to remunerate them.

Following another story lead coming out of this, Ngoro posed as an illegal immigrant and entered South Africa with a group of Mozambicans in a "pipeline" run by former Renamo soldiers. In one of his gripping articles, Ngoro wrote: "It's frightening in the darkness. If they think I'm a police spy, I won't last long. And I won't last much longer if they discover I'm a reporter infiltrating their human smuggling operation ..."

This reporter showed courage and determination by going into the rural areas of South Africa where most people live, but where the least journalism takes place. His assignments were lonely and dangerous, but raised important social questions for city-bound readers of his newspaper.

The quality of entries was extremely high this year, and decision-making extremely difficult. Judging took place by detailed consideration of the criteria for the award: that the journalism should be bold, independent, investigative, politically courageous, and personally engaged.

In addition, it should be characterised as much by the social questions it raises as well as the answers it gives.

The judges expressed pleasure that, as evidenced by the entries, bold and investigative journalism is alive and well in South Africa.

The judges were Professor Guy Berger, head of Journalism and Media Studies, Rhodes University; Juby Mayet, retired journalist (Drum, Voice) and Judy Sandison, Regional Editor, SABC radio news, KwaZulu-Natal.

Courage at work

'As evidenced by the entries, bold and investigative journalism is alive and well in South Africa.'

Courageous Journalism Awards



Winner's speech

Justin Arenstein, editor of African Eye News Service based in Nelspruit.

Ruth First's most important motivations seem to have been to give a voice to the voiceless and to ensure that those with power, whether they sat in Pretoria or in Moscow, didn't abuse it.

These are still the same principles underlying current investigative work. But the greatest threats to investigative journalism today, unlike Ruth First's time, are not from the state or judiciary. Instead, they come from gangsters and businessmen who have the funds to subvert justice, to tie reporters up in court for months or intimidate publications with multi-million rand defamation suits.

Also, in direct contrast to Ruth First, I believe that it is our duty to distance ourselves from all forms of ideology, be they political, social or economic. This includes the growing clamour from within the African renaissance camp for journalists to adopt an "objectively patriotic" stance.

The phrase is clearly contradictory, but more serious is the widely-held belief that objectivity can be used as a standard or attainable goal post. Objectivity implies neutrality or centre ground – both of which are value judgements that are in themselves subjective.

Another of the supposed cornerstones of investigative reporting, the quest for truth, is also subjective. What is true to a Christian or a specific political party member is often not true for anyone else.

A more honest set of guiding principles could perhaps be a commitment to balance and context and an undertaking to use only demonstrable fact as the basis for reportage.

Death threats are routine in our business, but are, in my experience, the weakest and most unsophisticated weapons used against probing reporters.

More serious methods include prolonged social ostracism, professional isolation, the persecution of potential sources, petty legal harassment and the attempt to wear both reporters and publications down through repeated, expensive

defamation suits.

The best way to combat this and other inhibiting factors is through increased media diversity. There are still massive geographic holes in South Africa's media coverage. While these gaps have created slanted coverage of the concerns and interests of South Africa's residents, they have also created opportunities for independently-minded reporters and other media entrepreneurs.

A more subtle threat facing balanced independent reporting today is the alarming development of circles of patronage by senior politicians among young journalists. Once given access to senior politicians or leaders – and after being drawn into their social circles – these young reporters are loath to write anything too contentious for fear of being denied access to the power sources on which they've built their careers.

At the opposite end of our younger news rooms, we're finding reporters becoming more and more office bound and therefore falling victim to press release journalism. This is especially true of reporters who write about complex political or economic issues in rural provinces outside their areas of experience. "Research" for their stories often means nothing more than a couple of telephone calls or a quick visit to the area in question.

It is my belief that the development of independent and locally-based niche media organisations provides the best opportunity yet for real black media empowerment. Although black economic interests have bought out large chunks of existing media monopolies and control the boards of publications, such as the country's two biggest papers, Sunday Times and Sowetan, middle management and editorial leadership remain white.

Even where there is a genuine desire for change in these monoliths, reformers and new black staff are constantly fighting 40 years of corporate habit.

The creation of new regionally-based independent media outfits provide young unaffiliated media entrepreneurs with unmatched opportunities to re-invent or re-interpret the media to serve their communities and local economies.

In conclusion, I'd like to thank all those mainstream editors who rejected my initial job applications. Without their rejections, African Eye News Service would never have been born.

Winner's speech

Thomas Kwenait, sports writer for the Sunday Times.

Ruth First struck fear in the hearts of a government reputed to have the most powerful arsenal in Africa. They killed her. Even then, they feared her so much, they could not face her, but sent her a letter bomb.

I feel humbled to receive an award in honour of a courageous woman like Ruth First, because I have never considered myself a brave person.

When I first started in journalism, I wrote a story in which a group of 16-year-old boys were playing marbles in Atteridgeville, my hometown. A police vehicle appeared and they scattered in all directions.

One of the boys tried to scale a fence and was a little late. He was shot in the back by a policeman. I knew the policeman very well. He was a famous professional boxer by the name of Kallie Knoetze. I wrote the story and filed it to the then *Rand Daily Mail*.

But the police denied the incident and instead claimed that the boys threw stones and petrol bombs at them. Two days later, I was visited at home in the wee hours of the morning and picked up.

I need not tell you the beating they gave me for spreading lies about the police. If you take a closer look at me, you realise how skinny I am. Now imagine getting beaten by a fellow called Bok de Beer, whose muscles could make Arnold Schwarzenegger green with envy. I considered quitting, because, as I said, I am not a brave person.

I stuck with it, remembering the works of a famous writer who said: "We as journalists must entertain, educate and inform, without indoctrinating. We must never pander to the whims of politicians, but always strive for the truth, with the knowledge that the public has a right to know."

Aggrey Klaaste's encouraging words inspired me. And when soccer became an empire run by a cartel, I found myself right in the middle, kicking so much dust that it began to cloud the soccer administrators who were initially considered untouchable. I'm talking about the likes of Cyril Kobus and Abdul Bhamjee, who were arrested for fraud and maladministration during 1992.

But it was when I followed that investigation three years later, that I uncovered what fraud was all about. I was labelled a nut, and my colleagues kept silent in the face of my harassment by the soccer establishment.

None of them tried to find out what was going on. Sometimes as journalists, we fall into the dangerous trap of trying to be seen as hip, or cool, or being with the times and rubbing shoulders with the who's who in soccer. We unwittingly get too close and too friendly to administrators. It compromises us as journalists.

My friends advised me to stop my nonsense, asking me if I really wanted to destroy football. I was incredulous. I love sport passionately. How could rooting out the rotten elements within the establishment result in the destruction of the game?

Then I discovered that some of my peers had actually been roped in by soccer administrators to dig out anything they could find about me, then trash me publicly in rival papers.

I received death threats. People expressed a deep desire to meet me alone in a darkened corner so they could work me over with a baseball bat.

I said it before, I'm a coward. That is why I skipped home and slept elsewhere. When a car backfired, I jumped with fright. But what hurt me the most, was when my company told me that I was on my own and that they would not support me in case of litigation.

I gave them 24 hours notice and quit. That was when I joined the *Sunday Times*.

I hate to gloat, so when Judge Pickard's commission of enquiry vindicated me, I did not ask: What do you have to say now? I simply felt that as a public servant, I did my duties as required of me.

You may ask me why we put our lives at stake. We journalists are in a way teachers as well. The only difference is that a school teacher has a number of students and we have a larger audience for students.

Maybe that is what drives us to go that extra mile, and expose ourselves to dangers, for that single story.

There comes a time when everything else does not matter and we have to answer the call of duty. Like Ruth First.

Killing her body did not kill her spirit.

Blackman Ngoro, Sunday Independent: while investigating the treatment of farm workers in Mpumalanga he stumbled across the pipeline bringing illegal immigrants into South Africa from Mozambique.

"The only visa we needed, we were told, was a forked stick to hold up the razor wire . . . I had earlier seen hundreds of Mozambicans deported at Komatipoort border post in Mpumalanga, heading for the frontier town of Ressano Garcia, where mafia-like gangs run daily trips across the border. Most of the deportees see deportation as a temporary irritation.

"Twenty-seven people took part in our crossing. But Maria Fernandes (not her real name) said she had crossed the border undetected with up to 300 people before. . . ." *How I joined the alien flood into SA, Sunday Independent, 8 June, 1997.*

"It's frightening in the darkness. If they think I'm a police spy, I won't last long. And I won't last long if they discover I'm a reporter infiltrating their human smuggling operation with the help of my Mozambican contacts. So far they believe I'm a well-off *chefe* (chief, important man) who lives illegally in South Africa and has a Mozambican girlfriend...

"The taking of fingerprints seemed a bureaucratic farting against thunder by the Mozambican authorities who have little or no control on the movement of their population. Most of the deportees left the train as soon as it arrived at the dusty frontier town of Ressano Garcia. Most would be back inside South Africa within 24 hours, spirited through the covert pipelines . . .

"We sit motionless in the cold drizzle. A man starts to cough. He gets a quick, and thorough, beating from the ninjas. The soldiers must not hear us . . .

"I have a small plastic card stuck in my sock, just in case. It identifies me and confirms I have been given permission in terms of section 5(3) and 35(1)(c) of the Aliens Control Act, 1991, to cross into South Africa from Mozambique "at a place other than a port of entry"...

"We are lined up by the ninjas. Single women in front together with single men. Those who are married are paired up. They must move together and take responsibility for each other's safety. We get down on our stomachs and crawl towards what we hope is a brighter future..." *How I sneaked into SA – a night in the life of an illegal immigrant, Sunday Dispatches, 8 June 1997.*



Beeld reporters **Adri Kotzé** and **Peet Bothma**: their investigations covered the Wouter Basson chemical warfare affair, the issue of informers among high-ranking ANC members and the still unsolved murder of Dr Robert Smit and his wife Jean-Cora in 1977.

Tim du Plessis, deputy editor of Beeld, said: "Not only did they have to convince wary and often highly fearful sources to trust them, they also had to deal with sceptical senior editors who had limited experience of investigative journalism."

"Apart from long hours and hard work, both of them suffered at a personal level. Kotzé received threatening phone calls. She was on occasion followed by suspicious individuals and the tyres of her car were slashed twice.

"Her personal security situation became such a concern that the company's security division was consulted. Kotzé believes

that she is still being investigated with the aim of identifying her sources. Bothma also received threatening phone calls, especially after his revelations on the Robert Smit murders. The NIA tried to influence him to be more positive in his reporting. He also had to endure the wrath of the Minister of Safety and Security at a press conference after a report on the death of Commander Leonard Radu.

Apart from superb reporting, these two journalists have shown commendable courage in journalism, especially in the context of their working environment, being that of an Afrikaans newspaper.

"They were not afraid to write critically about the previous regime and have shown the same courage regarding the present one."

[illegible]

Photographer **Benny Gool** and reporter **Roger Friedman**, Cape Times: Pagad and gangsterism on the Cape Flats.

"Staggie . . . took about 25 minutes to die. Handgun after handgun was emptied in his direction from across the street as members of the crowd bayed for his blood. He appeared to be wearing a bullet-proof vest." *Cape Times*, 5 August 1996.

"At least 10 people were shot, among them a reporter and photographer from Die Burger . . . Pagad issued a warning to the media to stop projecting the organisation – on pain of death – as vigilantes, extremists, or fundamentalists." *Cape Times*, 7 August 1996.

"As the coffin arrived at the Gatesville Mosque, photographers were warned at gunpoint not to photograph the mourners . . . photographers were warned they would be killed if they did not heed the warning . . . the funeral was interrupted several times as mourners got itchy about the cameras in their midst, although a masked Pagad guard being shown the virtues of the latest telephone lens by one press photographer helped alleviate the tension." *At the funeral of Pagad member Faizel Ryklief, Cape Times, 9 August 1996.*

"At the end of the day the people will judge your reports. If you are going to report lies, then you become part of the criminals and we will target you as well." *Masked sheikh speaking to the media at a Pagad rally, Cape Times, 12 August 1996.*

Saturday Star

South Africa's biggest-selling Saturday newspaper

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In October last year, photographer TJ Lemon and I spent two weeks in a warehouse above the corner of Bree and Sauer streets – one of Johannesburg's busiest intersections – an attempt to expose "smash and grab" attacks on motorists. The series of articles on the crime problem and allegations of police collusion with criminals provided one of the most serious indictments of Gauteng's police in years. Police Commissioner George Fivaz and Gauteng Safety and Security MEC Jessie Duarte promised the problem would be sorted out immediately. Six months later, Lemon and I returned to the same area to discover that criminals still had a free reign at the notorious intersection. After running a second series of articles, there was a marked increase in police personnel operating in the area, and the problem has finally been contained.

"After being mugged and nearly stabbed



partment of health-related AIDS awareness work, *Sarrafian 2*, is to reveal serious irregular expenditure.

Very close to the investigation of the irregularities in the not only included authorized expenditure of the European Union but pointed to other serious irregularities" noted for comment, said he was unable to the forensic report, experts will be consulted a week or two.

Smith is still on the go to report in Parliament before I can con-

By CRAIG UROUHART

Thousands of motorists blame the problem that is the intersection of River and Shaw streets every day as police fail to stop even the most obvious and predictable of crimes.

For many commuters, the intersection is one of few possible routes out of town - and it remains a preferred exit out of the city for many motorists.

For motorists, it is a terrifying drive through bricks, knives, shattered windows and firearms as thieves use violence and cunning to throw them up in traffic.

This week hundreds of rubber-beds and attempted robberies unfolded before the *Saturday Star* team as motorists waited helplessly for their "victims" to be hit by the unpredictable crime, terror, looting by gang members.

Police dither as motorists become sitting ducks in Jo'burg's Ambush Alley

Daylight Robbery

Police only
block away
but gangs
unafraid

Late yesterday afternoon, after receiving news of the *Saturday Star* report on crime at the Beer/Sauer street intersection, a large contingent of unaffiliated petitioners

About 20 uniformed and heavily armed policemen positioned themselves on the street corner, searching pedestrians at random. Police did body searches and checked through bags and purses.

The brief show of force by the police did not deter the gangs operating in the area. They continued to cruise through the stationary rush-hour traffic a block away on the corner of Leppa and Sumner.

Police yesterday issued a warning to motorists to keep their doors locked and windows closed when driving and to keep items of value locked in the boot.

Pedestrians were also advised to remove jewellery and other items of value when walking in the city centre.



LOSE ENCOUNTERS **OF** **JANE** **NAUTAL**, **KIM** Two muggers smash a car window and attempt to snatch a cell phone. The thief gets the phone back and the accomplice realizes, too late, depending to freedom the driver with a weapon.

Stand and deliver



Branchy
ruler, in
Africa's
city center
where crime
and
violence is
rife, in
CHANG
LIM HAAET
discovers
after
stealing
some loot
on the




Allyson, who's pregnant, first pulled her at an outdoor festival in August. "I was just looking for something to do," she says. "I was bored."



SKETCH AND GRAB: Brown, while in security and waiting for the police to arrive, took the window-opener

The seat on the right (shown in this picture) is, according to the engineer's test, Lundqvist's own.



near the Small Street Mall in Johannesburg, I returned to the area the following day to find out whether muggings were a common occurrence. TJ Lemon waited for three days at a vantage point above the mall, while I recorded the anger and frustration of shop keepers, restaurant owners as well as the recent victims of the mugging incidents.

"Within 48 hours of the article being published, I was invited by President Nelson Mandela to accompany him on a visit to the area. Mandela pledged that he would personally ensure that the problem was resolved immediately."

"Right from the start our informants warned that Basson and his cohorts were very dangerous. Information could not be exchanged over the phone and meetings with contacts were arranged on a fairly clandestine basis.

"What also emerged was that we would receive no assistance from the authorities. Right in the beginning Jean Le May and I went to see Ronnie Kasrils with our initial information about Basson. We were firmly rebuffed.

"It also soon became clear that our exposures would be damaging to the present Surgeon General and to the SANDF chief and that the ANC government appeared to have a degree of vested interest in not rocking the boat. Of course it later emerged that – astoundingly – Basson had been re-employed by the military.

"Basson's arrest has provided rich veins of investigation, although the veil of legal confidentiality has been thrown over much of the evidence. The threat of a cover-up, and the need to continue probing, remains."



"Too many good South African journalists today earn their living writing for foreign media or outside the profession, in public relations, advertising, and other non-journalistic fields.

"For young colleagues, this means working largely without the benefit of contact with, or mentoring by, journalists with 15 to 20 years of experience. For the country, it all too often means journalism at the lowest common denominator – subjective, sensationalist and lacking depth, perspective, or analysis. Even those newspapers best described as holding Ruth First's investigative tradition aloft all too often overstep the mark in their constant hunt for yet another scoop, yet another exposé.

"As Water and Foreign Affairs Minister Kader Asmal wrote, we live with the dichotomy of a serious country and a largely trivial media.

"I found myself wondering how Ruth would have approached these challenges to journalism's central task of telling the

truth and explaining the realities behind it in this era of transformation.

"She would, I believe, be placing greater emphasis on the need for thorough analysis, for journalism which goes beyond the catchy headline or the drive-by polemic in search of the increasingly complex truths which make up South Africa's post-1994 reality.

"Given my belief that it is possible to put this approach into practice in the mainstream media, it means engaging in an ongoing dialogue with editors . . . it means fighting for space and for the time to research and write properly. It means getting off one's bum and out of the office to see politics and society in action . . . it means getting the facts and figures right . . . it means breaking the big story despite threats of legal action. It means too, writing comment which provokes reflections by the powerful on their actions."

