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# Review





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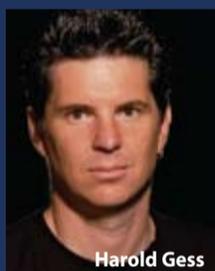
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# THE PAY-THE-PRICE EDITION

It was tempting to theme this *Review* the "Despair Edition". As we were sourcing contributions Zimbabwe was between the rock of unreleased election results and the hard place of re-voting; we were reeling from sights in South Africa that brought back dreadful late-80s-under-the-states-of-emergency déjà vu; the top management at the SABC was either suspended or reinstated or suspended again (and sometimes simultaneously); and (as Robert Brand points out on page 31), suddenly the price/cost of media freedom (here in SA, across the Limpopo in Zimbabwe and further afield) was being tallied and we were being presented with the bill.

It was all a bit unnerving.

But then we started to read the contributions rolling in. As usual, media workers, researchers, photographers, illustrators, cartoonists and theorists – thinkers all – have done that job they do so well when given the opportunity: put these issues on the table, subjected them to some hard questioning and come up with some very insightful writing which, we hope, will shift your thinking.

On Zimbabwe we have Elinor Sisulu asking us to consider the rhetoric of "anti-imperialism" which effectively shuts up and shuts out any dissent (see the Guest Editorial and her piece in the Zimbabwe section in which we also have Vincent Kahiya and Tom Rhodes dissecting the media situation there). On xenophobia we have a host of voices (Ian Glenn, Adrian Hadland) asking just where the roots of the violence lie and why South Africa doesn't "belong to all who live in it" (Chris Kabwato and Sim Kyazze), as well as an account of a very interesting documentary/web project about migrants (Terry Kurgan). And because public broadcasting matters so much to beginner democracies we look again at the SABC with some insights about what can be reconfigured (see Guy Berger's article).

But we also put into the package a whole lot of inspiration: books you really should read (yes the oldest form of mass media still matters! see the piece by Alexandra Dodd), ideas about community media that are really thrilling and useful (with Asta Rau and Peter du Toit reporting on their discussions and research), new insights and suggestions about reporting Aids (Segun Ige, Marion Stevens).



We bring you two photospreads from people seeing the world around them with different eyes (turn to page 12 for a batch of new photographers and page 42 for Jenny Gordon and Marijke du Toit's Durban South Basin project).

We delve into digital and asked those experimenting on the pixelated edge to fill us in on Web 2.0 (Jarred Cinman), mobile technologies, newsroom convergence and how all this affects those of us in Africa. We focus on peace journalism again and the intractable issue of reporting conflict AND making a difference (Allan Thompson, Fackson Banda and Karen Williams). We touch on trauma and how to deal with it (Pieter van Zyl).

And finally we bring you an edited essay by Breyten Breytenbach who doesn't stop believing that Africa belongs to all who live in it, that we have the right to have a say in this continent's future and that imagination is a very powerful tool to use to achieve a future that looks quite different to this present.

So having done the editing and fixing the fine print, I'm tempted to dub this the "Pay-the-Price Edition" – the world we want is worth fighting for and so are the media we need to achieve that goal.

Anthea Garman, Editor.

# EMBRACING DIGITAL ON THE COVER OF THIS REVIEW: FRANCOIS SMIT

Francois Smit is an artist, designer and illustrator. Many readers will recognise his distinctive illustrations from the *Sunday Independent* which has carried his work since its launch in 1995. Each week, Smit illustrates the lead feature story, producing the work in two to five hours. He has produced more than 550 works for the paper.

Critic Mary Corrigan says Smit has a "talent for capturing the essence of a story and building it into a fascinating and absorbing product".

Vivian van der Merwe, a former teacher, mentor and the curator of Smit's 2006 exhibition, says the artist is widely respected for his "formidable imagination, skill and artistic rigour, and especially for his idiosyncratic pathos".

Van der Merwe says: "It is not often that we see imagery that engages complex media issues and yet is able to stand alone as compellingly good art."

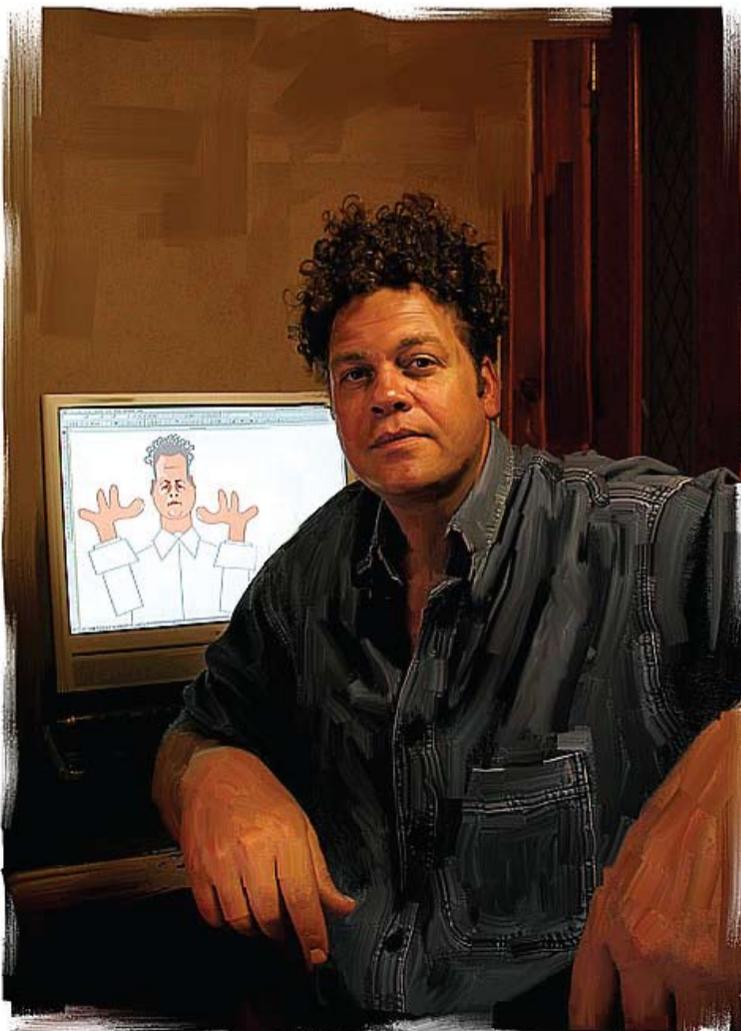
Smit's tools are Photoshop, Freehand, Illustrator, Painter, Bryce, Maya, Poser and Stratavision, which he combines with hand-drawn images, digital photography, scans and three-dimensional modelling.

"Whereas most digital artists seem to be at pains to recreate reality as a way of assessing a digital medium's capabilities, Smit seems to revel in the infinite possibilities that digital technology offers, often pushing the boundaries of the software, allowing him to distort reality in order to bring the spirit of a story to the surface," Corrigan wrote.

Smit studied fine art at the Port Elizabeth Technikon in the late 80s. In 1992, he took up a position as a graphic journalist and illustrator for the *Sunday Star*, working for the *Star* until 1996.

Smit is now the director of Quba Design & Motion, a company specialising in design, illustration and video production. Smit has won several SPA Pica Awards, including best overall magazine design for CMYK/Enjin magazine, as well as several Mondi awards for magazine and newspaper illustration.

He worked with photographer David Goldblatt on the design of his book, *Particulars*, which won first prize at the photographic festival in Arles, France in 2005.



# CONTENTS

## 05 • Guest Editorial by Elinor Sisulu: Breaking the ideological stranglehold

## 06 • The latest books

- The off-beat eye of the interviewer: Tim Cohen interviews Fred de Vries
- A complex, brilliant woman: Larissa Klazinga reviews Don Pinnock's *Ruth First*
- Forerunner to the resistance press: Robert Brand looks at James Zug's *The Guardian*
- The very thorough lens: Harold Gess reviews Kenneth Kobre's photojournalism textbook
- Media leadership: Asta Rau talks about a collection of African newsroom wisdom
- The vanishing book review – an essay by Alexandra Dodd
- A different point of view: New stories, new viewpoints from World Press Photos

## 14 • Review asks: "Is this simply xenophobia?"

- The burning man story by Ray Hartley
- Searching for the roots of the violent 'othering' by Adrian Hadland
- The watchdog that never barked by Ian Glenn
- Does the pandering perpetuate the xenophobia by William Bird
- The disconnect between ubuntu and reality by Chris Kabwato
- A symptom that defies simple analysis by Sim Kyazze
- Testing the rhetoric by Terry Kurgan

## 24 • Focus on Zimbabwean media

- Operation submission: moulding the media to parrot Mugabe mantras by Vincent Kahiya
- From bad to worse for Zimbabwean journalists by Tom Rhodes
- Distrust and speculation by Sandra Roberts
- In the grip of silence by Elinor Sisulu
- Staying in touch by Arther Chatora

## 31 • South Africa: taking stock

- The price of freedom: South African media in 2008 by Robert Brand
- Sing a swansong for the SABC as we know it by Guy Berger
- SABC: the funding conundrum by Reg Rumney
- The nudge of 'nation-building' by Steven Lang
- The anomaly of SAfm by Steven Lang
- When commercial can also be community by Peter du Toit and Asta Rau
- New world, new models, new responsibilities by John Battersby
- Desperately desiring attitude change: the news media and the country's image abroad by Wadim Schreiner



# CONTENTS



**42** • **Photography and oral history project: people living in Durban's noxious south basin by Jenny Gordon and Marijke du Toit: Carol Brown reviews Breathing Spaces**

**46** • **African issues**

- The responsibility to report by Allan Thompson
- Uganda's under-reported war by Karen Williams
- The interpretation of conflict: can journalists go further? asks Fackson Banda
- Getting and telling the other story by Paula Fray

**54** • **Cartooning in a time of calamity by Andy Mason**

**57** • **Being a reporter, being a human by Pieter van Zyl**

**58** • **Reporting Aids**

- Media messages under the microscope by Segun Ige
- Mobilising mobile by Peter Benjamin
- Sacrificing the woman for the child by Marion Stevens

**64** • **Brave new digital world**

- What would an African Web 2.0 look like? by Jarred Cinman
- Digital natives... pffff by Mark Comerford
- When the audience decides by Megan Knight
- YouTubing Africa: old patterns and new possibilities by Melissa Wall
- Lessons from a converging newsroom by Andrew Trench
- Southern African experiments by Elvira van Noort
- Convergence: business as usual by Hilton Tarrant
- From content to conversation: can cellphones be used for journalism? by Guy Berger
- Digital mapping: a tool for getting attention quickly by Erik Hersman

**72** • **Essay: On the importance of imagining. An edited version of Breyten Breytenbach's keynote address at the 11th Time of Writer**

# Breaking the ideological stranglehold

by Elinor Sisula

“Why is this Tony Blair coming to our country to contest elections? He is the one causing all this trouble.” So effective had been the anti-Blair campaign of the Zimbabwe government in the 31 March election that poor MaMoyo believed that Tony Blair was in Zimbabwe physically participating in the elections. MaMoyo’s mistaken belief was not based on ignorance or lack of intelligence but was a result of five years of sustained propaganda from the state coupled with the almost total denial of media voices to the rural populace of Zimbabwe.

Analysts seeking to explain the staying power of the Mugabe regime agree that Robert Mugabe’s greatest success has been to divert attention from internal repression by invoking anti-imperialist solidarity. In a recent article published in the *Review of African Political Economy*, professors Brian Raftopoulos and Ian Phimister noted: “The land question in particular has been located within a discourse of legitimate redress for colonial injustice, language which has resonated on the African continent, and within the Third World more generally.”

Thus the government-owned *Herald* is able to dismiss international concern about human rights, democracy, press freedom and the independence of the judiciary as a smokescreen to maintain the colonial grip (of Britain) on Zimbabwe. The consequence of this, argue Raftopoulos and Phimister, is that “when opponents of Zanu-PF have expressed their criticism of the regime through the language of human rights and democracy, they have struggled to make their voices heard above the clamour of anti-imperialism. Their protests have either been grotesquely misrepresented or simply ignored.”

Debates within the South African media are a case in point. The South African President, cabinet ministers and ANC leaders, especially the ANC Youth League have buttressed Mugabe’s ideological position by launching stinging attacks on conservative white Western critiques of the Mugabe regime and conspicuously downplaying or ignoring critical African voices.

A case in point is the response to the report on the situation in Zimbabwe by the African Union’s Commission of Human and People’s Rights which has been all but ignored by the South African government.

Based on a fact-finding mission to Zimbabwe in the wake of the controversial 2002 presidential election in Zimbabwe, the AU Human Rights report was compiled by distinguished and respected individuals, including Professor Barney Pitso, a liberation movement veteran, former chairperson of the South African Human Rights Commission and current Vice Chancellor of the University of South Africa. It is ludicrous to dismiss someone of Pitso’s stature as a “puppet of Western imperialism”, so the AU report is simply ignored.

Also ignored was the Zimbabwe government’s exclusion of some of the most experienced African electoral observers in the 31 March elections. Not one government in the region protested against the exclusion of the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa and the SADC Parliamentary Forum.

If the democratic movement in Zimbabwe wants to make any headway in breaking the Mugabe regime’s ideological



Francois Smit

stranglehold within the region, it has to highlight the appropriation of an anti-imperialist discourse to serve narrow political interests.

It has to invoke African instruments such as the Constitutive Act of the African Union and the African Charter for Human and People’s Rights. It also has to make a shift away from Zimbabwean exceptionalism and locate Zimbabwe within African debates on elections, democracy and governance.

For example we should have had extensive Zimbabwean commentary on the recent elections in Togo, the crisis in the Ivory Coast and the attempts to restore peace in the DRC and rebuild the state in Somalia.

There is a lesson for Zimbabweans to learn from all these experiences – the cost of decades of dictatorship is high and recovery is sometimes well nigh impossible. Let us try to resuscitate the patient before it is too late.

by Tim Cohen

06

Interviewing Fred de Vries about his book is a tantalising prospect, because it provides an opportunity to turn the tables. Fred's book, *From Abdullah to Zille*, is a collection of interviews he did mainly for *The Weekender* newspaper but also for the media magazine *Empire*. Interviewing the interviewer; what a great opportunity to dish the doctor some of his own medicine!

But it's an opportunity for De Vries to turn the tables too. As the editor of the *Weekender's* Review section, I was his editor for many of the pieces in the book. This sounds much grander than it was, since I left the deciding of who should be interviewed entirely up to him, except for once when I was ignored, and the pieces themselves didn't require much editing.

The Fred de Vries  
Interviews from  
Abdullah to Zille

By Fred de Vries  
Wits University Press

## The Fred de Vries Interviews FROM Abdullah to Zille



# The off-beat eye of the interviewer

But then there was "the incident". The incident took place when De Vries was trying to convince me to establish him as a regular weekly contributor with a specially-designated slot on the paper. This is a tricky decision for an editor. All writers, particularly freelance writers, like to have a designated spot. It's a kind of formal acceptance of their presence and expertise, and a regular flow of cash.

During the discussion, which De Vries remembers vividly, I said casually that I wondered whether he was "tough enough". Those were the actual words that came out, I'm really not sure why. It's just that interviews between counter-cultural journalists and counter-cultural characters can turn into cloying, smug affairs.

If De Vries was hurt by my all too casual assessment at the time, he didn't show it. But he raised it later in conversation, and at the launch of the book, and again in the interview – several times.

Despite "the incident", we ultimately did agree he would be the official *Weekender* interviewer, and every week for more than a year, a new, perfectly-constructed interview would drop into my email box. The characters are a fascinating mix: Chris Chameleon to Marlene van Niekerk; Bok van Blerk to Elinor Sisulu.

Despite the title, many of the interviewees were about people I had never heard of, but always conducted with a kind of soft, off-beat eye.

So when I meet him at the inevitable Melville haunt, I find the spotlight is also a bit on me. And for someone who theoretically likes "tough" interviews, we laugh a lot. We laugh about "the incident". We laugh about the Abdullah Ibrahim interview, which lasted 11 minutes and 49 seconds before collapsing. We laugh about the fact that the publication of the book is a kind of triumphant rejoinder against the editor, whoever that may be, who thought he was not "tough enough".

We also laugh about the fact that when I ask him about pre-interview preparation, he says the one thing he always does is write down 10 questions. "It's my basic rule of thumb," he says. "You look as if you have prepared, and there is already some narrative in your questions." I look down forlornly at my blank notebook.

Fred says he always records and transcribes. "People say things in their own way of talking. If you don't transcribe, the typicality of the person you are interviewing is gone."

It is a lot of work but "interviewing is such a subjective thing anyway". At the very least, he wants what people say to be accurate. All this care and forethought. I think back guiltily about how quickly I slammed the interviews into the paper.

I ask him about relaxing interviewees (ask for their CV and talk about it), about how he chooses his interviews (people who are doing interesting

things outside the mainstream; people who display a "stubborn singularity"), about being a foreigner (it helps), about race and gender ("I don't have a guilt thing, so I don't have to be, wow, this is a black person.") And gender? Not a problem, he said, until I point out the "Japan and I" interview which involved three young attractive women. "Oh yes," he said. We laugh.

But we do get into it at one point. He talks about "assuming a persona" in the interviewing process. His persona is that of a "tourist", a disparaging accusation made about him as a reporter on the European punk rock scene, which he turned on its head and embraced. "I thought it was quite a good persona to take on because it gives you an insider/outsider perspective. And I am a tourist" (he is Dutch).

This is all in the context of a discussion about "the crucial quote", it strikes me that perhaps this is a crucial quote, except it is not a quote really but an approach. "It's like a play; you take on a persona, and the other person is written into the play that you write, which can be very tricky and sometimes not very accurate."

He recalls Dutch writer Ischa Meijer who did massively in-depth interviews and who said interviews were basically psychotherapy. For the interviewer, the process of empathising can eventually be quite destructive to themselves. The approach of this particular writer was that everybody has a secret and the aim of the interview is to discover that secret. But eventually he stopped doing them. "It does eat away at you. It's quite exhausting."

Later he says you should allow yourself to change your mind. "Subconsciously you do want to go against the grain. If everybody thinks they are so great you want to show they are not so great, or the other way around."

Do you really? I'm not sure about that but take these three things together and we have our secret: the insider/outsider perspective, the psychotherapy, and the going against the grain. His contrarian self-consciousness and willingness to be mentally flexible are a complex mix. He is the dissident participant. But who is participating and who is dissenting?

Suddenly I realise the tables have been turned again. In fact, he is not the interviewee, nor I the interviewer. Neither is it the reverse. Instead, at root, we have both been examining ourselves, and our prejudices and premises. And that perhaps is the secret fact of all interviews.

Review by Larissa Klazinga

**W**riting left provides an insightful counterpoint for Gillian Slovo's powerful and moving *Every Secret Thing*, contextualising the work of Ruth First and her impact on progressive journalism, without ignoring her personal battles. It allows the reader to build a nuanced picture of a complex, brilliant woman, who was by all accounts a groundbreaking journalist and formidable political thinker.

In *Writing left* Pinnock explores the trajectory of First's life by paralleling the development of her work as a journalist and her political contributions in the liberation movement. The book begins by examining the genesis of First's social and political consciousness, exploring the impact that Ruth's mother Tilly had on her development. Pinnock probes Tilly's influence on her daughter, noting that she modelled fierce intellectual endeavour and independence for Ruth, long before the women's movement gave voice to women's aspirations of autonomy.

He delves into her relationships with leading political thinkers such as Ismael Meer, Nelson Mandela and, later, Joe Slovo. He highlights key moments in First's early life, citing Russia's involvement in World War 2 and the birth of the anti-pass law campaign of 1944 as particularly formative.

This focus on the anti-pass campaign and the resulting migrant labour system was to influence much of First's journalism in later years, as evidenced by her exposé of slave labour conditions on the Bethal potato farms, where workers were beaten and starved and forced into "voluntary" farm labour without pay.

The book contextualises First's remarkable career by juxtaposing it with the condition of

## A complex, brilliant woman

Writing left: the radical journalism of Ruth First

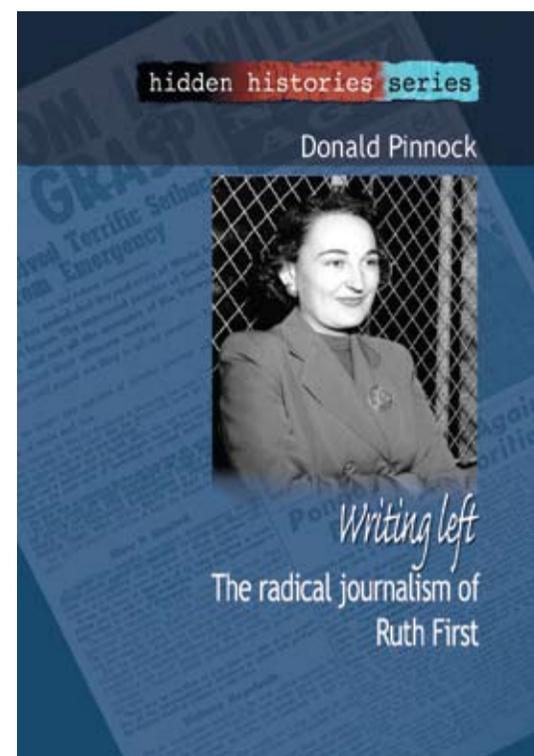
by Donald Pinnock

Hidden Histories Series. Unisa Press and Michigan State University Press

women both within the liberation movement and broadly in South African society. Pinnock notes that women were marginalised within the alliance, yet despite this First was a hugely influential journalist and party ideologue.

Pinnock does not limit his investigation to First's body of work, but unpacks the impact of her personal struggles on her professional and political life. He describes how First used journalism as a vehicle for her convictions, but also how it served to mask her lifelong shyness and the physical vulnerability resulting from her thyroid problem.

The book allows readers a glimpse of First's journalism, emphasising her ability to effectively capture the savagery of apartheid and its impact. "Ruth's reporting style was to listen to the problems of ordinary people, an approach that produced gutsy journalism in opposition to



apartheid."

It spotlights First's fearless criticism, so much a feature of her work and her life, noting that she was critical of the apartheid regime at great personal risk, but did not spare the congress alliance, never allowing cronyism to go unchallenged.

Pinnock combines rigorous scholarship and meticulous academic analysis with readability and an obvious passion for his subject. One is left with a sense of how First developed as a journalist, how she struggled to use her craft to further progressive political objectives and of what that uncompromising vision cost her, personally and professionally.

Review by Robert Brand

**T**he *Guardian* is a significant new contribution to the study of South Africa's early resistance press. The fruit of 17 years of research by US historian and journalist James Zug, the book offers a rich tapestry of anecdote, political history and biography spanning 26 years of social turbulence in South Africa.

Zug interviewed or corresponded with more than 60 former staff members of the *Guardian*, resulting in a wonderfully detailed account of a newspaper and the courageous people who produced and distributed it.

Writing in journalistic rather than academic style, Zug positions the *Guardian* within the tradition of left-wing politics and the early resistance press in South Africa.

While not attempting to impose a theoretical frame on its historical account, the book includes compelling and, at times, highly entertaining pen sketches of the prominent South African journalist-activists who populated the *Guardian*, such as Betty Radford, Brian Bunting, Ruth First, HA Naidoo, and Willie Kgositile, as well as many telling anecdotes which provide insight into the social and political context and the difficulties faced by the newspaper's journalists.

## Forerunner to the resistance press

The *Guardian*, started as a kind of "society" leftwing newspaper in Cape Town in 1937, progressed to becoming the foremost chronicler of resistance politics in South Africa and a propagandist for the socialist movement (and later, more strictly, the South African Communist Party).

Though regarded, until it was closed down by the government in 1963, as a platform for the liberation movement, it never became an "organiser of the masses", the role that Lenin saw for the socialist press.

Nevertheless, it was the forerunner of the later resistance press in South Africa which did, with varying measures of success, take on that role. As such, the *Guardian's* position in South Africa's media history is assured, and Zug's painstaking work will serve as a treasure trove for future historians studying the relationship between journalism and democratisation.

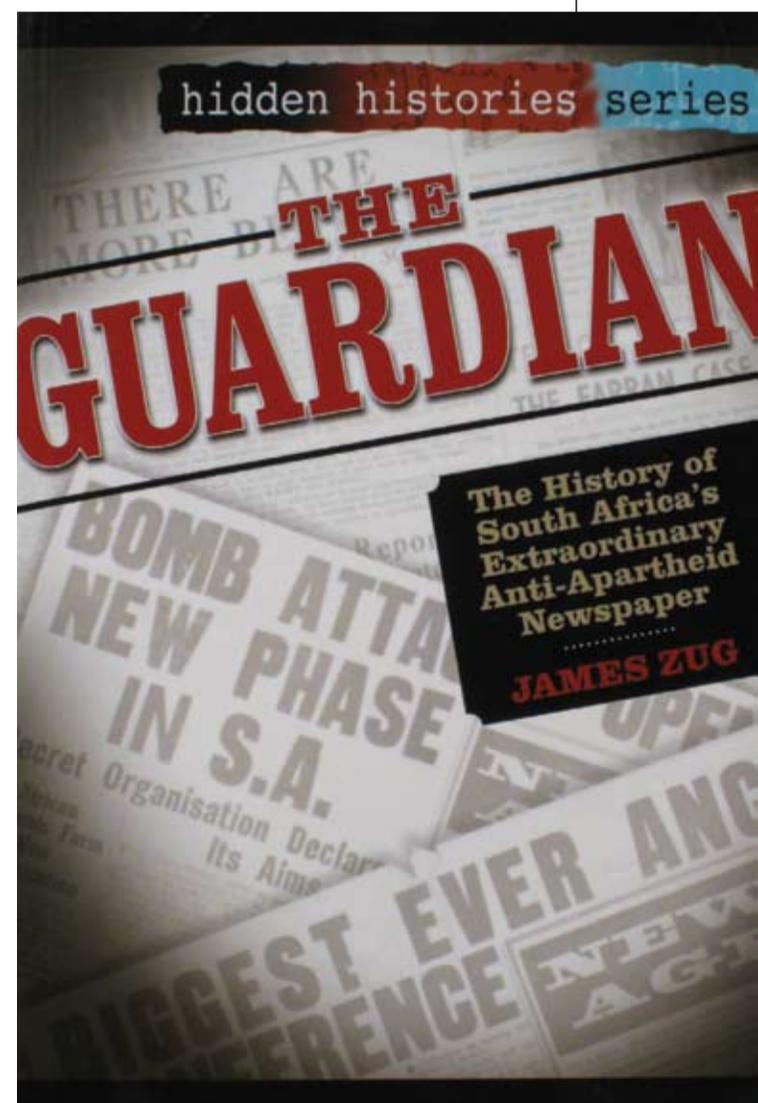
In a work of this kind, the lack of photographs and pictures detracts somewhat from the potential impact, while there is little in-depth analysis of the *Guardian's* content, especially in relation to the political debates of the time.

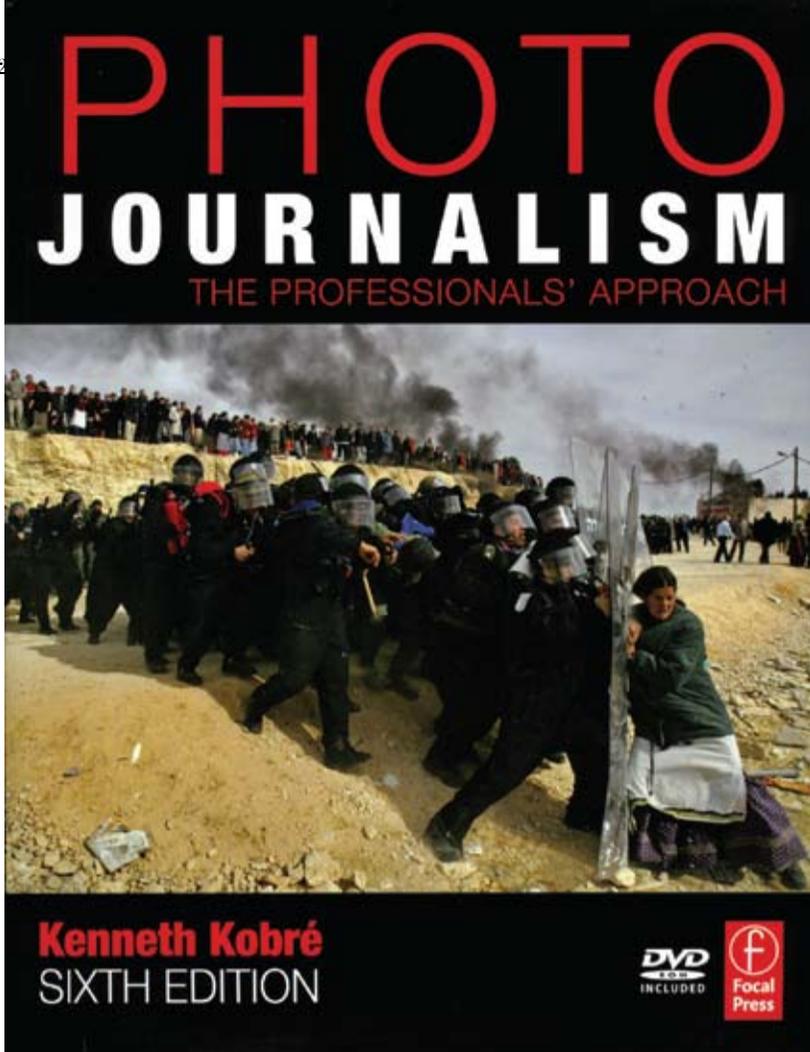
These criticisms aside, the book is important because it places on record the thoughts, experiences and contributions of generations of South African journalists who, soon, will not be there to tell their own story.

The *Guardian*: The history of South Africa's extraordinary anti-apartheid newspaper

By James Zug

Hidden Histories Series. Unisa Press and Michigan State University Press





Photojournalism: the professionals' approach, sixth edition

By Kenneth Kobré

Focal Press

## The very thorough lens

Review by Harold Gess

Each edition of Kenneth Kobré's book, *Photojournalism: the professionals' approach*, has brought his enthusiastic and very thorough lens to bear on the changing terrain of photojournalism.

Kobré is the director of the photojournalism sequence at San Francisco State University and also remains involved in photojournalism as a very active freelancer.

The book benefits from his years of experience as a photojournalist and as a teacher, and from his ability to write succinctly with an enthusiasm that excites as it educates.

While *Photojournalism: the professionals' approach* has been adopted as a textbook on many photojournalism courses, it would be a mistake to think of this book as being merely that.

It would not be out of place to say that almost any working photojournalist would benefit from this book, be it as an entry point to new trends in journalism, as a reference on issues of ethics and law, or perhaps as a reminder and inspiration of

what is possible through great photojournalism.

The first edition (a relatively slender volume of 342 pages) was published in 1980 and photography has undergone some radical changes in the last 28 years. Subsequent editions have built on the successful formula of the original, adapting to the development of autofocus, the Internet and digital cameras.

The sixth edition once again brings this remarkable book up to date, recognising the new multiskilled media practitioner approach, and adding chapters on multimedia storytelling and video storytelling as well as reworking other sections where necessary.

The page count has grown to over 500 and the new edition has added even more award-winning images and examples to illustrate the techniques and issues discussed in the text.

The fifth edition of the book was packaged with a DVD containing informative and inspiring documentary material. The sixth edition has expanded on this, adding an hour-long documentary on editing at *Sports Illustrated*.

From a South African perspective, the limitations of the book are to be found in its American-centric approach. This is very much a book of American photojournalism and an American view of the world. The majority of examples are from the United States and some chapters, such as those on history and law, are limited by their being written for a United States readership.

This issue aside, *Photojournalism: the professionals' approach* is arguably the best single volume on practical photojournalism currently available to the student, educator or practitioner.

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**THE WITNESS**

**Weekend  
 Witness**

# Media leadership: collective wisdom from Africa

by Asta Rau

Media in Africa is in an exciting phase of development, with talented, resourceful media leaders. But the region's capacity to support the ongoing professional development of current leaders, as well as train and groom new leadership candidates, is limited. Nevertheless there are experienced leaders in the region who have much to teach.

With this in mind, a leadership lekgotla was held over four days in Johannesburg during August 2007, hosted by the Sol Plaatje Institute for Media Leadership (SPI) and the Southern African Institute for Media Entrepreneurship Development (SAIMED), with funding from the Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa (NiZA). The lekgotla brought together 16 delegates, all of them recognised leaders from the print, radio, publishing and media consultancy sectors in 10 countries – Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

The purpose of the gathering was firstly for the delegates to network, share their experiences, and learn from each other; and secondly to document their collective experiences. The idea was to actively gather information while providing a space for delegates to share their expert knowledge and experience.

A delegate from Lesotho summed up media leadership succinctly: "We need to think about what type of organisations we want to build for the future: functioning organisations, properly governed, properly structured. And then create them! This requires a bit of work – the first thing is investment in researching your organisation, then equipping everybody, from the board down and from the bottom up, with a vision and mission. You negotiate the vision and get buy-in to it. You crystallise the vision into a series of plans and systems. And then you will find that your road is mapped and you can say 'Within this time frame we are going to achieve this. That is leadership.'"

The record of the lekgotla has been assembled into a book called *Media leadership: collective wisdom from Africa*. Divided into easy-to-navigate sections that are rich in quotes from the media leaders, the book presents principles, ideas, techniques and strategies to guide, assist, and inspire Africa's budding media leaders. It also opens up several challenges and dilemmas.

The initial chapters construct a foundation for African media leadership, including the essential attributes of good leaders and the key roles they play. Delegates shared their experiences of taking on leadership positions, with several finding that the staff in their organisations had not been properly briefed about the leadership change, nor told what their new leader's credentials were. Inevitably this led to resistance to their leadership. They said the only solution was to get on with it and prove yourself worthy of the task.

Part of the task involves setting visions, missions and mandates. Some delegates adopted issue-focused visions for their organisations, aiming for empowerment and development, while others favour more business-focused visions. Whichever the vision, there was agreement that a vision has to be for the benefit of both the media organisation and its audience.

Any media professional hoping to move into management and leadership has to learn the lessons of business, including how to work with one's governing board. Delegates agreed that it was vital to elect board members who add value, rather than people who are simply well-known public figures.

The business chapter goes on to discuss money matters: diversification, foreign exchange, innovative strategies for generating revenue, how to encourage staff to save money and generate money, and finally, advertising – in relation to government and private sectors. This is followed by a discussion on marketing: how to find your niche through research and feedback, how to capture audiences, how to develop a product, and branding.

In the chapter "People power", delegates analysed their personal leadership styles and explored how it feels to be a leader. They discussed issues of accountability and transparency, how to handle internal frictions and factions, maintain discipline, as well as fire, hire and train leaders. Here the reader can really see delegates' leadership skills in action. The knack with leading people, as one delegate says, is "to be clever about getting things done in ways whereby people enjoy doing them".

Or as another delegate put it: "If you make a decision on your own, nobody else is going to buy into it. You need to take decisions together with others – that's what locks them in and makes them feel part of it. Then as leader you sit back and watch. If you isolate people from decision-making processes, then you'll have to fight tooth and nail to impose your will on them. You need to understand decisions as processes – journeys you have to go through."

Delegates acknowledge that it is extremely difficult to balance advertising and editorial independence. As one comments: "I find myself faced every week with the decision of how to approach people for funding and advertising yet still remain independent."

In print organisations this issue tends to emerge in tensions between editorial and marketing departments, while in broadcast organisations these tensions arise between star personalities and other staff members. Also discussed is the contentious issue of "chequebook journalism".

Delegates were very vocal about political pressures in their home countries and their experiences with the law and litigation. These topics led into discussions of how a contemporary media leader in Africa has to take on the role of promoting diversity and enhancing democratic processes.

An interesting discussion here on music and language demonstrates that local arts and local languages are not only means to cultivating diversity and inclusiveness, but offer solid business opportunities.

Finally issues of growth, sustainability and change are debated, including changes in the media landscape, leadership succession planning and the impact of donor funding on sustainability. There were fascinating discussions of the challenges and opportunities coming from new technologies including the way these enable non-journalists to record events and publish them in blogs and social networking groups, which put journalists increasingly under scrutiny.

Many of these and other debates are the subject of public and academic media conferences. Where this book goes further is in encapsulating first hand the specific and deeply informed experience and expertise of delegates. It is a unique record of today's media leaders speaking their minds – and accessible and valuable reading for both media researchers and upcoming media leaders.

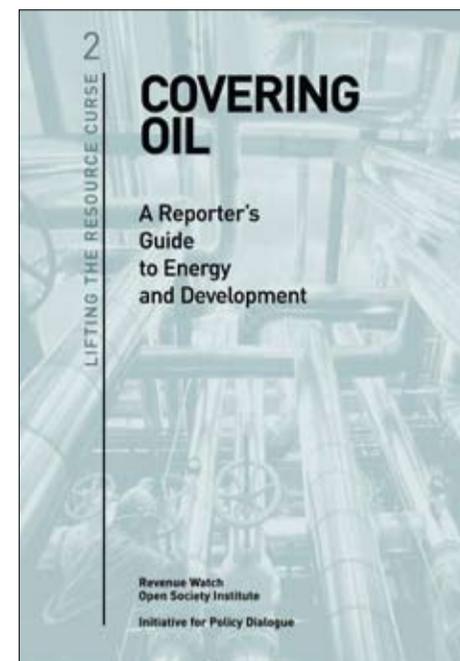
# Reporting oil

Journalists around the world find it difficult to report on government management of oil, gas, and mining revenues. A shortage of information about extractive sector projects, a lack of technical competency, short deadlines, and government repression of the free press in many countries undermine the quality of reporting on these issues.

Journalists are usually not trained economists or engineers and do not have the background in economics, engineering, geology, corporate finance, and other subjects helpful to understanding the energy industry and the effects of resource wealth. Lacking this kind of knowledge and access to information, reporters are often unable to cover natural resource stories in a meaningful way. In addition, some often underpaid journalists succumb to gifts and payments from local companies, compromising their integrity and objectivity as well as their willingness to report honestly and accurately.

The repression and exploitation of the press are obstacles that this handbook cannot overcome, but knowledge is a powerful tool that can help brave, ethical journalists address them.

*Covering Oil* provides journalists with practical information in easily understood language about the petroleum industry and the impact of petroleum on a producing country. The report contains tip sheets for reporters on stories to pursue and questions to ask. Sample stories are also included.



Covering oil: a reporter's guide to energy and development

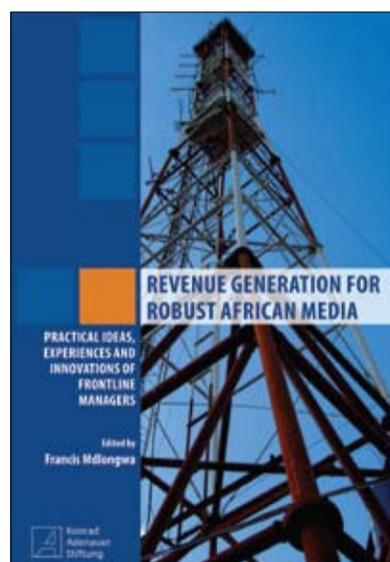
Published by Revenue Watch, the Open Society Initiative

A resource section recommends further reading. A glossary defines key financial, geological, and legal terms that can improve reporters' understanding of the literature on petroleum development and enable them to write in-depth, analytical, critical, and informative pieces on energy and development—a subject affecting millions of people around the world.

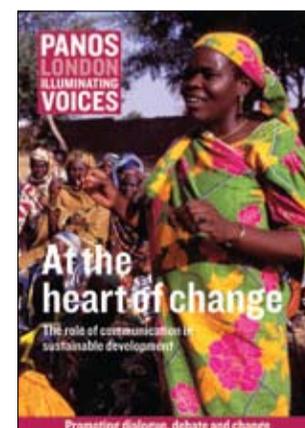
[http://www.soros.org/initiatives/cep/articles\\_publications/publications/covering\\_20050803](http://www.soros.org/initiatives/cep/articles_publications/publications/covering_20050803)

# Revenue generation for robust African media

This anthology is a collection of essays, stories and testimonies from Africa's top media executives who, through their actions and visionary leadership, are re-shaping and strengthening Africa's fledgling media companies and institutions. These media leaders, in sharing their stories with the rest of Africa and the world, show that the real test of what works and does not work in managing and leading a successful media firm too often lies in the field and at times does not necessarily follow orthodoxy. This compilation has been culled from nearly 30 presentations made at the Africa Media Leadership Summit held in Cape Town from 19 to 22 August 2007, hosted by Rhodes University's Sol Plaatje Institute for Media Leadership and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.



# Panos publications



Climate change toolkit for journalists <http://www.panos.org.uk/?lid=22221>

Making poverty the story available in English and Portuguese at [www.panos.org.uk/poverty](http://www.panos.org.uk/poverty)

At the heart of change [www.panos.org.uk/heartofchange](http://www.panos.org.uk/heartofchange)

# The vanishing book review

by Alexandra Dodd

As sure as people love a good greasy fry-up breakfast on a Sunday morning we love a good polemic. A nice, hot and heady, hard-line argument is bound to give readers a good rush of righteous indignation, fuelling that quick shot of adrenaline we might all secretly be after when we pick up a newspaper. (And if we don't get our kicks on the inside, there are always the lithe bikini girls on the back page or a stiff espresso to do the trick.)

With this in mind, the deep temptation, right here and now, is for me to jump on a righteous bandwagon and follow in the now well-trodden tracks of the feisty band of intellectuals who've already bravely pioneered my argument for me. But wait, I'm getting ahead of myself. Where does this story actually begin? Well, in America of course, where there has been an eruption of sturm

**THOSE FEW PRECIOUS PAGES OF RELATIVELY Highbrow BOOK COVERAGE IN OUR LOCAL WEEKLIES HAVE, OVER SEVERAL YEARS NOW, BEEN SLOWLY BUT SURELY SCALED BACK OR DISCRETELY INTEGRATED INTO REVIEW SECTIONS IN SERVICE OF A GENERAL DEMOCRATISATION OF TASTE AND COURTING BROADER DEMOGRAPHICS**

und drang in recent months over the moribund and increasingly threatened state of book reviewing.

In the American world of letters it's been a much-debated topic of late, spurred on by "Goodbye to all that", a lengthy treatise by former *Los Angeles Times* books editor Steve Wasserman in the *Columbia Journalism Review*, in which he laments the fact that "jobs, book sections, and pages are vanishing at a rate rivaled only by the degree to which entire species are being rendered extinct in the Amazonian rain forest".

The agonising has, quite rightly, been provoked by the slimming down of book review sections in the US print media. Some stand alone book sections have been culled, while others have been folded into increasingly dilettantish and scant arts sections. Word counts for book page stories have been slashed, commissioning budgets reduced and staff downsized. Sounds familiar?

For embattled literary critics and editors here in already-dumbed-down South Africa this all feels a bit like déjà vu – a distant remembrance of things past. We never had the erudition of the *New York Review of Books* to start with. And even those few precious pages of relatively highbrow book coverage in our local weeklies have, over several years now, been slowly but surely scaled back or discretely integrated into review sections in service of a general democratisation of taste and courting broader demographics.

Even more obvious is the way in which the

insidious cult of personality has steadily taken its manicured grip on our books coverage – rather a revealing profile interview with a sexy or wildly eccentric author than any kind of serious engagement with the content of the book itself. It is hardly surprising that some of the world's most highly regarded literary giants, most contentiously JM Coetzee, have adopted a self-conscious strategy of non-engagement with journalists, going to acrobatic lengths to sidestep the flattening media spotlight. The obsession with persona over the paradoxes of narrative is a theme Coetzee explores in his novels, via the character of Elizabeth Costello, but outside of the dense complexities accommodated by fiction alone, he steadfastly refuses to be reduced to an easily digestible persona that fits neatly into a 1 000-word profile.

Of course this irks reporters no end.

Personally, I think he deserves a standing ovation – he and JD Salinger before him. Long live the dark mysteries and unexplored anatomies of feeling that skulk warily around the corners of the dance floor, shying purposefully away from the world of brevity and ease and Paris Hilton with her portable Chihuahua. But stop me quick! I'm slipping again into the temptation of easy arguments.

It's a mite too easy to read the elegant prose of Steve Wasserman's memoir-essay and turn into a fiercely highbrow literary bullterrier. "In today's McWorld," he writes, "the forces seeking to enroll the populace in the junk cults of celebrity, sensationalism, and gossip are increasingly powerful and wield tremendous economic clout." Wasserman joins forces with *New York Review of Books* founder Elizabeth Hardwick in arguing that, instead of being handed out willy nilly to anyone who fancies a bit to read on the side, book reviews should be written by novelists, scholars and historians, who have earned, as Hardwick put it in her 1959 essay "The Decline of Book Reviewing", "the authority to compose a relevant examination of the themes that make up the dramas of current and past culture".

He also quotes Richard Schickel, the film critic for *Time* magazine, who in a blow to the "hairy-chested populism" boosted by the bombardiers of blogging, writes: "Criticism—and its humble cousin, reviewing—is not a democratic activity. It is, or should be, an elite enterprise, ideally undertaken by individuals who bring something to the party beyond their hasty, instinctive opinions of a book (or any other cultural object). It is work that requires disciplined taste, historical and theoretical knowledge and a fairly deep sense of the author's (or filmmaker's or painter's) entire body of work, among other qualities."

I'm very much with Wasserman and Schickel on the assertion that not all opinions are equal. I'd

rather read informed and elegant opinions than those of my next-door neighbour. But this is where the crack in the polemic starts to widen.

The highbrow argument for the crucial role of literary culture in promoting a mature civil society has tended to stake itself against the democratic onslaught of blogging and online culture, in a kind of reactionary Luddite siege against new technologies. There is something troublingly elitist and self-sabotaging in this stance that leaves me feeling some empathy with the snubbed respondent who writes: "My message to up and coming authors published by small presses, is not to bother with the old farts in print media, but to approach the bloggers and the specialist media."

It's also true that the verve and intellect to be found in the literary world online is abundantly there if you look for it. You don't even have to look too hard. For me, the proof of the pudding lies in the fact that I have just returned from an extraordinary literary festival on the theme of memoir and biography held at the legendary Shakespeare & Company bookshop on the banks of the Seine where I was able to commune with some of my favourite writers, including Paul Auster, Siri Hustvedt and Alain de Botton. Ironically though, I wouldn't even have known about the event if I hadn't discovered it on Jeanette Winterson's website.

At the festival I was chilled to the bone by Andre Schiffrin's coruscating personal account of the effects of the tightening grip of corporate capital on publishing, and its devastating impact on the world of ideas. As the publisher of Pantheon Books for 30 years, Schiffrin is responsible for publishing some of the world's leading writers, including Noam Chomsky, Michel Foucault, Art Spiegelman, Simone de Beauvoir and Marguerite Duras, and the picture he paints of contemporary publishing in his recent memoir, *My Political Education*, is a bleak one.

Surely the pressure from Wall Street to pump profits at constantly escalating margins is far more concerning than burgeoning new technologies. Either way, somehow, by hook or by crook, people who love books will always talk to other people who love books.

Books pages have never trumped the brutish reign of the sports pages. Books editors have always had to rigorously defend their turf, and thankfully they're not stopping now. But perhaps it is in the very nature of a book section to be dissident, subtle and covert, slipping between one beat and the next like a French resistance spy, an exile, or a courtesan, as it fights a secret war that hasn't stopped raging since Gutenberg assembled the first printing press.

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### ***Abir Abdullah***

(above) the Bangladesh correspondent for the European Pressphoto Agency, has been occupied with a long-term global-warming project in a country where small temperature variations make a big difference.

### ***Tolga Sezgin***

(above right) represented by Nar Photos, made organic farming in Turkey the subject of his project.

### ***Atul Loke***

(far right) represented by Panos Pictures, read in a local newspaper about HIV-positive orphans and widows living in India's far-flung villages. He has been documenting the particular trials of life in these isolated areas.

### ***Sudharak Olwe***

(right) wanted, on this assignment, to work on tribal peoples in India and an aspect of their lives that rarely receives attention – the difference between childbirth in cities and the experience of women in the remote areas.

## A different point of view

*World Press Photo: New Stories* is a showcase for the power of visual storytelling, and a celebration of world photography. The photo book presents documentary stories made by 10 young photographers from around the world. The issues matter to them, the perspectives are theirs. The book shifts the point of view offered by Western photojournalists working for established media and bears testimony to the level of professionalism and visual storytelling skills of a unique group of photographers.

The photographers, all former participants in World Press Photo's training programmes in developing countries, were asked to produce a photo essay. They were given freedom to work beyond the confines of a normal editorial commission – there was no brief, instead the millennium development goals were used as inspiration at the start of a creative journey.

Contributors to this publication were asked to engage with and throw light upon the subjects they chose to photograph. In a move away from traditional representation, they were encouraged to explore new ways of presenting developing world issues. The initiative is built on World Press Photo's existing record of encouraging and championing local photography.

With 187 photographs and an introduction by Panos Pictures director Adrian Evans, *World Press Photo: New Stories* ventures an important step in a new direction.





Simphiwe Nkwali

*is this simply*  
***xenophobia?***  
*why such violence?*  
*why now?*

# The burning man story

by Ray Hartley

The Sunday shift on 18 May was like no other we have had at *The Times*. Our reporters and photographers had fanned out over Gauteng early in the morning and by noon it was clear that something extraordinary, something terrible, was happening to foreigners from other African countries all over the greater Johannesburg area.

Soon reports and photographs began to make their way onto our news servers and we knew that we were dealing with a very big breaking story: The sporadic xenophobic attacks of the previous week had become an organised and sustained assault. And the brutality of the attacks appeared to be worse than in previous days.

Tens of thousands of foreigners were on the move to police stations and civic halls to seek refuge.

Then, in the late afternoon, pictures editor Robin Comley informed us that two of our photographers had captured the burning of a foreign resident – later identified as 35-year-old Ernesto Alfabeto Nhamuave of Mozambique – in the Ramaphosa informal settlement.

Halden Krog and Simphiwe Nkwali, both seasoned hard-news photographers, had held their nerve and taken a series of pictures that were very difficult to look at.

Nkwali was back in the office first. “I don’t know if you can handle this stuff,” he said. He looked shell-shocked and emotionally drained. He downloaded the pictures from his camera card onto our system and the editorial team gathered around to see what he had seen.

To say that the images were shocking is an understatement. We watched in a bizarre sort of frame-by-frame slow-motion as Nkwali went through the images leading up to those of the burning man.

Later on, we would do the same for Krog’s images. One of his pictures stood out. Through the flames, you could see the staring haunted eyes of a man at the very limits of existence. It cut through every emotional filter and moved me in a direct, visceral way that I had never experienced before. As a reporter more than a decade earlier I had seen burnt, shot and mutilated bodies during the violence of the early 1990s. Yet this image had more of an impact on me although I had not been present.

I was immediately conscious of the promise I had made to myself that *The Times* would be different to other daily newspapers, that it would seek out hope rather than dwelling on blood, gore and crime. We are a subscriber-based newspaper that goes into readers’ homes. Some children, whom we treasure as readers, would see this image. But I was also aware that we were staring the largest national emergency of the new South Africa in the face and that the nation needed to wake up to the true horror of what was happening in our midst.

There were some in the editorial team who were moved to tears by the picture. Their response was to say quietly: “This has got to stop”. I imagined that the readers would have the same reaction and that this image would once-and-for-all end the debate about whether or not we were in a crisis.

The team was in total agreement that we should publish the picture and

## Flames of hate

Residents laugh as foreigner burns in his own blankets



**HALDEN KROG**  
The Times photographer

AS WE made our way through the Ramaphosa squatter camp in Reiger Park on Gauteng’s East Rand, a woman’s words made us freeze in horror. “They are burning people down there,” she said. I ran to the nearest police officer and said: “The locals say they’re burning a person at the other intersection.”

Officers leapt into a Caspir and a Nyalia, and drove through the debris and barricades in the road. I ran after them, with other photographers following.

Two hundred metres down the road we found the first man. He had been severely beaten and was semi-conscious. Police thought he was dead, but later realised he wasn’t.

About 25m from him a man was on his knees. There was a mattress covering him, and it was on fire. He, too, was alight.



Police threw the mattress off him and kicked sand onto him to put out the flames. Another officer ran over with a fire extinguisher, pointed it at him and extinguished the flames. Other officers radioed for medical help. The man was alive, but barely. He groaned, but he could not speak.



It was all over in 20 seconds. There was a concrete pillar lying near him, splattered with blood. We can only imagine what was done to him before he was set alight. The police stayed with him until the paramedics arrived, doing what they could. But residents gathered at the scene were laughing.

Kim Ludbrook, a photographer, admonished them, and we reminded them this was human being and that what had happened was barbaric. Still they laughed. The burn victim, whose name has not been released, died last night in hospital.

**BARBARIC BEHAVIOUR:** A Reiger Park resident struggles after being assaulted, covered with blankets and set alight by a rampaging mob, above. A police officer extinguishes the flames, far left, and another calls for medical aid, right. The man was rushed to Tambo Memorial Hospital with 100 percent burns. Doctors were unable to save him. Pictures: HALDEN KROG

**WATCH THE VIDEO**  
See more pictures and footage of the violence that plagued Gauteng yesterday; content may offend sensitive viewers [www.thetimes.co.za](http://www.thetimes.co.za)

● See Page 4

we placed it large on the front page under the headline: “Flames of hate”.

Being a fully-integrated multimedia newsroom, we decided to place the picture – and others – on our newly-launched multimedia portal.

Multimedia editor Carly Ritz worked in tandem with the editorial team, recording audio from Nkwali which became the soundtrack of a multimedia slideshow of photographs of the xenophobic violence also titled “Flames of hate”.

By Monday, our front page and the slideshow were dominating the national conversation. The online slide show would be viewed by a record audience for *The Times*, drawing international attention to the plight of foreigners in our country.

I have no doubt that the decision to publish the picture was the right one. Before its publication it was possible to deny the seriousness of the xenophobia crisis engulfing the country. This changed on that Monday as decision-makers and ordinary citizens woke up to the depths to which our fellow citizens had sunk.

# S

## earching for the roots of the





# violent 'othering'

Story by Adrian Hadland

Photos by Rob Rees

In the first few days of the xenophobic violence in May, the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), South Africa's statutory social science and humanities research body, was contacted following a meeting of the African National Congress's national executive committee. There was a desperate need for information, for data that would somehow explain why the devastating violence had not only taken root, but was escalating and spreading. Why now? Why such violence? Why in informal settlements? Why mainly in Gauteng? And what could be done to stop this from happening again?

These were the questions that perplexed policy makers, government, civil society and the media too. In a rapid, two-week study of four townships, during which a series of focus groups were conducted among affected people, the HSRC's democracy and governance unit tried to provide some early, preliminary answers (which can be accessed on [www.hsrc.ac.za](http://www.hsrc.ac.za)).

But rather than dwell on the specifics of the report, its methodology or its recommendations, I would like here to focus on the media and, in particular, on the phrase that has served as the peg on which to hang the latest round of violence: "xenophobia".

At the outset, I must say I don't think there is any justification, on the evidence collected during the study, that the media is in some way complicit in the violence. That really would be a case of shooting the messenger. There is certainly no evidence, as Ian Glenn points out here in *RJR*, that the tabloid press exacerbated tensions to a greater degree than the mainstream media. Not a single person interviewed in Alexandra, Mamelodi, Tembisa or in Imizamo Yethu even mentioned a tabloid poster, headline or story.

What is striking is that while many media outlets devoted a great deal of energy to covering the xenophobia story, throwing up a whole range of possible causes and triggers, nobody took the time to take a broader view, to look at the total picture.

This is probably inevitable, given the competitiveness of the South African media and its enduring reluctance to quote other media organisations. This leads to a silo-style outlook in which the big picture falls prey to groups of news teams chasing their own deadlines and stories. If one does look at the bigger picture, the patterns both of similarity and of difference are intriguing and add greater import to the essentially symbiotic relationship that should exist between the media and the analysts and academics who make their livelihood observing the observers.

In considering the media coverage at the height of the violence, some trends become evident. A number of explanations for the outbreak were raised with differing levels of credibility and social scientific validity. These range from explanations which suggest external manipulation through a "third force", criminal instigation, a dislike and fear of foreign Africans, to poverty and the competition for scarce resources in poor communities.

What is clear from a preliminary analysis of media reports is that "xenophobia" is far too oversimplified to adequately describe what happened. One induna from Madala Hostel in Alexandra told the *Mail&Guardian*: "South Africans have come out to express themselves

against over-crowding and the loss of jobs because of the growing number of foreigners. It's not a Zulu matter, it's for all South Africans."

In this account, "foreigner" has an ethno-linguistic dimension ("Zulu"), which spoke to allegations that some attacks were being spearheaded by Zulu-speaking community members.

Another story in the same newspaper quoted a South African citizen of Zimbabwean origin, who had resided in South Africa for 18 years, recalling being accosted by community members who said: "He should go. He is a Kalanga." Kalanga is a tribe found in southern Zimbabwe and the north of Botswana.

A similar observation was made in the same newspaper where this time a South African-born woman was accused of being a Zimbabwean, after which a mob destroyed and looted the Radium hostel where she resided with her son in Jeppestown, Johannesburg.

A report in *Business Day* also noted that four South African women, camped at the Diepsloot police station and who, between them, spoke isiTsonga, seVenda and sePedi, stated that a group of isiZulu speakers had told them to leave their shacks and go back to Venda or Giyani.

A recent report carried by *Independent Online* (29 May 2008) citing fieldworkers and residents in some of Cape Town's poorest communities, noted that foreign migrants into the city were not the only grouping within these communities vulnerable to attack. They specifically cited the distinction between established residents and newer domestic economic migrants arriving from the Eastern Cape: "Many of us who come from the Eastern Cape have a job already waiting for us. In that case, it's because a relative organised it for you before... but those who have been in the Western Cape for a long time get jealous if they haven't found work, even though they are also from the Eastern Cape from before. When I came here, I didn't get a warm welcome."

References such as these pose a clear challenge to the "xenophobia" identity of these attacks, which at their most simple counterposes the foreigner and the indigenous, by introducing dynamic notions of ethnicity, indigeneity and even citizenship.

Indeed even the origins of the foreign migrants being targeted were not limited to those from other African countries, where this included the looting of Pakistani-owned shops in Diepsloot and Chinese-operated shops in Du Noon, Cape Town ([www.iol.co.za](http://www.iol.co.za), 15 May 2008; SABC News, 23 May 2008).

These observations complicate documented cases of conflict between black South Africans and Africans of other nationalities based largely on economic competition, and again obscures the search for consistent drivers of the current violence.

If the very nature of the xenophobia that allegedly underpins the recent spate of violence is so complex and perhaps has more to do with "othering" than with nationality, then one gains some sense of how difficult it is going to be to understand, let alone fix, the problem.



# The watchdog that never barked

## { or an investigation of the sin of omission }

by Ian Glenn

Let us start with some cold hard truths. Worldwide, there is rising pressure in wealthier states against immigration, particularly from Africa and the third world. In France, or Italy, or the United Kingdom, hostility to immigration has swayed election results and public policy. Nor should it be thought that this hostility is a feature of the first world only: a 2007 Pew survey found that two of the countries that had the most hostile attitudes to liberal immigration were the Ivory Coast and South Africa, with some 90% of South Africans opposed to any liberalisation of immigration policy. (See <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/607/global-trade-immigration>: "World publics welcome global trade – but not immigration".)

None of this is surprising to those in the know as publications from Jonathan Crush and others linked to the Southern African Migration Project have for years noted that one of the few things that unites black and white South Africans is hostility to immigration into South Africa of black Africans (for a list of SAMP publications, see <http://www.queensu.ca/samp/sampresources/samppublications/>).

And this is not an issue where the ANC has taken a different position from the population at large. At points, ANC cabinet members have claimed that uncontrolled immigration has caused government estimates for housing provision to be wrong and housing provision to falter (Sankie Mthembu-Mahanyele, then Minister of Housing, quoted in *Business Report* 31 January 1997) and have argued consistently that jobs should be provided for South Africans first and foremost (see, for example, Labour Minister Membathisi Mdladlana in Klerksdorp in September 2005). While state security officials like former NIA boss Billy Masetla said, also in September 2005, that the issue of large numbers of Zimbabwean refugees (economic, or political) to Limpopo and the concerned reaction of residents was of "huge concern" there and that this phenomenon needed

urgent investigation.

Nor should it be thought that South Africa is alone in registering these pressures; in Botswana, the problems caused by the economic and social chaos in Zimbabwe and resultant illegal movement into Botswana have been noted regularly.

One of the peculiarities of South African media, then, might be how much more liberal (or indifferent) most local media are about something where public opinion is so strong and unanimous. This is a clear case where NGOs such as SAMP have made a case, based on historical and moral grounds that are strong, but far from overwhelming, that South Africans should accept that migration to South Africa from the rest of Africa is likely to continue and that South Africans should accommodate it. (For example, is it logical to expect local South Africans to feel strongly sympathetic to Zimbabweans on the grounds of historic mining immigration when Zimbabweans were stopped from coming to South Africa as miners from 1981?) What is clear is that SAMP and others, often with strong business or free-market interests, have carried a significant body of elite media with them, but done very little to persuade a broader public.

If 90% of the population in any country were against something, yet the local media either ignored the issue, or reported on it as though the majority were simply ignorant, or failed to try to persuade the majority that their views were incorrect, it would be natural to expect that, over time, the media would come to be seen as irrelevant, or that people would find ways of reading or interpreting media messages against the grain, or that other forms of political protest would make themselves felt.

This has happened here.

### An alien by any other name?

One of the perennial objections of bodies such as the Media Monitoring Project to coverage of the problem of

uncontrolled movement of foreigners into South Africa is to object to the phrase "illegal aliens". The MMP and the South African Migration Project recommend that media instead use the phrase "undocumented foreigners". This may seem to be an attempt to get to the French phrase "Les sans papiers" (the ones without papers), but of course the problem is that the phrase is essentially euphemistic and tries to deny what is central to the hostility of many South Africans: that foreigners, who have entered the country illegally, are competing for resources and threatening their own status.

One of the problems world wide is that the sense of fair play of ordinary citizens and resentment towards those seen jumping queues or breaking the law is much stronger than lawmakers sometimes assume – something seen fairly dramatically in the United States where an attempt across party lines, with the support of President Bush, to regularise the situation of many illegal Mexicans, the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007, foundered on strong public resistance while failing to draw any strong public support.

In France, too, the phrase may seem palliative and to avoid any pejorative stereotypes but becomes simply a shorthand for the problem and certainly does not stop strong policing or the election of a Sarkozy whose tough talk about immigrant behaviour helped his election success. At its worst, the prim recommendations of many liberal pro-immigrant bodies seem like Orwellian Newspeak that refuse to consider many of the basic hard questions fuelling resentment: are some foreigners driving crime, taking away resources like housing and healthcare, undercutting locals in their search for employment? And, if they are here illegally, does that not matter?

### The watchdog that never barked

The reaction of media critics and the MMP to the xenophobic violence has been to blame the usual suspects – the tabloids, and in particular the *Daily Sun*. The MMP has in fact

# Does the pandering perpetuate the xenophobia?

by William Bird

In a recent speech the South African Press Ombudsman Joe Thlooe noted that he had yet to receive a complaint against the *Daily Sun* or any other tabloid for that matter from a member of the tabloid's target audience. Instead, he argued, complaints tended to be made by middle-class people, or well-resourced organisations.

Indeed, it was MMP and its partner CRMSA that submitted a complaint against the *Daily Sun* based on its coverage of the xenophobic violence.<sup>1</sup>

One of the questions that arises from this interesting observation is, why is it that members of target audiences do not submit complaints?

The reasons for this absence of audience complaint may well be because it requires resources, time, knowledge of the complaints

process, and of how to access it, time and resources to submit a complaint and follow through on the process.

Certainly, there has been a marked increase in action to raise awareness of the Press Council of South Africa, but it is in the interests of all print media for research to be conducted into levels of awareness and peoples' knowledge of and participation in the complaints process.

Another answer that is provided by the *Daily Sun*, among others, is that they are merely giving their readers what they

want and if there is xenophobia in the community then they are simply going to reflect it. Accordingly, the *Daily Sun's* readers are thus all happy and have little to complain about.

The problem with such a position, however, is that it quite clearly ignores the role the media plays in creating the world through the news and issues it presents. It is disingenuous to assert that the media simply reflects the concerns and environment of readers without the influence of clear editorial, individual, ideological and discursive choices and positions determining what is presented.

In addition to being clearly unsustainable, the impact of such an argument is that it abrogates responsibility of the media for its content, "we can't be blamed for simply reporting what is there".

Another concerning aspect of such an argument is that it assumes that their target market all share the same xenophobic view. It is one thing to suggest that some readers may have xenophobic views, but quite another to suggest that every member of the community shares those views, as a means of justifying or perpetuating them.

There can be little doubt that there is xenophobia in the communities that read the *Daily Sun*. However, the question arises as to whether this is sufficient justification for perpetuating stereotypes or ignoring basic media ethics. Taken to its logical conclusion, the reason a paper panders to the desires of its readers is to ensure that they get what they want and continue buying the paper.

This is a commercial imperative position that suggests commercial interests are what define and drive the news agenda. Certainly, it is true in many instances that newspapers and other

submitted a complaint with Press Ombudsman Joe Thloloe and the South African Human Rights Commission about the *Daily Sun*, arguing that it played a role in inciting or preparing violence by using the “aliens” tag and reporting negatively on foreign nationals in South Africa and in not condemning the outbreaks of violence early enough.

In an analysis based on their analysis of all media from 2007 and the first quarter of 2008, Media Tenor South Africa indeed found that the *Daily Sun* was the most hostile in its treatment of foreign nationals of all the media (“Lessons in the rear-view mirror: Reporting on foreigners in South African media”, 4 June 2008).

Yet, I would argue that before we can fix any kind of responsibility on the media, far more complex questions need to be considered. For a start, there are methodological problems with techniques that simply measure reports, without considering what the underlying reality is. A medium may emerge as “neutral” because it simply ignores problems and reports superficially on, say, visits by foreign dignitaries or the appointment of a foreign football coach.

Did the “serious” media warn us and urge government and local authorities to prepare? Did they report seriously and timeously on ongoing attacks on foreign shopkeepers? (They certainly did not in Cape Town in the case of the spate of murders of Somali shopkeepers.) Did they push for adequate responses to earlier outbreaks of murderous group violence such as the killing of 63 temporary security guards during the security guard strike? As the headline of an article by Jeremy Gordin and Eleanor Momberg in the 3 June 2007 *Sunday Independent* put it: “Security guards died like dogs. So who cares?” – but did they or any other papers follow up the concerns they raised? Did community radio work to integrate the communities? (Nobody has suggested they were inciting violence, though who would know?) Were they doing enough to convey the concerns of local residents to a wider public? Have our media shown how the network of anger and violence was set off and who was driving or controlling it?

The answer to all these questions seems to me to be “No” though they probably all need far more investigation. Neither the “quality” press nor the SABC nor other broadcasters have demonstrated that they have the resources – intellectual, moral, or material – to convey the reality of life for angry township dwellers or for foreign refugees living here.

They have not followed up or questioned group

violence or pushed for redress for its victims. If residents and criminal elements felt they could resort to theft and murder with impunity, that may be because the media have given this kind of violent crime so little sustained attention and done so little to press for police results – in comparison, say, to crimes involving white, middle-class or celebrity victims.

Local broadsheets and local broadcasters have, in other words, left a vacuum which the *Daily Sun* was left to fill in articulating the grievances of its South African readers.

### Native sons?

Much of the criticism of local black South Africans in comparison to foreigners seems to miss the familial psychodynamics of the situation. When whites (or well-off blacks) complain about how hard-working and well-educated Malawian (houseboys, in the telling stereotype) or Zimbabweans here are compared to locals, they surely miss the point. From one legitimate point of view, to be part of a nation, native, born here (the etymology of nation is in *natus*, to be born) is to claim familial privilege and preference.

Any family that takes in step-children or foster children and treats them as though they were its own and allows them familial privileges should expect resentment, hurt and rage from its own children.

A sense of entitlement, as native South Africans, is surely not unreasonable. It assumes that part of the new South Africa is expecting that some of the hurt and pain of the past and the suffering of one’s ancestors will lead to better treatment now, to not having to work for very low wages, to having some of the fruits of the new South Africa.

The expectation that poor South Africans should show a kind of generous acceptance of African brotherhood over their claims to preference as South Africans, or the remonstrations with poor black South Africans that they have not reciprocated the generosity of African states to South African refugees neglects the point that no other group in South Africa is willing to be this generous.

Government policy now explicitly demands that preference in advertised posts in business or state service

be given to native South Africans, black and white, over all foreigners, even black Africans, unless the circumstances are truly exceptional. For the middle and professional classes, in other words, being part of the family counts, and counts strongly, in our favour. As a not so hard-working or competent academic, or doctor, or bureaucrat, or as a businessperson bidding for a contract, I am, in other words, protected against competition from a foreigner who may be harder-working or better qualified or willing to work for half of what I am.

When it comes to the poor, however, the ANC and government and corrupt officials, as numerous commentators have pointed out, have failed to take proper care of those who might legitimately have expected it and probably needed it more.

### Reactions to media

Given the arguments so far, it will hardly be surprising that media commentators seem to me to miss the force of Deon du Plessis’s defence of the *Daily Sun* in the *Mail&Guardian* of 12 June, when he argues that it stands for the home team, for the average working class black South African. Tabloids

*Neither the “quality” press nor the SABC nor other broadcasters have demonstrated that they have the resources – intellectual, moral, or material – to convey the reality of life for angry township dwellers or for foreign refugees living here.*

tend to be moralistic, chauvinistic and patriotic. While the MMP may complain about the *Daily Sun*’s headlines, they are here fairly pointlessly blaming the messenger rather than examining the causes of the discontent that the *Daily Sun* articulates. Unless it can be shown that the *Daily Sun* was consistently distorting the truth or blaming the wrong people, the MMP position will amount to a form of polite censorship.

Nor is it clear that the *Daily Sun* had much effect or that print media are in a position to affect popular sentiment in

*continued on page 20*

media rely on a commercial revenue model for their growth and existence. One view of this model is that it will always mean that newspapers will simply pander to the interests of capital.

While there is some validity to such a position, it is not solely built or sustained on such basic conditions. It is fair to note that commercial imperative will impact on the news agenda and content, as well as how it is reported. However, within this it is possible, essential in most cases even, to maintain and produce news that is ethical, accurate and fair.

It is critical for the media to adhere to such standards in order to retain their credibility, for without credibility in the long-term, they will fail to sell and papers will suffer from no longer being commercially viable.<sup>2</sup>

It is reasonable on some level to note that all media will necessarily pander to their audiences, either for commercial reasons or for other educational reasons, as a public broadcaster should, for example. Like so many issues, pandering to audience desires is a matter of degrees. Some areas are generally deemed clearly unacceptable by society. There may be, for instance, an audience who would like a media publication to provide child pornography and even tips and suggestions on child trafficking. In this and other cases, even though such a media may be commercially viable, there are valid laws and regulations that would prevent them from being sold on our street corners.

In terms of the media, the degree to which they can “pander to their audiences’ every desire”, as well as the degree to which they can ensure their credibility and professional standards is neatly set out in the broadcasters’ code and licence conditions and in the SA Press Code for print media. For print media, the code is implemented through a process of self regulation.<sup>3</sup>

A core assumption that underpins the need for such a code and self regulatory system is the need for accountability. Thus, when people have a concern or complaint there is a fair process in place to ensure that media can be held accountable to that code.

The principle of accountability is central to media best practice. Holding government to account is one of the key democratic functions of media. One of the strengths of the *Daily Sun*, and there are many, is that they often succeed where others fail, especially in holding members of government to account. Often such accountability takes the form of following up on service delivery stories, or Department of Home Affairs disasters where people have waited for years to get an ID. The *Daily Sun* steps in and a few days later the problem is resolved and the relevant person rapped over the knuckles or subjected to disciplinary proceedings.

In just the same way as the *Daily Sun* holds government to account, it is equally important that they too, as well as other media, are held accountable when they err. This means more than adhering to the code and rulings of the press ombudsman, but also setting an example and abiding by the standards to which they judge public institutions, particularly in terms of taking responsibility for their actions.

Perhaps the most fundamental reason for rejecting the argument that a medium is simply giving their readers what they want, lies in understanding and accepting that the media doesn’t ever simply reflect reality, but versions of it. If media portray xenophobic, racist and or sexist stereotypes, they are doing more than simply reflecting views that may be held by some of their audience. They are also creating and perpetuating them. Not

only are such stereotypes at odds with the fundamental values of our constitution, in doing so they undermine other rights, including the intent and limits of freedom of expression.

Tabloids like the *Daily Sun* have introduced millions of readers to newspapers. They have great power and the potential to make a significant contribution to realising the values enshrined in our Constitution. To do so, however, they need to find ways of being sensational and colourful, without undermining peoples’ dignity and humanity. With the possibility of a Media Appeals Tribunal being set up, let us all hope they can.

### Endnotes

1. (A copy of MMP’s full complaint can be found on <http://www.mediamonitoring.org.za/tabid/60/ctl/ArticleView/mid/375/articleid/251/Media-Monitoring-Project-submits-complaint-about-Daily-Sun-reporting-on-xenophobia.aspx>).
2. Credibility is not however the most important element of commercial success for tabloid media. Children of the target audience who read the *Daily Sun* told MMP that they like the *Daily Sun* because, “... it isn’t true,” and that they liked it because, “it spices things up.” (Child participants at an Empowering Children and the Media workshop, May 2008) These comments speak to a range of other issues but also suggest quite clearly that the reason people may be buying the *Daily Sun* is not for reasons of credibility.
3. Self regulatory mechanisms may have significant limitations but in spite of these, they offer, when implemented fairly, one of the most viable solutions to ensuring media adhere to fundamental principles and ethics and at the same time ensure that the right to freedom of expression is protected and promoted. It is for this reason that by the time you read this the complaint MMP and its partners submitted will hopefully be resolved.

## The watchdog that never barked

*continued from page 19*

any meaningful way. The paper hardly reaches places like Cape Town where violence broke out powerfully. In their wide-ranging research into the attacks, the HSRC found that relatively few respondents mentioned the media as any kind of causative factor in the violence.

Not one respondent, in any of the four major trouble spots investigated (Alex, Mamelodi, Tembisa and Imizamo Yethu), mentioned the tabloids. Several did mention broadcast news, particularly the SABC, as influencing their perceptions, suggesting that this needs further investigation. What is peculiar or surprising in these mentions is that some of the media pieces mentioned might have seemed likely to produce sympathy for Zimbabweans rather than hostility. *Special Assignment*, for example, covered the plight of Zimbabwean refugees on South African farms in March this year, yet several respondents mentioned this programme as one shaping negative perceptions.

This makes sense only if we see that local black South Africans feel so disempowered and resentful that they do not react to the plight of poor Zimbabweans forced to work for a pittance on South African farms in the way that middle-class television producers or viewers might, but with a double sense of anger: that these workers continue to fuel an exploitative system, and that the South African media, instead of dealing with the plight of locals at a time of enormous economic hardship, instead concentrate on the plight of others with, in their view, less claim to sympathy or consideration. After all, as several sardonic respondents put it, if President Mbeki keeps assuring us that all is well in Zimbabwe, why are the migrants here?

We need, in terms of media and media analysis, far greater engagement with the issue of how all South Africans get information. We simply do not yet know enough about the recent violence and the role of personal influence (to recall Katz and Lazarsfeld) in transmitting and amplifying messages, or the role visual images and indigenous languages have played.

What we can say fairly surely is that the major sin was one of omission, not commission. This is a story of the watchdogs that never barked in the night – because the property and interests they protect seemed far away.

*I would like to acknowledge an honours paper by former UCT student Tarin Brown which I have pillaged for some references; our arguments, however, differ in almost every respect. I am also indebted to Adrian Hadland of the HSRC for giving me a preliminary indication of their findings.*

# W

by Chris Kabwato

hen the xenophobic violence broke out on 11 May 2008 I recalled the prescient warning that I had received from my cousin when I first came to live permanently in South Africa. He told me to dress like a local. I had given him a waistcoat from West Africa years back and it still hung in his wardrobe – unworn. To wear that would have marked him out. He also gave me further advice – do not live in the township. He lived on Bree Street in Central Johannesburg. But he had gone further – he spoke Zulu fluently. So he was very much at home in Joburg. This was a decade ago.

### What caused the mayhem?

Since the eruption of the violence there has been a lot of soul-searching. The answers to this question have been varied. They start with the economic competition between migrants and the South African working classes. The arguments here are that with the government, having failed to create employment, provide housing and adequate education, has enabled more mobile migrants to secure jobs/income at the expense of locals. Employers are also accused of taking undocumented foreign nationals because they can be paid lower wages and are not unionised. Added to this argument is the reported pressure on education, medical facilities and housing by the “tsunami” of migrants as the *Saturday Star* described them.

The other argument is that apartheid

# O

by Sim Kyazze

On 29 January 2007 I travelled on an SAA flight from Entebbe International Airport in Uganda to OR Tambo International in Johannesburg. Somehow, I had forgotten, ignored or failed to travel with my Yellow Fever Certificate and an Immigration Officer let me have it.

“You are not going through here unless you get a Yellow Fever certificate,” she said, in response to an embarrassing display of excuse making. I had three choices, she said: one was to be deported, at my cost: R4 500; two, be quarantined at the airport for at least a week: R600 a day or R4 200; and three, get a government-issued vaccine at the airport: US\$88 (or R700). There are no prizes

## A symptom that

for guessing which I chose.

Unfortunately, the vaccine combined with an existing illness to keep me morose and bed-ridden for most of 2007.

The same day I learnt that I would never walk through OR Tambo without a Yellow Fever certificate, hundreds of illegal immigrants slipped into South Africa through its porous borders with Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. For the rest of South Africa’s neighbours, the attractions of Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town are largely economic. The country has Africa’s largest, most dynamic

## The dis betw u

had created a legacy of a people cut off from the continent but also deeply divided along ethnic lines. The isolation of South Africa created a sense of exceptionalism and ignorance of what lay north of the Limpopo. You fear or hate that which you do not know seems to be the core of this argument. Indeed one minister bewailed that his government had neglected to educate its population on Africa and other Africans.

But if you hate people does it have to translate to violence? That was also explained by pointing out that South Africa had a deeply rooted culture of violence emanating from the brutal nature of the apartheid state. Violence permeated the fabric of South African society, so this argument goes. The home, the school and the streets are scarred by the scourge of violence.

And why did the violence spread so rapidly from the cauldron of Alexandra to other parts of Gauteng and then to the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal?

The first scapegoat was the media – if the newspapers and television had not carried images of the inferno in Alexandra the violence would not have spread. The other scapegoat was the mobile phone – texting was blamed for this.

and most efficient economy. It has indeed often been said that because South Africa’s first world economy is managed by a third world state institution, the contradictions complicate all explanations, including those for the recent violent attacks against foreigners that left at least 60 people dead.

You have to marvel at a state that has the capacity to impose its will on all who live in the republic (citizens and foreigners alike) in some instances, but fails so miserably in others. Foreigners who have attempted to regularise their status in South Africa (getting jobs, work, study or refugee permits, permanent residence, etc) know how long and tedious the processes are. Yet, it’s not too long ago that a local television broadcast an investigative piece during which they trailed

a Zimbabwean woman with a hidden camera, and recorded how easily she was able to get seven genuine ID books after paying small bribes at Home Affairs offices in different parts of the country.

South Africa was given less than 10 years to prepare for 2010 and all indications are that the most critical infrastructure (the Gautrain, stadia, etc) will be ready before the world’s best footballers jet in. Over the last 14 years however, the same state institutions have somehow failed to provide adequate housing of the most basic kind – just four walls and a roof – to the majority of South Africans.

It is imperative that public intellectuals are

# connect een buntu

But the government went a bit further and blamed the violence on criminal elements and an unnamed "third force". A few days later the "third force" thesis was withdrawn.

## Soul-searching?

But the soul-searching was at once filled with sincerity and with hypocrisy. There was an attempt to portray xenophobia as rooted in the working classes and the poor. But for foreign nationals like me who have had to deal with immigration, Home Affairs and the police we know that xenophobia is located within the state and in various spheres of society. If the people of Alexandra had grown accustomed to the police stopping any black person and asking them silly questions in a local language and then bundling them off to Lindela deportation centre, who were they to behave differently? A migrant is a not a person. So you can sing

a song *Makverekwere* and it will be hit.

Violence against migrants had long been institutionalised and it was time to democratise it so people could also participate. To the Somalis in Khayelitsha they might as well have shouted: "One Somali, one bullet" but despite the regular killings the police did not move in nor did the local community leadership protect them. The displaced Zimbabweans I spoke to in Cape Town told me of how they were given warnings to leave within two weeks before the Alexandra violence. The warnings were done on the trains and by neighbours. The street committees and their leadership did not stop the violence. They seem to have abetted it.

The dominant media raised critical debate around xenophobia via talkshows, opinion columns, letters etc. However, one thing was absent in the debate. What was the value of migration to any economy and what did the global studies indicate, for example in the US? So whereas there was the charity and Pan-Africanist dimensions in the debate, hard questions were not asked that broke the stereotype of the foreign national as an unskilled individual forging a South African identity card.

The other unresolved question was around semantics. Was this xenophobia or Afro-phobia? Was it self-hatred? If Polish migrants were living in Alexandra would they have been attacked as well?

There was some skirting around uncomfortable issues as when there was a furore from the middle classes in northern Johannesburg when some camps for the displaced were moved into their

neighbourhoods. Issues of crime and hygiene were raised by the same classes that had condemned the violence. Good if those migrants keep to Alex and come in occasionally do the garden or serve us in the sushi bar.

In other media there was a condemnation of tabloids such as the *Daily Sun* for having fanned the flames of xenophobia with use of terms like "aliens" and lukewarm condemnation of the violence. In his usual style Deon du Plessis, *Daily Sun* publisher, responded by stating that the paper simply spoke the language of "the man in the blue overalls". If the "man" used the word alien and did not like foreign nationals then the *Daily Sun* would capture that exactly. Period.

But what was not probed was whether the media as a whole was clean on the xenophobia issue. Over the years the same media have raised the spectre of the millions of migrants overwhelming the South African social welfare system and called for effective policing of the borders. The same foreign nationals had been blamed for the high crime rates – everytime a robbery occurs I actually pray that there is no Zimbabwean involved because you know what will come next.

## The disconnect

The xenophobic violence has revealed the disconnect between the "ubuntu" rhetoric and the reality. A president-poet who clearly loves Africa and has premised his foreign policy on the political

and economic revival of Africa has been betrayed in his own backyard. The rhetoric of "South Africa belongs to all who live in it" rings rather hollow. So as the middle classes chatter over a glass of red wine and condemn the violence and its implications, the communities where the foreign nationals lived remain largely unengaged. The approach now is to dismantle the camps because they are an obvious embarrassment and to push for "reintegration". The catch is the foreign nationals do not wish to go back. Some of those who have gone back have been robbed again. So the president can apologise and most foreign nationals seem to appreciate his sincerity but they are also cognisant that something has changed irrevocably. Their suspicions of black communities, which used to linger uneasily below the surface, have now been pushed to the fore.

In all this mess the main eye is on the World Cup in 2010 and the need to spruce up South Africa's image. It is no longer easy to say "2010 is Africa's World Cup" so expect a lot more PSAs and feel-good programmes on Africa and how we all belong.

We will be going to bed with one eye open.

# and reality

vocal in their condemnation of the perpetrators of these xenophobic attacks. But to pretend that these displays of impotent rage against foreigners were simple criminal acts is a fallacious failing and fuels the worst fears of those who think that the government of South Africa as it is currently constituted, has a rather large set of tin ears which prevent it from hearing the anguish of its citizens.

South Africa's poor are often worse off than the continent's other haves-not mostly because the majority can't subsist off the land. For better or worse, this is another apartheid-era scar. Moreover, it was apartheid that disenfranchised millions of people of colour, denied them a decent education and access to rare skills, confined them to townships and low-paying menial jobs, and

for raw materials has in turn buoyed resource-rich countries in Latin America, Russia, the Middle East and Africa.

Sassen (1995: 63) argues that "economic globalisation denationalises national economies; in contrast, immigration is renationalising politics". Indeed across the world, people are increasingly demanding more information flow and capital at the same time as they are demanding tighter border controls. This has happened in the US, Australia, in continental Europe and in Russia. Zimbabwean illegals are therefore not any different from the millions of Mexicans and other Latin Americans who have snuck into the United States over the years.

because the action confers upon the foreigner a certain status almost equal to his own. The case of other Africans in South Africa is even more complicated because many sacrificed a great deal to help get rid of apartheid.

Essentially, this is the story of xenophobia, nationalism and identity in South Africa. The rise of Brazil, India, China and Russia, together with the unpredictable nature of globalisation have combined to create spectacular wealth for a few, and extreme hardship for millions around the world. Some of both happen to be in South Africa. The worry is the trajectory of these spontaneous outbursts of popular anger. Once they are done

# it defies simple analysis

generally beat down their spirits. For these people, 1994 could not have come sooner. Unfortunately, the right to vote does not put food on the table. Neither does it create jobs, pay for healthcare, or transform a largely unskilled workforce into inventors. These most basic needs of people are the responsibility of government.

Unfortunately, the ANC government has been more successful in dominating the political arena. The recent economic success has been mostly due to good macro-economic management by the Finance Ministry and the Reserve Bank, as well as the global boom that has seen China and India become economic juggernauts. Their insatiable demand

Ten years ago, there were about 200 million immigrants, with just half of them in the West (Sassen 1995). The rest (refugees or illegal immigrants) were scattered around the South (from the SADC region into South Africa; from West Africa into Libya; from Rwanda into Tanzania and Uganda; from Palestine and Iraq to Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, etc).

By its very nature, immigration creates a tension between the protection of human rights (for refugees or highly-skilled workers), and the preservation of national sovereignty. To put it crudely, a man in Polokwane seems justified to think that granting a Zimbabwean refugee status "devalues" his own rights as a South African citizen

with foreigners, who is to say that they will not pick on the new black middle class; or big business; or whites?

The next ANC government (probably led by Jacob Zuma) will have the unenviable task of raising the spirits of a large constituency of poor South Africans, while at the same time dealing with a new global order in which skills and capital are more portable. Put simply, there will be more foreigners in South Africa in years to come. The difficulty is how they will be managed.

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**S**outh Africa's response to the migration that is transforming cities like Johannesburg appears to be far less than welcoming, and official and popular responses to immigration are testing its commitment to tolerance and the rule of law.<sup>1</sup> This stands in stark contrast to the inclusive and high-minded principles of our Constitution, the "rhetoric of inclusive cosmopolitanism"<sup>2</sup> and the professed desire of policy makers to embrace and to be embraced by Africa.

Hotel Yeoville is a new collaborative public art project in progress sited in Yeoville, an old suburb on the eastern edge of the inner city of Johannesburg. The project is about migration and the reconfiguration of the city and aims to make visible – through a range of media, site specific cultural interventions and public participation processes – a social map of this neglected inner city neighborhood that is home, of sorts, to a largely invisible community of migrants from all over the continent. The first phase of the project is an engagement with an immigrant community and their web culture via the Internet cafes on the Yeoville high street.

I was first brought into contact with the issue of migration through a previous project called Park Pictures<sup>3</sup> based in Joubert Park, a rare public space and business territory to a large community of street photographers in the dense inner city of Johannesburg. Since the demise of apartheid there has been a deluge of

*Story by Terry Kurgan  
Photos by Mark Lewis*

migration to the centre of the city, with large numbers of South African migrants and African émigrés claiming it as their own. While Park Pictures was not so much about migration as it was about the complex and elusive nature of all photographic transactions, I came into contact with many people who have come to live in Johannesburg from elsewhere on the continent. Their stories inevitably described their harsh experience of xenophobia, marginalisation, discrimination, and human rights violations.

Two years later, on a photographic commission in the suburb of Yeoville, which is largely populated by African immigrants and refugees, I was once again struck by the adverse circumstances in which non-national migrants and refugees try and go about their lives in this country, but also by the extraordinary level of education, entrepreneurial skills and tendency to risk-taking that they bring with them. Whereas many South Africans arriving in central Johannesburg are from rural areas and peri-urban townships, "more than 95% of non-nationals have spent their lives in cities or towns before leaving for South Africa. Foreign migrants also have disproportionately higher levels of technical and academic qualifications and bring with them skills needed to survive in cities: entrepreneurial chutzpah and the skill to talk and bribe their way out of hairy encounters with state agents".<sup>4</sup>

Walking through the streets of Yeoville, I began to think about a new project that might reflect and make visible the presence and experience of communities of recent migrants in public discourse. Until the early 1990s Yeoville was a densely populated

working class, student and immigrant white neighborhood. It was always the place that white immigrants started from before they began their journey north and upwards into the middle classes. With the advent of democracy and the demise of the Group Areas Act, the character of the area underwent dramatic transformation. Its proximity to employment and the city centre made it the preferred destination for a predominantly black, poor and working class population rapidly moving to the city from the far-flung black townships, rural areas of the South African hinterland and elsewhere on the African continent. White residents slowly began to move away taking their business and money with them. Property owners and landlords began to neglect their properties because of uncertainty about their value in the context of this radical change. They also exploited the vulnerable and tenuous status of their new tenants, massively hiking rents and neglecting to provide essential services. This made rents unaffordable, which led to subletting and overcrowding; and overcrowding, in turn, has led to excessive strain on buildings and their services. Buildings are now largely in a terrible state of decay and illegal new inner-city tenants choose not to complain about deteriorating conditions for fear of eviction.

Currently, the majority of Yeoville's inhabitants are micro communities from countries like Nigeria, Cameroon, Angola, Botswana, DRC, Ethiopia, Somalia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe amongst others. The ability of these residents to gain and retain access to the most basic conditions of everyday urban life is further undermined by a widely-documented, uncertain, corrupt and poorly managed immigration policy. In spite

of laws that provide them with certain of these rights, refugees and asylum seekers are denied access to basic health services, housing and education; faced with arbitrary arrests, detentions, extortion, xenophobic



Testing the rh



**In spite of laws that provide certain rights, refugees and asylum seekers are denied access to basic health services, housing and education. They are faced with arbitrary arrest, detention, extortion and attacks.**

attacks and more. They are also generally unable to access the most basic of banking services, let alone loans or other forms of credit. They are made scapegoats for a host of social ills from crime to unemployment, isolated and excluded from mainstream South African society and the formal economy, and their dominant engagement is with each other and with home in far away places. The heterogeneity of the population has worked against any sense of community or the possibility of collective engagement. Xenophobia and fear of the other are dominant themes in public discourse and in official public policy.

In September 2007 we started our first research process and I have undertaken to lead a two-year project which will ultimately produce a body of research, a website, an exhibition and a publication. The Hotel Yeoville project is partnering with the Wits Forced

Migration Studies Programme (FMSP) and is a close collaboration between a mix of people who work across many different disciplines and occupations, hailing from South Africa and elsewhere on the continent and the globe. The team includes multimedia artists, photographers, urban planners, social scientists, community activists, Internet café owners and their personnel, an information architect, a web designer and a web developer.

Our first process was to conduct site visits towards an understanding of the social and spatial infrastructure of the neighborhood, engaging in conversation with residents and small business owners on the high street. The unusual density of Internet cafes on Yeoville's main Rocky Street was an immediately striking phenomenon. We counted 20 in just four blocks and all of them filled with customers at every terminal.

The term "Internet café" usually evokes an image of world travelers checking on their email and their lives back at home. In this context however, they are much more than that. They are places where you can make long distance phone calls, have your CV typed, commission somebody to do research for you, have all kinds of forms filled in, or a job application photocopied; you can hire a DVD, order a plate of food, have your hair cut and styled or find out about places to stay and routes through the city and its authorities. Café income is of necessity produced in multiple ways; customers using the Internet to communicate with family and friends in far-flung homes across the continent bring in the least of it. People use the cafés to be with familiar people and share news and information. Most of the cafés are owned and run by foreigners and have very specific national identities providing the link between people living in South Africa and the places that they have come from. Internet cafés in Yeoville seem to be integrated into the lives of the people living around them; many customers making repeat visits at intervals throughout the day.

The spin-off of this need creates interesting community spaces and we discussed introducing our project through a customised website aimed at the online community of Yeoville. Our thinking here was to introduce a cultural space and/or a cultural project in such a way that it would not be separated from existing social infrastructure and contemporary everyday practices. In order to do so we began a process of negotiation between partners, participants, stakeholders, audience and ourselves through whom the project began to take shape.

In a modest way, the website idea was conceived of as a strategic intervention to assist the residents of Yeoville in building social networks and social capital, decreasing their isolation, increasing their visibility and accessing the hidden resources of their own community. But we were also thinking about it as a cultural object; a site that might produce itself through largely user-generated functionality, simultaneously producing a social map of the territory our project engages with and producing the raw material necessary for the next two phases of our project; the design and production of an exhibition and a book publication.

Preliminary discussions with the owners and managers of Internet cafés were very interesting and encouraging.

They liked the idea, or were curious enough to generously agree to host our research process. We gathered together a research team of a mix of South African and immigrant researchers mostly resident in Yeoville and designed a series of research tools comprising paper and online questionnaires aimed at Internet café users, Internet café owner/managers and staff, and people on the street.

Internet café users were friendly and responsive, and our questionnaires produced a sense of a typical research persona and their Internet needs. We discovered that – contrary to the popular notion about developing countries that there is a huge digital divide between rich and poor people – the Yeoville community, in fact, maximise technology as a survival strategy with hundreds of users completely disrupting that digital divide idea. It revealed how available technology in developing contexts is already being used and is key to the ways in which people manage to survive, regardless of the apparent lack of infrastructure and first world notions of "developed" (one person, one PC).<sup>5</sup> For the people in these communities "digital divide" is a purely academic notion while they actively embrace and share technology to get on with their lives.

We then worked on designing the Hotel Yeoville website based upon the political importance of the minutely-observed details of personal everyday life. We decided to design the site's navigation through six everyday life categories; to have a site that largely produces itself as a cultural object through user generated content and interactivity. To add useful resources and to include playful interactivity that might generate social mapping. We then went back to the Internet café owners and managers for feedback.

The website is now in the final process of being built. The Internet café owners have, in principal, agreed to make Hotel Yeoville the home page on each of their terminals. We hope to go live with the first iteration of the site soon.

While art can't change the world, it's often the way society holds a conversation with itself about itself, provoking thoughts and questions, and holding up to the light or placing in relief a range of pressing global socio-political conditions. In this first phase of the project, we hope to generate those conversations and to consider the implication of these reflections for the decisions of policymakers, city planners and designers while drawing on the lived experience of urban residents themselves.

#### Endnotes

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etoric

# Operation submission: moulding the media to parrot Mugabe mantras



ZimbabweInPictures.com/Taurai Maduna

by Vincent Kahiya

**J**ust before the electoral sham, which retained Robert Mugabe as president of Zimbabwe, at least half the vehicles in the capital Harare carried Zanu-PF campaign paraphernalia. In the townships it was rare to see a house without Mugabe's poster. The young and the old carried portraits of Mugabe on their chests, heads and backsides (how appropriate I thought) depending on the apparel provided to carry the party slogans.

This was emblematic of a people terrorised into submission by a system bent on retaining power for Mugabe at all costs. Dissent was met with brute force executed in the form of extra-judicial killings, rape, torture, beatings, forced disappearances and destruction of property. To many, pretending to be a Zanu-PF became the best form of self protection. Relics of repression became instruments of survival for the general public.

For this second round of polling, government thought the police was more than determined to mould the media into a pliant apparatus to parrot Mugabe's mantras and completely shut out his opponent Tsvangirai. There was more. The media was also expected to turn a blind eye to the brutal campaign that preceded the polling on 27 June. If any of the incidents were to be reported, the official



line was that the opposition was responsible for all the violence. There was no official confirmation from the police on the more than 80 people the MDC claims have been murdered between March 29 and June 27.

The draconian nature of the Zimbabwe's media laws and the Orwellian media strategy of the government of President Mugabe have been well documented. The hectic election period between March and July has reminded the world of the daily grind of a Zimbabwean journalist and how the profession has been criminalised for foreign scribes.

Foreign journalists thrown into police cells on charges of covering the election with proper

accreditation wrote horror stories of experiences they do not hope to ever experience again. Theirs was a brief dance with the devil. Ours is permanent engagement in which journalists have to learn survival tactics. They are aware that they can be arrested for simply taking a picture or covering a demonstration. In most instances, no real charges are preferred but the experience is often traumatic.

In one emblematic incident, our photographer and driver on a routine assignment to photograph foreign currency traders at a major cross-border bus stop, were threatened by men with guns. The photographer made good his escape while the driver was forced to hand over the keys to the gunmen who drove the vehicle away. The vehicle soon appeared at the central police station where the driver and photographer were summoned to give statements. No one was charged and the vehicle was handed back but the gunmen were never identified.

Ten years ago I attended a conflict reporting workshop organised by the Reuters Foundation at Rhodes University. Coming from a relatively peaceful country at the time, it was easy to dismiss the course as being only relevant to our comrades from Rwanda, the DRC and Somalia. But here I am 10 years later reciting notes from the course to the youngsters in the newsroom. "In all situations exercise common sense and use all your instincts to keep out of trouble... Look for the story, and not for trouble... Have a level of professional maturity to



ZimbabwePictures.com/Chris Kabwato



ZimbabwePictures.com/Chris Kabwato



ZimbabwePictures.com/Linda Gabriel



ZimbabwePictures.com/Chris Kabwato

make the right call..."

This is an intimidating environment where it is easy to distrust your colleagues. The intelligence has seen fit to recruit operatives from newsrooms. Diary meetings have become different from the traditional brainstorming sessions where frankness and debate were encouraged. These days you do not know where the information will end up.

We parted ways with a senior political reporter who admitted to passing an unedited story to a third party – in this case to a state security officer. Before the paper had even hit the streets, we were hit by a court injunction by the director of intelligence barring the distribution of the paper. Subsequent correspondence from the government spooks threatened me with arrest if the story was published. We never got to publish the story as it became dated while our lawyers haggled with intelligence over the issue.

The moral of the experience was that we were becoming more vulnerable with each passing day, especially when one of our own was a conduit for channeling information to the state security.

The degree of infiltration can never be known but the incident confirmed our worst fears; we had been infiltrated and paranoia and suspicions soon became rude reality.

I also get worried when officials run to the state media to deny details of a story we are due to publish. There are subtle fishing expeditions

from officialdom to find out the sources of our information especially issues to do with the internal dynamics in the ruling Zanu-PF party – a subject we have keenly covered.

Then there is open hostility displayed in official statements describing the privately-owned press as "weapons of mass destruction" – not very complimentary is it? There are random arrests of senior newsroom staff and in between we are kept busy by civil lawsuits, some of which are as vexatious as their sponsors. The combination of arrests and lawsuits is designed to kill off newspapers' zeal to investigate and publish state excesses, policy failures and the degeneracy of individual members of the ruling elite.

This is generally the sore point between us and the state. The enactment of laws such as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act was a bold attempt to close the media space. There is a raft of media laws that make it criminal to criticise the president or to write stories which cause disaffection in the police and the army. There are very broad definitions of these crimes.

The danger has also involved newspaper vendors who have been beaten up by thugs who confiscate their papers and rob hawkers of cash. In May a truck transporting 60 000 copies of *The Zimbabwean*, the paper printed in South Africa, was burnt and the driver was assaulted by armed thugs.

Last month, the government also imposed

punitive taxes on foreign private papers sold in Zimbabwe including the *Mail&Guardian*, the *Sunday Times*, the *Sunday Independent* and the *Star*. Even after paying the taxes and duties, authorities have in instances refused to release papers for sale.

There is all the evidence one needs that Zanu-PF's intimidating grip on national and international media effectively quashed the opposition MDC's campaign for the second round of polling. Government information handlers made sure that no pro-opposition material was aired by the state broadcasters, effectively blocking any country-wide campaign coverage. The state justified this brazen assault on civil liberties and outright disregarding of regional SADC norms and standards on the staging of democratic elections. "The MDC was using inappropriate language!" government said.

To make statements of its intent to reconstruct the state media, in May, the government fired Henry Muradzikwa, chief executive officer of the state broadcaster the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation before sending seven news staffers on forced leave. Muradzikwa was immediately replaced by Happison Muchechetere, a war veteran, and toadying Mugabe loyalist. The results were immediate. The airwaves were filled with pro-Mugabe propaganda and jingles while Tsvangirai and his party were subjected to unethical hate speech and threats of war.

To our rulers, he is the model journo.

by Tom Rhodes

**A**politically-vulnerable President Robert Mugabe and his administration have unleashed the harshest news media crackdown in their notoriously repressive tenure. Startled by the 29 March election results that favored the opposition, Mugabe's government has arbitrarily detained at least 15 journalists and media workers, intimidated sources, obstructed the delivery of independent news, and tightened its grasp on state media.

"This is the worst time for journalists in Zimbabwe's history," Geoff Hill, an exiled Zimbabwean reporter and author, told the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). Several other veteran journalists, both local and foreign, offered the same characterisation during interviews conducted here and in areas bordering Zimbabwe.

The press crackdown comes as police, soldiers, and militants with the ruling Zanu-PF party have orchestrated a campaign of violence aimed at crushing the opposition and ensuring that Mugabe, 84, will remain in power as he has since 1980. This has resulted in Morgan Tsvangirai of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) withdrawing from the presidential runoff saying he could not ask supporters to cast a ballot when "that vote could cost them their lives".

A spike in journalist arrests immediately after the 29 March election – among them the detention of Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter Barry Bearak – drew worldwide attention. But CPJ's investigation has found that throughout the run-off election period, Mugabe's government has engaged in an ongoing pattern of press harassment. Police have arrested journalists without basis and charged them under nonexistent laws. State radio has been filled with pro-Mugabe propaganda. Foreign newspapers have been subjected to onerous import charges, their staffers to outright attack.

Despite the crackdown, numerous local and foreign journalists are taking risks to get the Zimbabwe story out to the world.

Independent news outlets are scarce in Zimbabwe, the product of many years of government repression. Zimbabwe today has no independent daily newspapers, no private radio news coverage, and just two prominent independent weeklies. Seven news websites and one radio station have been launched outside the country by exiled Zimbabwean journalists, although access to them is limited inside Zimbabwe's borders. Two television stations and a small handful of newspapers from South Africa also reach into the country.

About a half-dozen international news organisations have correspondents permanently stationed in Harare, although the number grows several-fold during election periods. Many news organisations are forced to skirt restrictive entry requirements so they can report inside the country. For the 29 March vote, major outlets such as CNN, BBC, Sky News and South Africa's e.tv were officially barred from covering the election inside the country.

Unlike some African countries where foreign journalists can work relatively freely, Zimbabwe has targeted journalists working for international media. Just one week after the election results were announced, five foreign media workers were detained across the country. Bearak, a *New York Times* correspondent, was arrested during this period and charged with "committing journalism".

"One of my captors, Detective Inspector Dani Rangwani, described the offence to me as something despicable," Bearak recounted in an interview with CPJ.

It was not, however, a crime. Zimbabwe's parliament this year revised the country's notorious Access to Information and Privacy Policy Act, or AIPPA, allowing journalists to work without state accreditation. That did not stop authorities from using the now-obsolete section of the law to arbitrarily arrest at least 10 journalists. "Now when the police arrest journalists they are either using trumped-up charges or laws that no longer exist," Bearak said.

All types of media workers have been targeted, CPJ research shows. In May, three truck drivers were arrested for allegedly hauling Sky News equipment, and they are now facing six-month jail terms. In March, two technicians working for the South African media company GlobeCast were arrested while setting up cameras and other equipment for an interview with Information Minister Sikhanyiso Ndlovu. One of them, cameraman Siphosiso Maseko, spent most of two weeks in Zimbabwean prisons, including one meant for hardened criminals, before being acquitted on obsolete accreditation charges. "The main prison was particularly dire – it's full of sick people," Maseko said.

A veteran newsman, he was still shocked at landing in jail "for setting up a microphone".

The GlobeCast case was replete

# From bad worse for Zimbabwean journalists

with irregularities, CPJ's investigation found. One magistrate, finding no basis for the arrests of Maseko and colleague Abdulla Ismail Gaibbe, ordered their release only to see a high-ranking police inspector simply re-arrest the pair within minutes of their leaving the Harare courtroom. "The law is only adhered to and applied when it serves the perpetuation of the state," said Beatrice Mtetwa, a human rights lawyer who has defended a number of journalists.

Trumped-up and retaliatory charges were used in several cases, CPJ found. Frank Chikowore, a Zimbabwean journalist, was arrested on charges of "public violence" during a protest on 15 April organised by the MDC. The charge was related to the torching of a bus during the event – but local journalists said Chikowore arrived at the scene at least five hours after the bus had been set on fire. Although he was finally released on bail, Chikowore was denied medical attention for

abdominal pains for days.

Chikowore's lawyer Harrison Nkomo, was himself arrested for "insulting the president" in private remarks he is said to have made to the state prosecutor. Criticism of Mugabe is on the books as a criminal offence, and it was enforced with greater frequency during the run-off period. An article critical of Mugabe by MDC faction leader Arthur Mutambara in the independent weekly *The Standard* led to the arrest of Mutambara and the paper's editor Davison Maruziva.

Ironically, the run-up to the 29 March elections had been relatively calm for the press. In talks with the Southern Africa Development Community Mugabe's administration agreed to amend AIPPA, which had been considered one of the most restrictive press accreditation laws in the world. The negotiations, designed to promote fair elections, also produced an agreement that election results would be posted outside polling stations.

Opposition party leaders called the initial election period the freest and fairest since the MDC's 1999 inception. Confident of victory, Zanu-PF allowed state media to broadcast opposition campaign material. State broadcasters announced results in vernacular languages to reach a wider audience.

Those results showed the MDC had won an unprecedented majority in parliament, and that Tsvangirai appeared to have won at least a slim victory in the presidential race. The people voted for change, US Ambassador James McGee said in an interview with exile-run SW Radio, and the ruling elite were not prepared for it.

A clique of senior generals in the Joint Operations Command pushed back with a vengeance, directing widespread violence in rural areas where the MDC made unexpected electoral gains, according to news reports and CPJ interviews. The state-sponsored intimidation list has expanded daily to include civic leaders, teachers, human rights lawyers, church leaders, and even diplomats.

Mugabe has long been willing to endure political isolation from the West, but this time

he has come in for regional criticism as well. Although South African President Thabo Mbeki has been guarded in his comments, African National Congress President Jacob Zuma and veteran South African cabinet minister Pallo Jordan were vocal in their criticism.

Then 40 prominent African political and civic leaders, including Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano, a once-staunch ally of Mugabe, wrote an open letter calling for free and fair elections.

CPJ's investigation found that it has been exceptionally difficult to report the story from rural areas, where state-sponsored torture has become commonplace. The brutal tactics of pro-government militants have intimidated many sources into silence, reporters told CPJ. Journalists not only risk their own safety in these areas, they said, they fear endangering those they interview.

"We can't go to rural areas to do violence stories as we were able in early April," said Peta Thornycroft, a Zimbabwean reporter for the London-based *Daily Telegraph*. "We would bring danger to people who are already in danger. Several contacts have sent messages to us not to come." Even the informal network of information that once existed between rural areas and towns

is largely broken now due to deteriorating phone lines and increasingly infrequent bus routes, Thornycroft said.

Opposition sources also became scarce as they feared arrest or attack. Tsvangirai was detained at least five times in less than two weeks, and the MDC claimed that 86 supporters were killed in state-sponsored violence.

Even if the MDC could have talked freely, the opposition stopped getting airtime on state broadcast media. In May, the government dismissed Henry Muradzikwa, chief executive officer of the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation, for allegedly defying orders to suppress favorable opposition coverage, according to local reports. At least seven senior broadcasters were also suspended for failing to cast Mugabe's campaign in a sufficiently positive light, according to the exile-run news website ZimOnline. Newly appointed ZBC chief Happison Muchechetere, a staunch Zanu-PF loyalist, began packaging news bulletins with campaign messages from the ruling party.

About the same time, Mugabe spokesman George Charamba instructed all state media outlets to block MDC campaign advertisements and pro-opposition editorials. The Media Monitoring Project cited a dramatic surge in pro-Zanu-PF music, advertisements, and programming – including 66 Zanu-PF advertisements in the first week of June. Unsurprisingly, the government media has not provided balanced or comprehensive coverage of the widespread political violence or of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission's run-off preparations.

As they have tightened their grasp on state media, the ruling elite have cracked down on distribution of independent news. According to *The Standard*, the government decided in early June to deploy soldiers to obstruct private newspaper dealers in the Masvingo district of southern Zimbabwe and in two towns in the midlands, Gweru and Kwekwe. The paper also reported cases of Zanu-PF militias assaulting people holding copies of *The Standard's* sister paper, *Zimbabwe Independent*, in the eastern Harare suburbs of Mabvuku and Tafara. Government militias in Matabeleland ordered residents to remove satellite receivers from their homes so they could not receive "misleading reports" from South African and Botswana broadcasters, the Media Institute of Southern Africa reported.

To obstruct foreign newspapers entering Zimbabwe, the government imposed import duties and surcharges of up to 60% in June, according to news reports and CPJ interviews. For *The Zimbabwean*, an independent weekly printed in South Africa, the charges are totalling R140 000 per issue, said the paper's UK-based editor Wilf Mbanga. The charges come at the same time the government has imposed price limits on single-copy sales.

Sales of *The Zimbabwean* are reaching record levels nonetheless, with more than 200 000 copies being shipped into Zimbabwe. "We are now selling far more than ever before," Mbanga said, "which proves that despite the economic hardships, people are desperate for accurate, reliable information." The paper's success has come at a price: Suspected security agents near the southeastern town of Masvingo hijacked a newspaper's delivery truck, beat the drivers, and then set fire to the truck with 60 000 copies inside.

Foreign radio and television are popular throughout the country, partly due to the poor quality of Zimbabwe's only domestic broadcaster, the state-run ZBC. But signals from SW Radio and Voice of America's Studio 7 were periodically



ZimbabwePictures.com/Taurai Maduna

jammed by the government during the election period, local journalists told CPJ. SW Radio founder Gerry Jackson, an exiled Zimbabwean residing in the United Kingdom, now sends daily news bulletins to 22 000 people through text messages as a way to avoid government censorship.

Other creative techniques have been used to disseminate news. "Citizen journalism has caught on in Zimbabwe," Hill told CPJ, and some citizens are taking risks to get the story out to the world.

Local and foreign journalists are using volunteers to help relay information from the volatile rural areas where pro-government militants crack down on news media and opposition supporters. South Africa's e.tv, for example, has used reliable volunteers from the border town of Beitbridge to help gather and relay information. These volunteers, who can collect information less conspicuously, are "the unnamed heroes and heroines" of this ongoing story, Thornycroft said.

Journalists based in South Africa are making quick forays of their own across the border. In some cases, they've worked in tandem: one reporter conducts an initial set of interviews and hands off to a colleague for follow-up reporting. In all cases, fast and surreptitious methods are necessary; journalists no longer stay in one area for long. Twenty-minute interviews are reduced to 10 minutes. Unmarked vehicles carry equipment to strategic hideouts to avoid detection.

"Even with this big suppression, networks still manage to smuggle cameras in and conduct hit-and-run interviews," said GlobeCast's Maseko, who has worked with several major television networks. "The news is still getting leaked out."

# Distrust and speculation

by Sandra Roberts

The South African media's previous experience of Zimbabwean elections, coupled with the economic problems faced by Zimbabwe and a lack of media freedom and curtailment of civil society organisations have undoubtedly led to South African journalists distrusting Zimbabwe's official sources. And this distrust and lack of access to alternative sources has led to speculative coverage rather than evidence- and event-based reporting.

The Media Monitoring Project monitored coverage for two weeks before and after the elections in March 2008<sup>1</sup> and found that while news media face a difficult job when covering elections, it is exactly then that they can best play their role as watchdog.

Reporting of elections in a situation like Zimbabwe has proved doubly challenging – as the environment prohibited open access to information, discussion, debate and freedom of opinion. And the indicators were there before the election – with a variety of stories pointing to different concerns, such as the lack of media freedom and objective election observers, the ability to campaign freely for the opposition and vote buying and rigging.

Journalists' suspicions seemed justified when the process of vote-counting proved unaccountably long. This led to further speculation. After the polls, there was much discussion on whether the elections were free and fair, and why the results were being delayed. There was also, general speculation on the outcome of the elections, whether there would be a run-off, whether there will be an outbreak of violence, or whether the economy of Zimbabwe can be revived. Sadly subsequent events have shown the elections to be neither free nor fair with excessive violence being reported.

The lack of media freedom in Zimbabwe, no doubt, contributed to the amount of speculation during the election period. Firstly, it made collecting material for stories very difficult, with various media being denied access to Zimbabwe to cover the elections completely. Secondly, the clampdown of Zimbabwean media also functioned to make the Zimbabwe government seem less credible. There were only a handful of stories in the period monitored that directly quoted the Zimbabwean government.

While media in Zimbabwe faced difficulties with freedom of expression, the South African media struggled to report on a process with little information and great distrust. For some older journalists, it may have served as a reminder of what it was like to report during apartheid, when a complete lack of credibility on the part of government made reporting events very difficult.

This article is based on a longer version available from [www.mediamonitoring.org.za](http://www.mediamonitoring.org.za)

## Endnotes

1. *Beeld*, *City Press*, *Daily Sun*, *Mail&Guardian*, *Saturday Star*, *Sowetan*, *Sunday Times*, *The Citizen*, *The Star*, *The Times*, *Weekender*, e.tv, and SABC 3.

by Elinor Sisulu

during Zimbabwe's March 2005 election, elderly Zimbabwean grandmother MaMoyo was heard asking a plaintive question: "Why is this Tony Blair coming to our country to contest elections? He is the one causing all this trouble." So effective had been the anti-Blair campaign of the Zimbabwe government in the election that poor MaMoyo believed that Tony Blair was in Zimbabwe physically participating in the elections! MaMoyo's mistaken belief was not based on ignorance or lack of intelligence but was a result of five years of sustained propaganda from the state coupled with the almost total denial of media voices to the rural populace of Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe has the unenviable distinction of having the fastest shrinking economy, the highest rate of inflation (now in the millions), one of the highest rates of employment (80%) and the lowest life expectancy in the world (34 years for women and 37 years for men). Zimbabweans today are poorer than they were 50 years ago. The scale and speed of this income decline is unusual outside of a war situation, according to the Report by the Centre for Global Development.

In fact, the income losses in Zimbabwe have been greater than those experienced during recent conflicts in Ivory Coast, Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone.

It is one of the greatest conundrums of the opening years of the 21st century that President Robert Mugabe's government continues to cling tenaciously to power in the face of an economic crisis of such staggering proportions and a multi-faceted social, political and humanitarian crisis.

The Zimbabwe government owes its staying power to the fact that its economic ineptitude is inversely proportional to its efficiency in marshalling the instruments of a repressive state to ruthlessly suppress all forms of opposition. Indeed there is a remarkable parallel between the South African regime of the 1980s and the Zimbabwean dictatorship at the turn of the century.

The attacks on press freedom, assaults on the independence of the judiciary, a battery of repressive laws, detention without trial, torture and other forms of state-sponsored violence, the use of "third force" elements such as youth militia, an unrelenting barrage of propaganda and militarisation of the state are common elements of both PW Botha's apartheid regime and Robert Mugabe's dictatorship.

The Mugabe regime however, has had a crucial advantage over the apartheid regime of the 1980s – that is the unstinting support of its regional neighbours. The support from African governments has been the mainstay of survival of the Mugabe regime. This support has been maintained through the skilful use of an anti-imperialist discourse that reduces the crisis to a conflict between the sovereign state of Zimbabwe and the former colonial power. The propaganda delegitimises authentic Zimbabwean voices by characterising them as puppets opposed to land reform. The deliberately created cacophony over the land issue drowns out the discourse over human rights violations in Zimbabwe.

Just as the apartheid regime understood the power of the media and did all it could to suppress it, so the Mugabe regime understands that its grip on power is dependent on silencing any independent media voices and supplanting them with an aggressive propaganda campaign. Draconian legislation such as the Access to Information and Privacy Act (AIPPA) the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and the Broadcasting Services Act have been used to close down media space.

Like the apartheid regime, the Zimbabwe government has closed down newspapers and carried out a vicious campaign against journalists and independent media stakeholders. Zimbabwe has been classified by international human rights and media organisations as one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists.

Media repression in Zimbabwe has had dire consequences for the populace. The massacre of 20 000 people in Matabeleland and parts of the Midlands in the Gukurahundi campaign between 1983 and 1987 were carried out under a media blackout in the affected areas. Like Gukurahundi, the catastrophic destruction that rendered 700 000 people homeless under Operation Murambatsvina, would not have been possible in an environment of media freedom.

Zimbabwe's rigged elections of 2000, 2002 and 2005 would not have been possible without the muzzling of the media. Media restrictions were eased for a short time before the harmonised presidential, senate and parliamentary elections of 29 March this year.

It is instructive that the head of the state-controlled Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation was fired after he was blamed for giving the opposition too much airtime, thereby contributing towards the victory of Morgan Tsvangirai's MDC.

The Zanu-PF master plan that unfolded in the wake of the 29 March poll had several elements – withhold the election results, close down political space to prevent any public unrest, declare a presidential run-off since neither candidate had garnered more than 50% of the vote, roll out a campaign of violent retribution and put in place structures of violent coercion throughout the country to ensure victory during the anticipated run-off.

Undergirding this strategy was an intensive propaganda drive employing the usual anti-imperialist rhetoric and resuscitating that old scapegoat – the white farmers who were targeted, along with opposition activists in previously Zanu-PF strongholds.

Throughout April, May and June the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum and Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human rights confirmed reports from all over the country of a terror campaign intended to ensure that people will be too frightened to vote for the MDC in a run-off election. Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights (ZADHR) treated



# In the grip of silence

thousands of patients suffering from severe injuries sustained from assaults by Zanu-PF militia and war veterans. In its Daily Media Update on 14 April, the Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe referred to "Frightening new levels of disinformation and distortion featured in the two government-controlled dailies this morning, reinforcing the impression that they are not just biased in favour of Zanu-PF but are actually used as conduits by the embattled authorities

to misinform the public." More than just misinforming the public, these reports set the stage for intimidation and violent attacks against those identified as culprits.

The arrival of SADC, AU and Pan-African Parliament (PAP) observer missions in the weeks before the 27 June presidential election run-off failed to stem the tide of violence. In fact, acts of violence were carried out in full view of some observers. By the third week of June over 80 opposition activist were reported dead, more than 2 000 people severely assaulted and tortured, hundreds of women raped or sexually abused and over 200 000 people displaced.

Fearing even greater loss of life, leader of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), Morgan Tsvangirai, was forced to withdraw from the election. President Mugabe and his government chose to go ahead with the election against the advice of SADC and the AU.

Unlike the 29 March poll, the results of the June 27 presidential run-off were almost instantly available. The massive boycott of large sections of the voting population was not reflected in the official results that indicated that Robert Mugabe has obtained at least a million more votes than he had done in the previous election. He was inaugurated on the day after the election in time to jet off to the 11th Summit of the African Union at Sharm El Sheikh in Egypt.

Despite the thumbs down from the Pan-African Parliament Election Observer Mission, the AU Observer Mission and the SADC Observer Mission, the AU resolution that emerged from the Sharm El Sheikh summit did not recommend any substantive action against the Mugabe regime. It failed to acknowledge the impact of state-sponsored violence on the Zimbabwean people or to recommend any measures to protect them from further harm.

It merely threw the fate of the Zimbabwean people back into the hands of the SADC-appointed mediator President Thabo Mbeki, urging him to continue with his efforts to seek a negotiated solution in the form of a government of national unity.

It is difficult to understand how talks between the Mugabe regime and the MDC will progress in the context of ongoing violence. Surely the violence that forced Morgan Tsvangirai out of the 27 June election will also make it impossible to enter into an agreement on a government of national unity with Mugabe?

The media blackout in many areas of Zimbabwe continues to mask the levels of violence and regrettably media focus, especially in South Africa, has moved to the "two men syndrome".

Solutions to the crisis in Zimbabwe are premised on Tsvangirai and Mugabe "sitting at a table to talk". It is as if the crisis in Zimbabwe can be simply attributed to the failure of these two men to talk as a result of personality differences, instead of the fundamental problem of the conduct of the Zimbabwean government.

It is clear that instead of the mediation in its current form, a more painstaking negotiation process must be undertaken, one that addresses the fundamental unfairness of what has taken place and seeks to redress it; one that acknowledges the great violence that has been done and that there is a need for a transitional process with outside support until the parties and civil society are able to co-operate; one that ends the violence and restores humanitarian assistance to the millions in need and, above all, one that acknowledges that Zimbabweans voted for change on 29 March 2008 and recognises, in the interests of democracy, not only in Zimbabwe but the whole continent, that their wishes should not be negotiated away in a political settlement that ignores and denies their rights.

Above all, the people of Zimbabwe must be given a voice in that process. Removal of media restrictions and repressive media laws is central not only to giving all Zimbabweans the right to express themselves about the kind of changes they want in their country, it is central to the struggle to end the violence and ensure their safety and security.



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# Staying in touch

by Arther Chatora

I have been studying in Grahamstown for five years and I now consider Grahamstown my second home. It has been fairly easy for me to settle here given the fact that Rhodes University is home to many Zimbabwean students and academic personnel. Diverse cultures merge in this town, giving it a cosmopolitan feel. Although seemingly far from Grahamstown, Zimbabwe gets a lot of representation from different media organisations.

My main source of news on Zimbabwe is the Internet. There are a couple of websites I religiously visit, which offer different views on the situation in my country. The sites I frequent include *The Zimbabwe Independent Online*, *The Standard* and *Financial Gazette*. *The Zimbabwe Independent* and the *Financial Gazette* are business weeklies which are highly critical of the government, attempting to hold public officials accountable. To balance out this critical view, I usually read *The Herald Online* and *The Sunday Mail Online*, both government publications whose representation of the country is embedded in ideologies of nation-building and protecting the country from external influence. Websites such as Zimonline, SWRadioAfrica, ZimDaily and NewZimbabwe offer an alternative different voice, often critical and hard hitting.

I have observed that different South African media organisations have different ideologies and their representations of Zimbabwe support these. I have been subscribing to the *Mail&Guardian* for the past five years and their representation of Zimbabwe is critical and often on the mark. The publication often represents issues on the Zimbabwe governance crisis, deteriorating political environment, welfare and economic environment and I find their perspective informative. Although other media publications tend to sensationalise representations on Zimbabwe, I find the general portrayal of Zimbabwe by South African media fair.

South African broadcast media also offers a different but useful lens for looking at issues in Zimbabwe. SABC and SABC Africa try to offer a balanced portrayal of Zimbabwe but it is e.tv which hits the mark for me. e.tv goes beyond informing viewers and, through investigative journalism, manages to offer well-researched stories.

I get alternative perspectives from BBC, CNN and Al Jazeera, organisations which offer different discourses which I find quite interesting. BBC and CNN are highly critical of Zimbabwe while Al Jazeera is relatively truthful and balanced in its reportage.

My other source of information on Zimbabwe is through communication with family and friends still in the country and living in the diaspora. I also assess the situation on the ground when I go back to Zimbabwe and I talk to a lot of people who update me on the issues and concerns unfolding there in my absence.



**T**he freedom of South Africa's media to report without state interference is more robust now than at any time in our history. Even as the chorus of anti-media sentiment from the government and the tripartite alliance gathered volume last year, the media emerged stronger rather than weakened. Two new newspapers and a television channel saw the light of day, and a progressive court ruling rewrote the rules around pre-publication censorship.<sup>1</sup> But the price of freedom, as the saying goes, is eternal vigilance.

by Robert Brand

demanded the inclusion of three of his nominees – Christine Qunta, Gloria Serobe and Andile Mbeki – on the short list of candidates recommended by Parliament. Instead of asserting its independence then, Parliament caved in to the presidency and recommended a board it didn't want.

When Polokwane brought about a power shift in the ANC, Parliament tried to reverse its decision by adopting a vote of no confidence in the board, only to discover that it doesn't have the power to dismiss individual board members, let alone the entire board.

In civil society, in the meantime, a debate continued to rage about the future of the SABC. A number of commentators, among them Professor Anton Harber, head of journalism at the University of the Witwatersrand, and Professor Guy Berger, head of the School of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University, called for a new process, led by civil society, to appoint members of the board, thus wresting it from the politicians' grip.

Groups including Sangonet, the Southern African Litigation Centre, the Freedom of Expression Institute, the Media Monitoring Project, Oxfam, the Open Society Foundation and the National Consumer Forum set up a committee to "reclaim the national broadcaster" (*Business Day*, 3 July 2008). In addition to proposing ways of solving the current management crisis in the institution, the committee intends making proposals on amendments to the Broadcasting Act and the SABC Charter to ensure the independence of the board and broadcaster.

Parliament's response, however, was to fast-track a bill aimed at giving itself de facto power to remove members of the board or to dissolve the entire board. The Broadcasting Amendment Bill, drafted by ANC members of the communications portfolio committee, was gazetted in early July, clearing the way for public hearings in August and promulgation before the end of the year.

The Bill sets out grounds for the removal of individual board members, including misconduct, the inability to perform functions efficiently, absence from three consecutive board meetings without good cause, and having undisclosed financial interests. Crucially, the President has to act on a recommendation by Parliament calling for the removal of members or dissolution of the board.

But such a proposal, far from rescuing the SABC from its political mire, will add to the potential for abuse, some opposition MPs warned. While agreeing with the principle of giving Parliament a say in the removal of board members on objective grounds of misconduct and incapacity, Democratic Alliance MP Dene Smuts strongly opposed the proposal allowing for the dissolution of the entire board.

"Is it inconceivable that an entire body selected by Parliament with public nomination and participation will be unable to perform its functions, and its members one by one found incapacitated?" Smuts asked, according to *Business Day* (27 June 2008). The only purpose of such a provision, she said, would be to enable a political purge.

The future of the SABC is about much more than the corporation itself. The steady erosion of the SABC's public broadcasting ethos – both as a result of political interference and commercial imperatives – has left the majority of South Africans without a reliable and impartial source of news and information. The management crisis has further eroded public confidence in an institution that should be a central pillar of South Africa's democratic system.

# The price of freedom

## South Africa's media in 2008

The debate about a statutory media tribunal, meanwhile, seems to have waned. Constitutional law experts, including Professor Pierre de Vos at the University of the Western Cape, have pointed out that any attempt at state control over print media would be unconstitutional. History shows that it would also, probably, be ineffective. In 1962, following sustained criticism of the media by the National Party government (surprisingly similar in tone and content to the ANC's criticism today), the Newspaper Press Union established a Press Board of Reference to adjudicate complaints against newspapers.

As William Hachten and Anthony Giffard recount in their book *Total onslaught: the South African press under attack*, the board received only 28 complaints in its first 10 years of existence, most of them from National Party politicians. It ruled against the press in 15 cases but issued only two reprimands, leading the chairman Judge de Villiers to remark: "I have come to the conclusion that, generally speaking, we have an excellent press in South Africa... In regards to errors, the remarkable fact is not that they occur, but that they do not occur more frequently."

One other issue may have profound consequences for South African media: a pending court case to decide whether a government body may withdraw advertising from a newspaper in response to unfavourable coverage. The case, which will be heard in the High Court in Grahamstown, pits a local newspaper, *Grocott's Mail*, against the city council, and has implications far wider than the local community (at the time of writing the two parties were still negotiating). Similar boycotts have taken place against the *Witness* in Pietermaritzburg and *Talk of the Town* in Port Alfred, and Minister in the Presidency Essop Pahad has threatened the *Sunday Times* with the same fate. Newspapers, especially small community newspapers such as *Grocott's Mail*, derive a large proportion of their revenue from government advertising. A withdrawal of such advertising could be a death knell. The question is whether public resources should be used to prevent unfavourable coverage or reward sunshine journalism. In either case, the public is the loser.

### Endnotes

1. On 18 May, the Supreme Court of Appeal ruled in favour of Mide Television, trading as e.tv, in an appeal against a ruling which invoked the *sub judice* rule to prevent the television station from broadcasting a programme in connection with a pending court case. The court ruled that freedom of expression in most circumstances trumps concerns about the administration of justice, except when there is a real risk of prejudice and the prejudice will be real, demonstrable and substantial. Even then, a pre-publication ban should be a last resort, bearing in mind the right of every citizen to have access to information. In passing, the court noted that the same principle applies in every case where a pre-publication ban is sought. Three months later, Judge Mohamed Jajbhay followed this precedent when he rejected the health minister's attempt to gag the *Sunday Times* on the basis that it was invading her privacy.

Two issues have dominated debates around the media this year: the management crisis at the SABC, and the ANC's proposals for a statutory media tribunal, tabled at the organisation's national conference in December but only fully entering the national debate after the Christmas hiatus. Both have important implications for the future of South Africa's media.

The SABC, already buffeted by controversies about the "blacklisting" of commentators, the loss of soccer broadcast rights, and CEO Dali Mpofu's decision to sever the organisation's links with the South African National Editors' Forum (Sanef), lurched into a new storm when Mpofu fired his head of news Snuki Zikalala, only to be suspended in turn by his own board of directors. The roots of this dispute lie in the appointment of a new board in 2007 in a flawed process which politicised the corporation along the lines of the Zuma-Mbeki divisions in the ruling party.

The SABC board is appointed by the President on the recommendation of Parliament after a public nomination process and hearings. Parliament has been at odds with the presidency over the current board after Mbeki

# Sing a swansong for the SABC as we know it

## Keep public broadcasting, redistribute

*Behind the dragged-out confrontations around the SABC are a politics of paralysis. That's not necessarily a bad thing if the alternative is the broadcaster being a tool of a single particular force. But it's also not exactly first prize for South Africans. Power is divided across so many centres that no single force has been able to easily prevail on SABC during the year.*

**T**o recap: CEO Dali Mpofu suspended Snuki Zikalala in June, only to have this lifted a month later in a conciliation hearing. Meantime, he himself had been suspended three times by the board which challenged, amongst other things, his authority to act against Zikalala. The board itself, however, was frustrated in its desire to determine what happened at SABC, meeting with court action each time it tried to move against Mpofu.

Also thwarted in their aims were other stakeholders in the saga. Parliamentarians wanted to fire the board, only to find themselves without the authority to do so. Their influence was not enough to persuade the President to dismiss the members. Civil society mounted its own call for the board to resign, but also found itself stymied.

When the Minister of Communications announced a process to restructure the law on SABC governance, it was never an option to even consider this as a unilateral governmental project. Sure enough, MPs short-circuited her by the unusual step of drawing up their own legislative amendment, but also had to take cognisance of public

interest in making submissions on the process. Every stakeholder and his dog seemed to be blocking any single actor from having his or her way with the public broadcaster.

In all this, the corporation itself was not simply a sought-after football in a scrum of external players. Despite the suspensions of the CEO and the head of news, the broadcaster did not implode. Instead, programming continued. And senior staff and the main union at the corporation took a public stand on the controversy in support of the CEO.

Some coalface journalists became energised and seemed to feel that the vacuum required them to demonstrate their own ownership of the corporation. A number seemed to show real professional independence in covering the Zimbabwe crisis for instance.

The point is that everyone has wanted sway over SABC, but unlike the days of the Broederbond and subsequent securocrats, no one was able to prevail.

Despite its instability, this multi-power contest is set

**T**he SABC is funded by a combination of commercial ad revenue, licence fees and state funds. Opinion both in the ANC and among commentators has been growing that the SABC should throw off the golden shackles of commercial revenue in favour of more state funding. There is a danger that the SABC becomes a sinkhole for taxpayer's money, undermines the growth of new competition in broadcasting, and ends up toeing the government line.

The danger arises because of confusion between financial sustainability and the profit motive, and the idea that public funding might enable the SABC to mimic other publicly-funded broadcasters like the BBC, in producing independent, quality programming. Given its history, it is more likely the SABC will become a true outlet for government propaganda, as more funding translates into greater political control of content.

At the same time, a less rigorous Finance Minister than Trevor Manuel, appointed under a Jacob Zuma presidency, might be persuaded to direct more government funding to the SABC without insisting the organisation ditch its advertising revenue.

Anything less than doing without ad revenue would be to further

by Reg Rumney

## The funding conundrum

subsidise the dominant broadcaster, giving it even more of an unfair advantage in muscling aside private competition.

An ANC resolution at the 52nd conference in Polokwane in December last year repeats the resolution of the 51st ANC conference that public funding of the SABC increase, and comes up with a specific figure rather than a formula. The resolution proposes funding of the SABC increase to at least 60% by 2010. Why the figure is 60% is not explained: the SABC's commercial revenue is 80% of its total revenue. The

resolution does not explain what should happen to ad revenue, which was around R3-billion in the 2007 year.

The SABC is unlikely to resist a few billion coming its way. Coincidentally, the corporation in a never-presented presentation to Parliament earlier this year, proposed asking for around R4-billion extra funding over the next three years to the 2010/11 financial year. The SABC presentation was cancelled because of the well-publicised crisis caused by the suspension of Group CEO Dali Mpofu, but the documents were circulated.

The presentation also mentions a R1-billion request, which seems to be

to remain, with some ebbs and flows, for the foreseeable future. This is even with an impending change in the broadcast law which is likely to increase Parliament's power – but will be balanced by other stakeholder interests and actions.

It's a sign of the wider times. In the jostling of the various sandstorms, no single dune can easily coalesce to smother other interests contesting for the public broadcaster.

While the crisis at SABC has unfolded, broadcast power more broadly has also continued to diversify. e.tv started its 24-hour news service to subscribers. Coming closer has been the November deadline for digital broadcast switch-on – which will herald an era of many more broadcast channels,

# the broadcaster

by Guy Berger

including broadcasts to cellphones.

Almost overshadowed by the SABC on centre stage has been another development: some infant community TV outlets have received licences. Meantime, increasing broadband uptake continues to open up entirely new options for consumers of audio and video.

Eventually, all this pluralism will reduce the strategic significance of SABC and the rationale for all those currently seeking control of what continues – for now – to be a key lever of power.

But there is also a parallel route to hasten the depoliticisation of the SABC... and at the same time to deepen its potential for distinctively public service programming for South Africans. That means: programmes that are scrupulously fair in terms of politics, which expose a range of injustices, which educate citizens and promote minority languages, children's fare, and cultural celebration.

This way is simply to unbundle the broadcaster.

That's not the same as privatisation, because the SABC's stations would still be publically-owned and legally mandated to pursue public interest rather than profit. Instead, it is a proposed reaction to recognising that any beast as big as the corporation is always going to constitute a target for take-over.

The case for unbundling is possible because there's no

god-given reason why SABC should stay as a single entity.

Germany has 12 public broadcasting organisations, nine of which are regional entities governed independently even though they also make up a wider network. In Australia, there are two public broadcasters, with different boards and different business models.

Transforming the SABC into several separate entities would not be a loss of economies of scale. Instead, it could even facilitate a new flexibility and efficiency.

Part of such restructuring could also be to open up serious opportunities for parallel windows of locally-differentiated programming.

It's granted that listeners to Umhlobo Wenene in Gauteng may like to hear about what's happening in Port Elizabeth where the isiXhosa-language station has its centre of gravity. But, undeniably, the same people would also be very well served by several hours of programming specifically about what's up in their particular part of the world.

The converse applies. For instance, SABC TV news sometimes conflates national news with Gauteng news. Consider the viewers in KZN – they would definitely appreciate more regional and local TV news. The proposal then is to redistribute control of certain stations or airtime to the regions.

In some cases, such locally-rooted public broadcast outlets might fall subject to control by local politicians. But in principle, it could be easier to ensure local accountability around the regions than to have everything headquartered in Auckland Park (including the two new proposed regional TV channels).

Even having some decentralised stations suffering the fate of local hijack is arguably preferable to risking an entire centralised apparatus falling prey to the same scenario. Another case for unbundling is that it's probably impossible for a CEO to do the job of running both the business and the editorial sides of a broadcaster as big as SABC.

You just can't give adequate attention to each, let alone balance the contradictions between the two. Smaller entities may lessen this problem. The job should also be divided into peer positions – editorial and business, and the business model itself re-engineered.

Many people argue that the business model of SABC is partly responsible for this year's crisis. Losing soccer rights has been one of the biggest criticisms of Dali Mpofu's performance as CEO. The complaints have been based on

the loss of revenue, rather than emanating from a conception of public broadcasters providing universal access to national sports programming.

Without the huge pressure on public broadcasters to make money, the leadership could better concentrate on what the institution is supposed to concentrate on – programming for public service, where revenue is a means to this end, not an end in itself.

Instead of the marketplace, state, provincial or municipal funding could contribute to the costs of public broadcasting. While this could be a conduit for political control of stations, transparency and arms-length governance (properly regulated by the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa) can obviate or reduce such dangers.

There is no intrinsic reason for state-based funding, in a mixed revenue model, to translate to political control of an institution.

What would also take SABC out of the political realm is a change in governance structures. Part of the broadcaster's woes are a function of the fact that most of the forces interested in it are external to its board, rather than represented and aggregated within that structure.

That's an intrinsic result of politicians (MPs and the president) being exclusively charged with appointing the board, and also of them being able to do that in one fell swoop.

Instead, what's needed is a diversified body of appointers and appointees. For instance, trade unions should directly elect a representative to the board – and likewise churches, sports bodies, universities, business, etc. SABC staff should also have a nominee.

Politically-appointed members (via Parliament and President) would not be in a majority, and all appointments should be staggered so that the full board's terms of service do not all expire at the same time.

The result then would be a sharing of power between diverse interests, rather than this year's deadlock and strife from the outside, and the conflict between those without and those within.

In sum, for public broadcasting that works, we need several SABCs, with regional presences, operating on a different business model, and with governance that involves and reflects more diverse stakeholders.

It's an ambitious prize, but still one that's worth campaigning for.

separate, for funding of the SABC's programme stock.

The final slide in Mpofu's presentation to the communications parliamentary portfolio committee states: "Our success should no longer be measured solely on the basis of financial performance." Instead, he proposes that the barometer be "delivery against the freedoms enshrined in the Constitution, the requirements of the Broadcasting Charter and our delivery on our Corporate Goals".

The fallacy of this is that financial performance has never been the sole measure, and the SABC has a specific public service mandate, which it is supposed to achieve by using licence fees for its public broadcasting arm, which is everything except SABC 3, SABC Africa, Good Hope FM, SAfm and Metro FM.

Licence fees make up about 18% of SABC's revenues, with government contributing another 2%. The rest, around 80%, is commercial revenue, mostly from advertising.

However, the supposed public broadcasting components, like SABC1, compete for ads with private broadcasters like e.tv. e.tv told Parliament's portfolio committee in June this year in a briefing on the necessary migration of broadcasting from analogue to digital TV broadcasting that e.tv's main competitors were the public service divisions, SABC1 and 2, rather than the supposedly commercial SABC3.

The e.tv document objects strongly to the SABC's request for government subsidising SABC's migration to digital TV, because e.tv will not also be subsidised. And the R4-billion proposed funding does indeed include funding migration to digital TV broadcasting.

The R4-billion is not a *fait accompli*, and some is for specific projects related to the 2010 World Soccer Cup, but it shows how management is thinking. Of that, the SABC wants more than R1-billion for extra public service channels, presumably on the new digital platform.

Without the discipline of attracting viewers and listeners, which is what having to carry advertising does, what would complete state funding do to programming?

It could result in a broadcast version of the competent but hardly compelling state news agency BuaNews and a greater percentage of worthy but unwatched and unheard educational and information programming. And is it necessary? The private broadcasters are in any case regulated for local content and language.

It is anyway hard to see the state foregoing the billions that flow in from advertising. More likely the government would top up the SABC from state coffers, and the extra money would persuade the SABC not to rock the new Zuma-captained boat.

The presentation to Parliament, almost in an aside, mentions increasing staff remuneration by 2% (this is probably two percentage points) more than inflation. With the cushion of billions of extra rand, the SABC could undercut ad rates and increase its dominance of the airwaves, reversing the gains made by the private sector. Without privatising the commercial arm of the SABC, and preventing the public service arm from accepting ads, full or increased public funding does not make sense from any angle.

by Steven Lang

**T**he embarrassing convulsions within the SABC spilling over into the courts and in the media are the visible symptoms of a multi-layered power struggle at the end of a 13-year interregnum. The layers include the obvious personal turf war between CEO Dali Mpfu and news head Snuki Zikalala, as well as the battle for supremacy between the Mbeki and Zuma camps. But there is much more to it than the obvious.

To understand the SABC crisis, let us roll back to 2 February 1990 – the first day of the interregnum when President FW de Klerk announced the unbanning of the ANC and the release of Nelson Mandela.

In the ensuing years, the National Party relaxed its grip on the SABC while senior members of the ANC formulated policies on how the broadcaster should be run. Debate intensified around the role of the SABC – should it serve the interests of the country or should it be an instrument of government and consequently a tool of the ruling party?

Dismayed at the way the National Party had used the SABC for its own narrow political interests, the ANC vowed never to follow that route. Cyril Ramaphosa, ANC Secretary General, said in November 1992, “The ANC believes that unquestioning loyalty by a public broadcaster to a ruling party is incompatible with democracy.”

A public commitment to this position was made in the Broadcasting Charter contained in the Broadcasting Act of 1999: “In terms of this charter, the corporation will... enjoy freedom of expression and journalistic, creative and programming independence.”

At the height of the Prague Spring, the influence of the old National Party had dissipated while certain senior members of the ANC were still looking for ways to subtly nudge the national broadcaster into the orbit of the new regime.

It is a little harder to put an exact date to the end of the interregnum, but when the Board of Vincent

# The nudge of ‘nation building’

The war for control of the SABC manifests itself in small but spectacular battles. These battles are nevertheless mere skirmishes in the vicious war between those who believe the SABC should be a servant of the government of the day and those who believe it should serve the public.

Maphai reached the end of its term in December 2003, the corporation tipped noticeably in the direction of the Union Buildings.

Board member Thami Mazwai had recently dismissed objectivity in journalism as a “delusion” that simply “does not exist” and the corporation was still smarting from the resignation of Mathatha Tsedu, arguably the most credible head of news the corporation has ever had.

The new board, chaired by Eddie Funde with Christine Qunta as his deputy, was far more pro-active in meddling with the affairs of the SABC. Soon after taking office in early 2004, the board bypassed CEO Peter Matlare to appoint a government spokesman, Snuki Zikalala, to head up its news division.

Zikalala rewarded the board with unflinching loyalty. At every meeting, bosberaad or workshop he insisted that staff members know and follow the letter of the board goals. At job interviews, he always tested the candidates’ knowledge of the board goals.

Zikalala also believes the broadcaster has a critical role to play in nation building. If he does not like a TV insert, he holds it up against the nation-building yardstick where it inevitably fails. In this way, a report critical of the method a minister uses to deal with an issue can easily be thrown out because “it does not contribute to nation building”, or “how does it promote the board goals?”

The real problem for many is how to define “nation-building”. How can a reporter reconcile criticism of the President with nation-building?

As the final nails are being knocked into the coffin of the interregnum, the war for control of the SABC manifests itself in small but spectacular battles such as when the CEO suspends the head of news, and when the board repeatedly tries to suspend the CEO.

These battles are nevertheless mere skirmishes in the vicious war between those who believe the SABC should be a servant of the government of the day and those who believe it should serve the public.

# The anomaly of SAfm

*SAfm – “your news and information leader” – is a unique station for many reasons. But perhaps one of the most curious being that top management in the SABC refuses to acknowledge that it is different from any other radio station, says Steven Lang.*

**R**ules that apply to SAfm do not apply to other stations, yet no one in the highest echelons of the corporation will publicly admit that SAfm occupies a unique position within the SABC radio portfolio.

In terms of audience numbers, the yardstick used to assess most radio stations, SAfm with fewer than half a million listeners is a featherweight among SABC stations. Ukhozi tops the scales with more than six million listeners while other heavyweights Umhlobo Wenene and Lesedi FM come in with 4.7 million and 3.7 million listeners respectively.

In spite of having by far the wealthiest audience profile, SAfm regularly makes massive losses while advertising sales executives consistently complain about how difficult it is to

sell airtime on SAfm.

The station has the biggest radio footprint in South Africa. This means that with its 120 transmitters, it can be picked up almost anywhere in the country – from Prieska to Pretoria. Kaya FM with only one transmitter has double the listenership of SAfm.

Being the country’s “news and information leader”, the station carries six hours of current affairs shows every weekday. The “Live” current affairs shows, *AM Live*, *Midday Live* and *PM Live*, take up one quarter of the broadcast time and all of the prime time during the week, yet the station manager Dennis O’Donnell, has absolutely no say about the content of these shows – that is the prerogative of the news division.

In spite of being the smallest station in the stable, at the morning diary meetings when all the assignment editors and executive producers around the country discuss which stories to cover, SAfm calls the shots. If SAfm’s *AM Live* wants an audio package on the story then it will be done. If another station wants it, they will cross their fingers.

This anomalous situation is not because SAfm is intrinsically superior to any of the stations, but rather because the decision makers within the SABC, in Cabinet and in most boardrooms in corporate SA choose to listen to current affairs in English.

The fact that top management pays so much more attention to SAfm than to other stations coupled with the fact that SAfm is better resourced than other stations does not go unnoticed by those other stations.

This apparently privileged position does however, have some serious downsides. If someone in the presidency, probably the President’s spokesman Mukoni Ratshitanga, phones the head of SABC news with a complaint about an interview, that someone will not have to say which station he heard the offending comments, it will be presumed that the station was SAfm.

The entire blacklisting debacle in 2006 happened because Snuki Zikalala, the managing director of the SABC’s news division, would not allow certain commentators to be interviewed on SAfm’s current affairs shows.

There never was any blacklist written on a piece of paper or an email that was distributed to editorial staff, but the producers at SAfm knew that if certain commentators such as Aubrey Mashiqi or Siphoo Seepe were put on the air, there would be a negative reaction from Zikalala’s office. They were discouraged from putting certain individuals on the line-up.

While this was happening on the current affairs shows of SAfm, other programmes on SAfm such as *Morning Talk*, or other stations, such as RSG were free to interview whoever they pleased.

It is highly unlikely that SABC CEO Dali Mpfu would have convened a high profile and probably very expensive Sisulu Commission to investigate the blacklisting saga had it boiled over onto any other station.

Yet SABC top management insist that SAfm has the same status as all the other stations.

by Peter du Toit and Asta Rau

Questions of ownership, control and profit distribution are widely used to distinguish between commercial and community media ventures, but an over-reliance on such distinctions may eclipse other important considerations in a way that impacts negatively on media diversity.

This is the central thrust of our findings from an in-depth study of six cases involving small independent South African publications<sup>1</sup>.

We suggest that if a definition of "community media" that emphasises commune-style ownership and community control persists, then it is likely that existing and emerging, small, for-profit, independent newspapers in need of substantial donor funding or assistance may fail to attract the support they need.

While there are some avenues available for privately-owned titles to obtain support, funding baskets tend to exclude independent commercial ventures. This is despite the fact that many of these publications are committed to principles that normally define community media.

By juxtaposing a working definition of community media and an in-depth series of case studies, we find that, leaving profit out of the equation, the gaps between community and independent commercial media can be very narrow indeed.

The working definition was formulated by stakeholders, leaders and practitioners participating in a workshop hosted by the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism (IAJ) in 2005.<sup>2</sup> The case studies were conducted by the Sol Plaatje Institute for Media Leadership (SPI) to uncover examples of key business and editorial strategies emerging newspapers may emulate.<sup>3</sup>

# When commercial can also be community

What follows are three examples of how the small, privately-owned, but community-orientated titles included in the SPI's study, conform to the defining criteria for community media.

## Ownership

In as far as all the owner-managers of the newspapers in the research live in and are part of the communities their publications

serve, they are in accord with the principle (IAJ, 2005) that community media should be characterised by local ownership and control. Ownership can also be more broadly conceptualised with strong interconnections between a sense of owning publications through participation and the actuality of owning publications. When a newspaper is established and run for profit, or perhaps simply as a means of self-employment, it does not mean that community members, readers, advertisers and employees do not experience a sense of ownership in relation to it. Furthermore, the SPI research found a strong correlation between a title's outreach activities and the community members' sense of ownership.

## Content

IAJ delegates proposed that "community media" incorporates a community journalism approach where content is informed by the needs of the community. In other words, media that gives a voice to communities as opposed to that of authorities. All the newspapers participating in the SPI study conformed to this criterion. Not only did they showcase local issues by inviting and purposefully soliciting stories and opinions from community members,

they also explicitly shared the objective of empowering their readers, and by association their communities, by presenting information and writing articles that are educational and of relevance and value to the specific challenges facing distinct communities.

## Promoting democracy and diversity

IAJ delegates concluded that community media should challenge racism, sexism and homophobia and promote diversity in terms of languages and class. All of the titles in the SPI study demonstrated a commitment to counteracting stereotypes and respect for religious and cultural diversity. The study also found evidence of management and staff bridging cultural and racial differences in the workplace and in their communities and of people working together harmoniously to pool different knowledges in ways that transcended racism, sexism and other social divides.

It was clear from the case studies that, while a commitment to reconstruction and social change has informed how these publications do business, these principles are also underpinned by a commercial rationale. The owner-managers shared the view that a community-orientation also makes good business sense.

We found that the principles and practices of small independent newspapers were so similar to those associated with community media that the term *independent community media* could be a more inclusive and fitting way of thinking and speaking about the sector.

## Endnotes

1. See the July edition of the journal *Communicatio*, 34 (1) for the academic version of this study.
2. IAJ (Institute for the Advancement of Journalism). 2005. *Better training for community print media*. Johannesburg: IAJ. [September workshop proceedings].
3. Milne, C, A Rau, P du Toit and F Mdlongwa. 2006. *Key editorial and business strategies: A case study of six independent community newspapers*. Grahamstown: Rhodes University, Sol Plaatje Institute for Media Leadership. <http://eprints.ru.ac.za/379/> or <http://spiml.com> (accessed 3 October 2007).



The South African Library For The Blind



The South African Library For The Blind



## Can you read this?

by Francois Hendrikz

It is assumed that one of the driving forces of any journalist is to communicate information to the public. We live in a world where we have access to excess when it comes to information and we have a choice of formats to choose from. We can buy newspapers from a street vendor, find reading material in any bookshop or café not to mention the Internet. All printed material is the product of a journalist or author's intellectual input and we have limitless choices in this regard. The "we" referred to earlier is not an inclusive "we" but actually an exclusive "we".

As sighted people "we" do take ease of access to reading material and information and the act of reading itself for granted. There is a percentage of the population that is unable to read anything that is freely available to sighted people. The people referred to here are the blind or the print handicapped or the visually impaired which ever term is preferred. For the purpose of this article we will use the term "blind".

Accurate statistics of how many blind people there are in a country is a challenge. The International accepted percentage used to estimate the number of blind people in country ranges between 2% to 3%. For South Africa this percentage translates to around 1,2 million blind people keeping in mind there are varying degrees of blindness not to mention the dyslexic. Most of the reading material and information available in the market does not even exist for blind people.

The hard work of the journalist to identify a topic, do research, verify facts and finally craft a well worded article or book is therefore meaningless to this number of people. Imagine living in a world where it is accepted that only 5% of what is published in the world is accessible to the blind. Imagine walking into a library or bookshop where there are 50,000 books on the shelves but you are only able to read 2,500 them. Imagine how this limited choice could influence your life's experiences, choices

and awareness. This is the reality for blind people.

The South African Library for the Blind is the only institution of its kind not only in South Africa but on the African continent reproducing reading material for blind people. It was founded in Grahamstown in 1919. Today, the library is part of the International community of libraries and institutions serving the information and reading needs of blind people. The Library is currently serving 5 151 members nationally and internationally and reproduces on average 300 Braille and 300 audio books annually. The library has a collection of more than 25 000 titles and is also offering seven audio and 47 braille magazine titles. In keeping with International trends the library is currently converting its analog collection into digital audio material using the Daisy format. This allows blind people for the first time the choice to interact with a book the same way sighted people do.

Reproducing material into braille or audio is a slow and expensive process. All reproductions are made within the Copyright Law of South Africa. Complying with this Law is delaying the reproduction of material due to bureaucratic procedures involved. Reproduction involves narrators, copy typists, transcribers, proof readers and staff to edit and convert the material into audio or braille books of high quality. One may argue that lots of material is available on the Internet. This is partially true for a small number of blind people if we keep in mind that only around 8% of the total South African population has access to the Internet. In addition a blind person needs screen reading software to have access to a computer which is available at a prohibitive cost which many blind people cannot afford.

Most blind people in South Africa are still denied their Constitutional right to have access to all information that is freely available to the majority of the population. In our creation of reading material as a journalist, writer or publisher we should creatively consider how to make the fruits of our labour accessible to all. This is possible in partnership with the South African Library for the Blind.

The South African Library For The Blind

Servicing the library and information needs of the visually impaired

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**Editors, media owners and even cabinet ministers agree that more skillful journalists and communicators would make for better journalism**

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**Our courses, on-site programmes and executive workshops all have one aim - to help journalists and communicators become sharper, whether they use keyboards, microphones or pens.**

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The Institute for Advancement of Journalism (IAJ) was established in 1992 by veteran journalist and editor, Allister Sparks, in response to the media's call for new and sharper skills in a changing South Africa.

We place special emphasis on interactive learning, giving participants scope to develop their skills through discussion, role-play and hands-on exercises. Our courses offer an opportunity to learn new techniques and refresh old ones, to network and to debate.

Partnerships with Poynter Institute, WITS and Duke Universities provides access to the newest thinking in media around the world.

	<b>PRINT</b>	<b>BROADCAST</b>	<b>CMTU</b>	
<b>September</b>	Advanced Subbing (01-03) Newsroom Leadership and Management, Cape Town - <i>Poynter</i> (09-12) Reporting and Editing Online, JHB - <i>Poynter</i> (16-19)	Creative Radio Presenting (01-03) Creative Writing for Radio and TV (15-17) Technical Production (22-24)	Writing Newsworthy Features (08-09) Writing Opinion Pieces for Publications (11-12) Writing and Designing Product Briefs (15-18)	<p>Contact the IAJ to book your place</p> <p>Tel: (011) 484 1765/6 Fax: (011) 484 2282</p> <p>9 Jubilee Road, Parktown, Johannesburg</p> <p>PO Box 2544, Houghton, 2041, South Africa</p> <p><a href="mailto:info@iaj.org.za">info@iaj.org.za</a> <a href="http://www.iaj.org.za">www.iaj.org.za</a></p>
<b>October</b>	Writing Opinion & Analysis (01-03) Advanced Feature Writing, Cape Town (14-16) Advanced Photo-journalism (27-31)	The Art of Telling a TV Story (13 Oct) Wanting it all - be a Video Journalist (27-31)	Handling the Media (29 Aug-03 Oct) Mitigating a Media Crisis (06-08) Setting up a Media Strategy (13-15) Communicating with Clients (20-24)	
<b>November</b>	Advanced Layout and Design (03-07)	Radio & TV: Effective Broadcast Field Reporting (03-04)  Radio & TV: What Makes a Story a Story (29 Nov)	Writing & Delivering Speeches (04-06) Writing & Presenting Reports & Proposals (17-20) Presenting to Win (24-27)	<p><b>REGIONAL</b></p> <p>Summer Academy for Southern African Journalists - Broadcast and Print (joint programme with German <i>International Institute for Journalism (IIJ)</i>, <i>InWEnt</i> (10-21 Nov)</p>
<b>December</b>		Producing News Programmes for Radio and TV (01-03)	Writing and Designing Product Briefs (01-03)	

In addition to courses at the Institute's own premises, the IAJ also carries out specialised training programmes for individual newspapers, broadcasters, NGO's, businesses and government departments in their own environment.

Over the years, the IAJ has added other activities: it works with community media, administers scholarships and fellowships, runs children's media programmes, offers on-site coaching and training, organises 'Open House' debates and reaches out to other countries in Southern Africa.



# New world, new

# W

hat distinguishes South Africa from countries like Venezuela, Cuba, or Vietnam is that it has strong and independent institutions that offer the protection of basic rights and create the space for a participative form of government contained in our Constitution.

An independent judiciary and separation of powers, a robust and independent media, an independent central bank, strong trade unions, a dynamic private sector and vibrant non-governmental organisations are high on the list of institutions that have ensured that the Constitution has emerged intact in the first generation of the post-apartheid era.

Flawed and lacking as these institutions were under apartheid, the important factor is they survived in a form that they could be transformed

by John Battersby

by a just and democratic order.

So what is the role of the media in a divided society in transition from a racial oligarchy to a shared society?

As well as to educate, inform and act as a watchdog against the abuse of power, is there an additional role that the media can play in a society which cries out for symbols of unity, belief in a common set of values and ways of making the Constitution stick in a society divided along racial, socio-economic, modern/traditional and urban/rural lines.

Is there a role the media can play to inspire people around a broad set of national goals – social cohesion, ubuntu, safeguarding the rights of others?

The print media in particular has already undergone significant transition since 1994 which has ensured that newsrooms are representative and ownership diversified. Today the media has become one of the vital instruments of ensuring accountability.

Having worked in the print media for most of my professional life, it is hugely encouraging to see a new generation of editors engaging in robust and honest dialogue with government and other institutions over the future shape of society.

But has the media played the role that it might have done in inspiring ordinary South Africans to embrace the rights offered to them in the Constitution and to coalesce around a set of values that have to underpin any sustainable society?

What has become of the nation-building concept introduced and practised by the late Aggrey Klaaste during his reign as editor of *The Sowetan* and beyond?

In a one-party-dominant state with a low-degree of social cohesion arising from the country's deeply-divided past, there is clearly a major challenge as to how the Constitution will become a living document in which democracy thrives and citizens are aware of their rights and exercise them in way that ensures that government and all institutions are accountable.

Events of the past six months or so have been a reality check for the society after nearly 15 years of democracy: while South Africa has come a long way since the 1994 elections, the unfinished business of transition has put the spotlight on the social, political and economic faultlines which could jeopardise democracy.

What is clear is that the decay of the apartheid era – and the moral ambiguity that has arisen in attempts to speed its demise – has made the road ahead a lot less clear than it was 14 years ago.

Like the shoots of new-born saplings in a forest, the new growth is finding that it has to push through a lot of detritus to find the light.

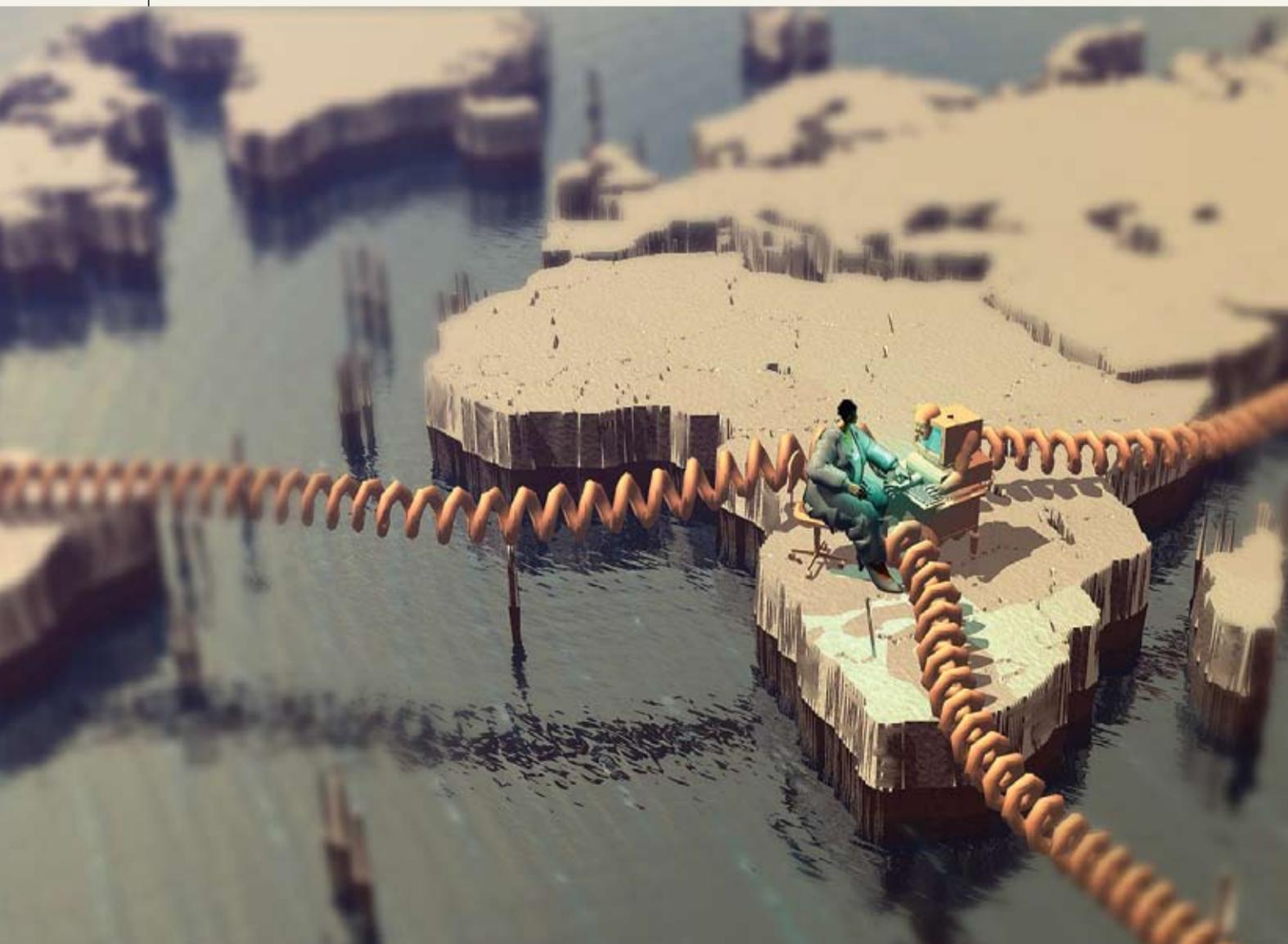
To further complicate the challenge of resetting the country's moral compass is the backdrop of a rapid and fundamentally changing world in which the absolutes and opposites of the Cold War period have given way to the challenges of synthesis and inclusivity in a globalised but unsustainable international order.

Humanity has not yet come up with a business plan that ensures medium to long-term survival for the planet. But there is an increasing global focus on how to devise one that works.

Out of this process has come a broad consensus of what needs to be done to ensure the survival of the planet: the architecture of global institutions – such as the UN, the World Bank, the IMF and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) – need to be drastically overhauled so as to create a multi-lateral global order capable of closing the gap between haves and have-nots.

Secondly, there needs to be a massive trade-off between the industrialised and developing worlds on the issue of climate change in a way that will balance the dictates of development with those of the environment in order to ensure survival.

The emergence of a new economic order – which is likely to see the United States, India and



# models, new responsibilities

China as the world's three largest economies by 2050 – is drastically changing the paradigm with which the world sees South Africa and other emerging high-growth states such as Mexico, Turkey, South Korea, Brazil, Malaysia and Vietnam.

The assumptions of the past century have been based largely on the view from Washington and London and the G8 club of nations based on economic domination and governmental systems based on democracy and human rights.

But this system has not only failed to address the massive global disparities of wealth and opportunity but has entrenched the inbuilt inequalities and deepened the faultlines threatening global security: terrorism with its underlying causes of poverty and underdevelopment and environment-threatening climate change born of an economic system which puts acquisition above self-preservation.

So what is the responsibility of the media in an emerging democracy such as South Africa against the backdrop of a fundamentally changing order? Does it need to reflect a more global view of how South Africa is perceived? Is the view from Beijing, New Delhi, and Moscow not an increasingly important part of that world view? Should we not be exposed more to different models of accountability? Why is China a far more accountable and responsive system than Myanmar (Burma), even though they are both centralised governmental systems? Is the Indian model of economic growth – based on democracy – more sustainable than that of China with its centralised governmental system?

And what of the media's role in contextualising South Africa in terms of the African continent? There has been a dramatic change in the past 15 years in terms of coverage of Africa and African issues in SA media, from virtually nil to a substantial part of overall coverage.

## The last frontier: Africa

Since 9/11, but more particularly against the backdrop of the current credit crunch and slowing of the global economy, Africa is the focus of more interest in the city of London and other global financial centres than it has ever been. The continent is regarded increasingly as the last frontier for global growth.

Just as investors felt that they had to have a foot in the opening door of Chinese opportunity 30 years ago, so now is the case with Africa. In the past six months, there has been a proliferation of Africa investment funds appearing in the market and Africa investment seminars abound.

After decades of marginalisation in the global economy and on the media spectrum – except for the usual stereotypes of conflict, famine and corruption associated with Africa – Africa is in the spotlight. The international media has played a major role in this trend.

In the past 18 months, CNBC has come on line

*Africa is the focus of more interest in global financial centres than it has ever been. The continent is regarded increasingly as the last frontier for growth. Just as investors felt they had to have a foot in the opening door of Chinese opportunity 30 years ago, so now is the case with Africa.*

with a 24/7 Africa Business Channel, Al Jazeera has brought a more synthesised global paradigm to its reporting on Africa where its new English service has set up major bureaus in Johannesburg and Nairobi, Reuters has established a dedicated Africa website, and CNN and the BBC have – partly in response to these initiatives – bumped up their Africa coverage.

There have been perception setbacks in Kenya and the crisis in Zimbabwe is holding back much of sub-Saharan Africa's potential but once the deadlock in Zimbabwe is broken there is the prospect of the SADC becoming one of the world's most promising growth regions with South Africa as the infrastructure hub and the investment platform.

The media's role in the rapidly changing perceptions of Africa as an investment opportunity rather than a basket-case has been crucial. It provides a good example of the role that the media could play in South Africa. But there needs to be a consensus or social compact involving the media and government before that can happen. The Constitution provides the framework for that consensus:

- The government needs to engage the media at all levels and establish a system of open communication and proactive generation of stories which emphasise the emergence of the new in South Africa.
- The media in turn need to change their paradigms. The domestic media need to position South Africa as part of the new emerging world order. The international media need to look beneath the surface and contextualise South Africa in terms of the changing global order.
- The South African media need to recognise that South Africa has a major challenge in inspiring

people to realise their rights under the Constitution and that the media can play a major role in that process by seeking out the stories which reinforce this process.

- Nurturing a society which upholds the rights of others and the principles of ubuntu – putting the interests of the community on a par with those of the individual – needs to become a national project in which the media have a crucial role.
- Support for a national campaign of good citizenship which seeks to instil a sense of individual responsibility and accountability and a set of values which enshrines the values of the Constitution.

In addressing the recent International Media Forum in Johannesburg in May, ANC deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe spelled out the basis of such a consensus: "We want the international community to have confidence in the direction our country is taking but we don't want the confidence to be founded on spin and advertising campaigns... rather on an informed understanding of what the country is about... and to be able to form views and make decisions on accurate and balanced accounts."

His statement would provide a good basis for another round of engagement between the government and the media in the elusive search for a common understanding and basis on which to differ.

*Battersby writes in his personal capacity.*

# Desperately desiring attitude change

## The news media and the country's image abroad

**The International Media Forum South Africa could not have come at a better time. Barely a week after the first incidents of xenophobic violence in South Africa, the conference in May undertook to analyse the reasons for South Africa's declining international reputation and the role of the stakeholders involved, particularly the media.**

by Wadim Schreiner

I attended the conference both as a presenter and participant, and was surprised by the robust engagements of both media and government. Having expected the classical media-government bashing ("you media never report anything positive", "you government never talk to us openly"); I was pleasantly surprised by the constructive debates that emerged both in the presentations from media and government, as well as behind the scenes during the many networking opportunities.

Following the introductory speech by Essop Pahad, Minister in the Presidency, I kicked off the day with Media Tenor's research on the international media coverage of South Africa in the last two years. The findings probably did not come as a surprise to the majority of participants as they confirmed already existing expectations about the

type of international media coverage on South Africa: Zimbabwe, corruption allegations against Police Chief Jackie Selebi, the dissolving of the Scorpions, Polokwane, Eskom, and again Zimbabwe. Corporate representatives would have noted that it is the good business news that is keeping South Africa's overall media reputation at somehow acceptable levels in most months. The results also showed a difference between the Western media and African media, although the latter did not necessarily show a greater share of positive news, but were just less explicit in their criticism of SA in their headlines.

The presentation was followed by the "journalist" slot: Barry Moody, the African Editor of Reuters, considered the efforts of the agency to provide content on Africa, and the use of their website and feeds. Similarly, the Africa Editor of BBC News Joseph Warangu shared his experience at the BBC in developing content on Africa. Both journalists emphasised the importance of their respective media companies in spreading the word on Africa.

The problem I saw, particularly with agency content, was that it is one thing having the content available, but still another to convince other sources to use the content. Just because it is there, does not necessarily mean it makes a meaningful contribution towards changes in perception. That is less a criticism of the agencies, but more of those media who are connected to the agencies: how can you convince them to report on Africa other than in the usual stereotypical way? It would still need qualified and experienced journalists on the ground, digging for those stories and finding new angles and sources.

Speaking of sources, Caroline Lambert of the *Economist* used the platform of the conference to take the government of South Africa to task over their lack of communication skills. Her 10 dos and don'ts of how to treat a journalist were, although not new, nevertheless refreshing, particularly when observing the angry rejections of the comments by government officials following the presentation. Lambert's first lesson ("Why do government members have cellphones if they never answer them?") was followed by "if you promise to get back to us, please do so".

Later in the day, Government Communication and Information Services CEO Themba Maseko bravely acknowledged the lack of resources, skills and possibly wrong attitudes by some governmental members towards the media. Maseko in particular impressed me, as the number of times government actually acknowledges something wrong without pointing fingers at someone else, is very rare. Even more impressive, Maseko highlighted what government intends doing about its lack of media relation skills. With little of the usual government lingo, he convinced me that government indeed seems to care about its media coverage.

On the second day, the discussions continued with members of the international media fraternity starting with John Chiahem, the editor of the Reuters Africa website, who took us through their web platform for news on and from Africa. He emphasised the importance of the new

media in a faster and more current new world and highlighted the new features on their website.

In particular he emphasised the interactive discussion features BBC News has on their website, which allows "Africans to participate in the discussions". Great idea, I thought, but how many Africans can readily access the Internet, and "interactively" discuss things?

Somehow I was starting to doubt if indeed new media would make any change to the news flow theories that have been in existence for decades. I heard so much about blogs, but what impact do they have on the perception of countries? Would blogging prevent a war, a famine? Would it make any difference if international media websites had interactive discussion forums on the outcome of the elections in Zimbabwe? Would developing countries have the resources and personnel to participate in these debates with the goal to swing those millions of people's attitudes (and wallets)? In my opinion, and taking the vast number of blogging sites into account, these bloggers must either be jobless or spending their employers' bandwidth on endless stereotypical discussions on Africa.

I was glad that Doug de Villiers, the CEO Africa of Interbrand Sampson presented the audience with a more strategic and realistic assessment of how governments can "actively manage their image and media to communicate their core values". His comments surely did not go down well with the executives of the International Marketing Council as well as government. But De Villiers did not place the responsibility solely on government to manage the country's reputation, he also emphasised the importance of business as a contributor to perceptions.

The day was dominated by the impact of the xenophobic attacks. We were particularly impressed by the address by deputy president of the ANC Kgalema Motlanthe and particularly the Q&A that followed.

Maybe as this session intimated there would, after all, be a change in government communications with a new government next year?

Other than networking, the conference was stimulating. I realised that government still does not know how media are operating, and that often they don't seem to care. Which for me raised the question: who needs whom more? Media don't really need government, they can write the stories without their input. Sure, it would give some good sound bites, but it would not necessarily change the story. But government really needs journalism as it is a more convincing, more trustworthy source than its own issued

*The government still does not know how the media operate, and often they don't seem to care. Which raises the question: who needs whom more?*

press releases. Media have the ability to reach those whom government would struggle to reach directly. If this is the case, should government then not do everything in its power to "conform" to the way media operates? And if it does, would it really change the way journalists report? I also realised that international media still often display the same arrogant attitude they have been holding historically: if you don't co-operate with us the way we want you to, don't be surprised if the story does not go your way.

Being involved in media research for the past 10 years, my opinion was confirmed that media are indeed very powerful, and that stakeholders are aware of that. What it also confirmed is that media do not always know how to deal with this power and that instead of utilising it for fostering understanding, it often is used to get a particular point across – no matter what the consequences.

This was impressed on us further during and following

the xenophobic attacks in this country in the past few weeks. Why had the reasons for the attacks largely remained undetected by the media prior to the social eruptions? Were media too busy chasing a particular story? Possibly the same story everybody else was chasing?

It still remains a huge challenge for developing countries to break stereotypes in coverage even though the content to do this is supposedly there, from wire feeds to interactive discussion platforms to radio waves with international media located in Africa, and reporting with their own personnel from Africa.

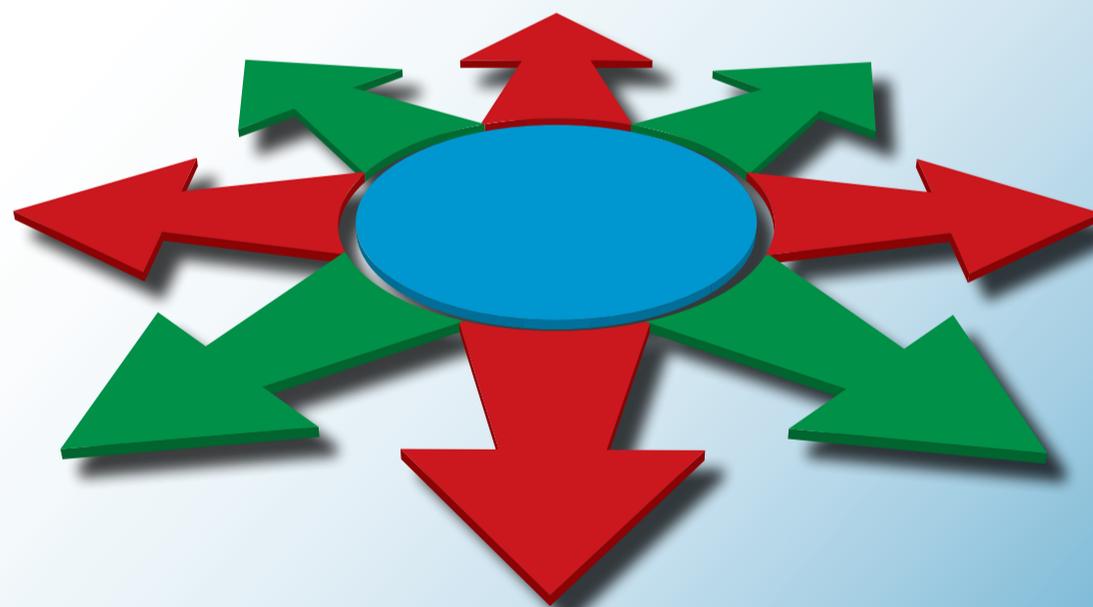
Why is it, then, that India and China no longer get the negative coverage they had received just 10 years ago, but Africa still does? I pondered that they probably have something to offer, something that other countries wanted: India offers highly qualified people and IT and China is an endless consumer market with cheap labour.

Media Tenor's research of Chinese media reporting on South Africa shows a large change in attitudes particularly since the ICBC deal with Standard Bank: Chinese media previously focused on crime, but seems now unable to stop highlighting what a great country South Africa is – and the rest of the African continent. Is it because China now has a vested interest?

For South Africa the 2010 World Cup is around the corner. Yet the world does not stop turning after 2010. What is the country going to do once all the visitors have returned without the great financial impact we have been made to expect?

Will international media stop reporting on us? I hope that the third International Media Forum South Africa, which should be taking place in 2010, will take a further critical look at what will have changed between now and then.

# Where to now?



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# BREATHING SPACES

SURVIVING IN THE NOXIOUS ENVIRONMENT OF DURBAN'S SOUTH BASIN, AN INTIMATE INVESTIGATION OF THE LIVES OF PEOPLE IN MEREBANK, WENTWORTH AND LAMONTVILLE.

A project by Jenny Gordon  
& Marijke du Toit







by Carol Brown

These photographs are the result of an interdisciplinary partnership between Jenny Gordon, a photographer and lecturer at Rhodes University, and Marijke du Toit, an historian in the history department at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Their project, which began in 2002, has focused on documenting a particular area of Durban, known as the South Basin, which incorporates the working-class suburbs of Merebank, Wentworth and Lamontville. There are many oil refineries and other industries here which have caused heavy pollution, resulting in a community that has suffered ill health for many years.

Although Gordon's photographs concentrate mainly on the social issues of the area, there is always a suggestion of how the landscape and its spaces are constructed, underpinning the emphasis on the inhabitants. Gordon's richly coloured panoramic landscapes give a view of what at first appear to be twinkling, glamorous, lights, echoing the ships at sea but on closer examination reveal themselves to be machines that spew out dangerous emissions into the homes that are dwarfed by the overarching giant spewing black smoke into the air.

There are also the quieter, more intimate and often hidden spaces of the domestic interiors. There is a contrast between power and fragility, which is constantly played out in the photographs of the inhabitants of this area.

A major issue addressed by the photographs is the ill health and disease of the people who are being engulfed by their noxious environment. The photos are documentary in nature and show interior domestic spaces where the narratives of illness and confinement are often hidden from the public gaze. Many of these photos consciously place people in a specific context with the objects they treasure around them, emphasising personal narratives. Illness is not always apparent but visual clues, such as the presence of an asthma pump, bring an awareness of the lives being led.

When Gordon's images were exhibited at the Durban Art Gallery last year, they were juxtaposed with photos taken by members of the community, giving them a voice in the exhibition. This approach is becoming more prevalent among activist curators and artists and one which is long overdue. The sense of agency was further developed by exhibiting older family portraits, adding an historical dimension to the discourse.

The exhibition is part of a much larger project, which has been ongoing since 2002 and which has been shown in various manifestations in different spaces including neighbourhood libraries and the UKZN campus. Workshops were held with various groups, many of whom have benefited from learning the skills of photography while being sensitised to environmental issues. At each venue, comments were elicited from the viewers, who are then able to participate fully in the process and become part of the archive of the exhibition.

The project is an excellent example of how art can be genuinely socially committed and where the voices of the curators are shared with those of the subjects in a manner which is empowering and still satisfies the aesthetic demands of a fine exhibition.

*This is an edited version of Carol Brown's review of the Breathing Spaces exhibition, which was originally published on ArtThrob.*





1	3	4	5	6
	7	8	9	10
2	11	12	13	14
	15	16	17	

**1.** Fieona Kahn on the balcony of her family's flat in Dinapur Road, Merebank. The Engen oil refinery is visible in the background. **2.** Boys from Wentworth in front of the Engen Oil refinery. **3.** Taking a photograph in the barbershop at Wema hostel. Gordon is behind the tripod and to the right Du Toit can be seen talking to the barber. **4.** Latasha Webster (right), and her cousin Lucinda Booyesen who has fought auto-immune hepatitis. She also has chronic asthma. Austerville, **5.** Faziala having her hair done by Ursula Pechey in Hime Street, Austerville. **6.** Lorna McDonald at the Memorial Wall in Austerville. Lorna is touching the name of her brother who was stabbed to death by a member of a local gang. The wall remembering young men who have died in gang violence now also bears the names of those who die from Aids. **7.** The Govenders at home in Dinapur Road, Merebank. **8.** Darryl Govender looks at the Sapref oil refiner from Buldana Road in Merebank. **9.** Nomsa Molly Malinga with her daughter Senzi and grandson Bongani, at their Pungula Avenue home in Gijima, Lamontville. **10.** Olga Labuschagne, her grandson Quinton and his friend Peter in her flat, Hime Street, Austerville. **11.** Three women working their gardens in the shadow of the planes flying overhead. **12.** Disposable nappies for sale at a house overlooking Mondli. **13.** Dudu Dlamini in the Wema men's hostel. **14.** Chenece, Anita, Precious and Faith play with bricks wrapped up as dolls. Michael and Mervin are behind, Tara Road, Wentworth. **15.** Dulcie Marnce in her lounge at Quality Street Flats in Austerville. **16.** Zanele Ngcobo in the room she shares with her partner and four other men, Wema hostel, Lamontville. **17.** Hafiza Reebee at home in Shillong Road, Merebank.

**Previous page:** The view from George Bridger's third floor flat in Hime Street, Austerville, showing the boundary between residents and the industries they live with.

# THE RESPONSIBILITY TO REPORT

A PLEA TO ADOPT AN ETHIC OF RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD ALL OF HUMANITY

by Allan Thompson

**H**ands rose up from the grave to grasp each coffin, as if the dead were welcoming the remains of the genocide victims. The simple wooden boxes contained bones recovered from mass graves and pit latrines so that they could be re-interred during ceremonies marking the 10th anniversary of the Rwanda genocide.

It was 7 April 2004 in Kigali, and a gaggle of television crews, reporters and photographers jostled for space around a concrete tomb where victims of the 1994 genocide were finally being given a dignified burial. Earlier, pall bearers had descended into the crypt, climbing down a ladder so they could be in place to receive the coffins. The boxes were gingerly passed one by one into their final resting place at Rwanda's national memorial to the 1994 slaughter.

Ten years after the genocide, Rwanda was still burying its dead and representatives of the international media were there, watching. Heading the dignitaries assembled to take part in the ceremony was Paul Kagame, president of Rwanda and in 1994, leader of the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front, which ended the genocide and took over the country. Retired Canadian General Roméo Dallaire, who led the ill-fated United Nations mission to Rwanda during the catastrophe, joined Kagame at the ceremony.

Both Kagame and Dallaire could have been forgiven for asking a pointed question as they regarded the international media throng gathered for the ceremonies: where were the world's media a decade earlier when a campaign to exterminate the Tutsi minority and Hutu moderates resulted in the massacre of more than 800 000 innocents?

In hindsight, the media shorthand for the Rwanda genocide goes something like this: "The world community failed to intervene and abandoned Rwanda while dead bodies clogged the rivers and piled up on roadsides." These events were reported by the news media, but not very prominently. When the media finally descended on the story, it was to cover the cholera epidemic in refugee camps across the border in Zaire, camps populated by Hutu who fled Rwanda at the tail end of the genocide.

Looking back, it is easy to see what the news media did wrong, both inside Rwanda

and without. Many journalists within Rwanda were implicated in the killings. Hate media were instrumental in the extermination campaign. International news media misconstrued or downplayed the Rwanda story.

Political figures, such as US President Bill Clinton, later claimed that they did not have enough information to fully grasp what was going on in Rwanda. More likely, because the public was not very engaged by the Rwanda story, there was little pressure for leaders to do anything.

More than a decade and a half later, are we any wiser? What has changed and what have we learned from what went wrong?

In part, the answer lies in Darfur, the region in western Sudan widely acknowledged to be a humanitarian and human rights tragedy of the first order. In the face of reliable accounts of what is at best ethnic cleansing and at worst genocide – a situation that some have described as Rwanda in slow motion – the world community has done little. Perhaps, just perhaps, content analysis would demonstrate that Darfur has registered on the media radar screen to a greater degree than did Rwanda. But it has not become a mega-story, or a media sensation. It has not captured our imaginations. And that signals, once again, a media failure.

For what it's worth, the international community has shown a measure of contrition with regard to the events of 1994. Rwanda is now a synonym for the world community's failure to intervene in the face of gross violations of human rights. And in large part because of Rwanda, a new paradigm emerged and eventually won formal recognition on the world stage.

The Canadian-inspired doctrine called "the responsibility to protect" was formally adopted by the United Nations in September 2005. (Whether it is ever put into force is another matter.) The doctrine was set out in the December 2001 report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty. It overturns the notion of absolute national sovereignty when it comes to massive violations of human rights and genocide, marking the first time that state sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs have been qualified.

In effect, the UN declaration enshrines in international law the notion that the world community has a right to intervene – a responsibility to protect – to stop a government from massive violation of the human rights of its citizens.

But the document is virtually silent on the role of the news media, and there is little discussion of the part journalists and news organisations could or should play in the face of



UN Photo/Stuart Price



EC/ECHO/Beatriz Suso

the kind of atrocities witnessed in Rwanda.

All these years later, we don't yet seem to have figured out that part of the puzzle. Perhaps it is time to advance a new paradigm for journalists: "the responsibility to report".

If we cannot adequately address the kind of structural constraints that handicapped the media in the case of Rwanda, at least we can deal with the behavioural aspects of the media – the way individual journalists conduct themselves.

What lessons have the international media drawn from the debacle of Rwanda? Like other international actors, the news media have been slow to acknowledge their failures during the genocide. Journalists tend to look forward, not back. And history continues to repeat itself. Stories like Rwanda continue to be downplayed. Year after year, the international news media devote less and less attention to foreign affairs, with the exception of the big stories, such as the war in Iraq, the war on terror or the disaster du jour.

The shocking thing about these findings is that they no longer shock us. They haven't shocked us for a long time. In fact, we now take this kind of media coverage for granted. There is a vast academic literature on media coverage of international affairs and more specifically, paltry coverage of Africa and the developing world.



EC/ECHO/Peter Holdsworth



EC/ECHO/Ivo Freijssen

But the problem with media prescriptions is that they are often so general that they are beyond implementation. In essence, the prescriptions end up being variants on the symptoms: news organisations should devote more resources to coverage of Africa and the developing world; the media should train more professionals in coverage of conflict and development issues; news from the developing world should be given more prominence on news pages and in broadcasts; news organisations should deploy more full-time foreign correspondents; rather than just covering wars, the media should pay more attention before a conflict erupts and after the fact, examine efforts at conflict resolution and ways the news media could actually support reconciliation and peace.

All of these prescriptions are really just reworded descriptions of the problem. Clearly, we need more information and more first-hand, eyewitness reporting from places like Darfur.

We need to hear more and different voices. But how can we make that happen? Who moves the media? And what is "the media" anyway? How can we talk coherently about such a disparate, diverse group of commercial and state enterprises that differ vastly across continents? Media organisations are populated by individual journalists, editors, media executives and others.

More broadly speaking, "the media" includes anyone who can apply some code of professional standards and disseminate news

and information. So is it even realistic to look for discernible patterns of coverage in the media with an eye to recommending a different course of action?

The crux of the Rwanda piece is that more extensive media coverage might have made a difference, might have pushed international actors to do something in the spring of 1994. Roméo Dallaire argues that media coverage of Rwanda never gained momentum during the genocide, never reached the kind of critical mass needed to move leaders. That momentum only emerged in July 1994, when media descended in droves to cover the plight of those living in the refugee camps in Goma and sparked an international response.

Not surprisingly, journalists largely reflect the societies in which they live and share the same ambivalence toward what is going on outside their borders, as well as the same focus on domestic issues and selected international issues that are deemed to be relevant.

In my view, it is up to individual journalists to crawl outside their skin, to get beyond that domestic focus and to exercise their role fully. Just as nation states have begrudgingly acknowledged the responsibility to protect – driven by the simple realisation that we have a responsibility to others – I think journalists, as individuals, must accept the responsibility to report and take action themselves.

My simple point is that we've been lamenting for three decades how "the media" fail to cover stories like Rwanda and Darfur. I echo the lament, which is backed up by a stream of qualitative and quantitative research. But normative prescriptions for what "the media" should be doing differently have little application.

Could it be that everyone is going about it the wrong way, looking top-down at the media, which is an amorphous, disparate beast anyway, when they should be looking from the ground up, at individual journalists and the role they can play?

British journalist-cum-politician Martin Bell (1998) has spoken about the "journalism of attachment", a call for empathy with humanity among journalists, something that some regard as an affront to the classical notion of journalistic objectivity and neutrality. But surely journalists can talk about an ethic of responsibility, a responsibility to report on people, places and events that have been excluded from the agenda of news organisations for myriad reasons. Surely individual journalists can try to make a difference, even if news organisations and the media are unable or unwilling to fully exercise their role.

At every opportunity I have urged development assistance agencies, government and nongovernmental organisations, and advocates interested in media coverage of the developing world to invest in individual journalists – those new to the profession but also veterans – by endowing research grants, fellowships and awards that make it possible for journalists to visit the developing world or to explore areas that otherwise fall into that nether world of media absence. In my experience, journalists exposed to the developing world want to go back again and again. And their reporting can make a difference.

We need more voices, more first-hand accounts of events from journalists in the North and the South. Technology makes the arguments about newsroom budgets increasingly less relevant. It is much, much cheaper to travel to the developing world and do journalism than it used to be. And why not use more locally-based correspondents as well? Isn't it about time that Western news organisations re-examined their assumption that visiting foreign correspondents are of more value than locally-based journalists? And Africans don't just need to tell their stories to the outside world. They need to tell them to each other.

It is difficult to fashion a strategy to deal with the structural flaws in the news media that resulted in the failure to provide adequate coverage of the Rwanda genocide or the crisis in Darfur. But surely that difficulty should not prevent us from trying to change the structure one small piece at a time, through the work of individual journalists.

This is a rallying cry to those who call themselves journalists, who practise this profession. Rwandan journalist Thomas Kamilindi recounts an encounter he had in Côte d'Ivoire with a group of young reporters who wondered how to avoid being drawn into the hate media in their country. Kamilindi's admonition was simple: stand up and be reporters, do your job.

He is echoed by Roméo Dallaire, who reminds journalists that they can be powerful individually and collectively and must stay dynamic in the search for truth. This essay ends on a simple note, a plea to journalists: do your job, use the power that this profession affords and take up your responsibilities, starting with the responsibility to report.

*Photograph from United Nations Photo  
<http://www.unmultimedia.org/photo>  
 and the Echo Photo library  
<http://ec.europa.eu/echo>*

# UGANDA'S UNDER-REPORTED WAR

FOR ALMOST TWO DECADES THE WAR IN NORTHERN UGANDA HAS RECEIVED SCANT ATTENTION IN THE REST OF THE COUNTRY

by Karen Williams



UN Photo/Marie Frechon

Journalists in northern Uganda have, for 20 years, been telling the stories of their own lives to their communities. The northern war has been brutal and it has sporadically also affected other parts of the country and was twinned with the southern Sudanese civil war.

Yet for almost two decades the northern war has received scant attention in the rest of the country. Not surprising when you consider that before President Yoweri Museveni took power in the mid-80s, the army and political power (and abuses) had been concentrated in northern hands.

But there has been relative peace in northern Uganda for the past 18 months – bolstered by peace talks between the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Kampala government, as well as the knock-on effect of arrest warrants for the LRA leadership issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

These developments have not only made the north much safer to move around in, but have also caught the interest of the rest of the country and the rest of the world, as well.

For 20 years, the northern war has been under-

reported and forgotten. But, now with more media attention on it, it's being reported as a running news story (which it also is) and, at other times, as a place of "horror" (thereby erasing the easily-understood political elements of the war).

But the challenge for journalists – both Ugandan and international – is being able to tell a complex story well – as well as *wanting* to tell that story in all its aspects, rather than providing an easy narrative of an "African bush war". (And it's not only Western journalists who tell clichéd stories about Africa.)

A large part of the challenge is framing the story.

The sudden interest in the northern Ugandan story – both to the rest of Uganda, as well as to the outside world – has translated into stories that are event-driven, as well as framed by the people who are willing to talk and are accessible – the government.

It is easy to tell hard news stories about the war, as well as surface stories where great atrocities have been committed. The war, conducted mostly by abducted child soldiers and featuring

massive sexual violations of women and physical mutilation of victims, provides easy copy and ready images.

Government has also consistently tried to characterise the LRA as an aberration that needs to be dealt with militarily. Yet at the same time, a political agenda is served when the LRA leader is characterised as a madman who is driven by a fundamentalist need to impose the Biblical 10 commandments on the country. If the LRA are seen as crazy, not understandable and have ridiculous demands, this washes away any possibility that there might be legitimate political grievances across the north – and not necessarily represented by the LRA.

But it's in the journalistic relationship between journalism and "peace" that some of the greatest challenges take place. And these challenges might not lead to an easy conclusion, or a tidy resolution at all.

It's difficult to tell a story of a situation where people are simultaneously victims and perpetrators (as child soldiers and abducted children forced to fight, are). It's hard to tell a story where more than a million people have been displaced across the north, and countless children abducted – often more than once.

This includes the possibilities that journalists reporting from the north were themselves abducted as children or lost family members to army and LRA attacks. And it's difficult to tell stories about politics when the humanitarian need is so apparent and so great, victims are everywhere, with child mothers and mutilated people living in displacement camps.

Also, how do you tell a story about conflict – including longstanding, unresolved, political conflicts between north and south – and not suppress the real issues, the causes of the conflict and the fact that conflict is a great catalyst for change, by working under the rubric of "peace reporting". (The danger is always in trying to whitewash real, deep issues, in the wish to provide easy answers.)

With its vibrant, extensive and stable media scene, getting information out to the Ugandan population is not a problem. At the same time, getting hold of basic information in the north is not too difficult. The army have also given out basic information on its "major operations" in the area, and have often taken Kampala journalists into southern Sudan (where Uganda supported the southern Sudanese former rebels and the LRA were armed by Khartoum in a proxy war) and to recent talks with the LRA. Similarly, NGOs and the humanitarian community abound in the north.

But what will happen to journalists who ask the bigger questions?

How do you question the veracity of the army's information, or raise the thorny issue of

their “successful” operations (killing of rebels on the battlefield is actually the killing of abducted children who are forced to fight)?

How do you question the reasons why people at the beginning were very against the indictments issued by the ICC? How do you raise the question of the complicity of the humanitarian movement in the war in their providing food and basic services to people who were forcibly displaced and herded into camps by the government – and thereby enabled the government to continue its policy of, what northerners see as, government hostility towards the north? (Not that this denotes northern support for the LRA – but rather a feeling of being under attack from both sides.)

When gender violence is rife – perpetrated by the LRA, the army and local communities – how do journalists tell complex stories on the phenomenon of this violence being so high in the north and in displaced camps – and not tell a very safe story on “it’s bad to beat your wife” (which many donors and NGOs would fund), but rather raising questions on impoverishment, army violence, the violence that comes with being politically marginalised, massive unemployment and alcoholism, and how that has a relationship with violence against women and children.

It’s not only the challenge of raising these issues, but knowing that you will be denied access and information from people who don’t like the line you are taking.

Some intrepid journalists have contacts with the LRA and know the group’s structure. This has made it easier to get information and to occasionally use them as sources in stories. Journalists are also increasingly sourcing political analysts and think tanks who raise complex issues.

Journalists living in the smaller towns also have access to victims on the frontline. But with

misinformation, accusations of subterfuge and sometimes not being able to verify information that you get off-the-record, much of the most interesting and complex rumours and half-information about the north can never be reported on and never stands up to be tested.

But besides access, peace has also brought about a number of ethical challenges. Child soldiers have mostly returned to their communities and are now easier to interview. But, how do journalists tell stories of great trauma of perpetrators and victims (and often the abducted children have been victims as well as a perpetrators) – without portraying the subject as helpless or an aberration – and still giving that subject dignity?

What ethical considerations do you have to consider when talking to child mothers: abducted girls who became pregnant at LRA bases (more often than not through sexual coercion), and might be the partners of top commanders (who themselves might have been abducted as children)?

How do you get a very interesting story, but still respect the parameters of good journalism practice and ethics?

Informed consent means that journalists have to work extra hard in providing options to people they’re interviewing, as well as really talking through the implications around issues of identifying them, providing information, detailing their time in captivity. It also means that journalists working on the ground often work very hard to provide a space of dignity for their subjects – not by going the extra mile, but by observing the basic journalistic principles of fairness and balance, and giving everybody the same due consideration: rich or poor.

The last anomaly that Ugandan journalists currently face is that they are starting to talk about

issues of transitional justice in a place where there is no real political transition, ie the government is not changing. The relative peace recently in the north has meant that there have also been calls for the set-up of a truth commission. Unlike the ICC indictments, civil society believes this will be a chance to get to the root causes of the northern war (as well as the myriad other armed conflicts in Uganda’s recent history), and investigate the behaviour and culpability of a range of actors in the conflict – including that of government and army.

The government has tried to limit the debate to the arrest and prosecution of the LRA leadership. And, since ordinary people really only get to know about the debates on transitional justice through the media – how can the media tell an in-depth story about the issues at hand, when they have little information on the justice debates being raised.

A few international organisations have started training journalists on transitional justice, but it’s only when Ugandans really own the debate – and are able to exchange views through the media – that they will really start talking on what real change can mean for the country.

*Photograph from United Nations Photo  
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# THE INTERPRETATION OF CONFLICT CAN JOURNALISTS GO FURTHER?

THE CASE FOR LINKING THE TEACHING AND TRAINING OF JOURNALISTS TO CONSTRUCTING A PEACE-BUILDING ROLE IN THE WORLD

by Fackson Banda

Since the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, in the wake of the bombings of the Twin Towers on 11 September 2001, there has been even greater interest in understanding the role of the media in constructing interpretations of conflict. Although his analysis was concerned with the Euro-American context, the questions posed by Hamelink (2003: xxiii) are relevant to the African situation:

How did opinion-leading news media in the countries that initiated and supported the invasion assist the justification of the attack?

How can one explain media connivance with partisan propaganda and persuasion? (Here, one could just as easily ask why Rwanda's Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) connived with radical Hutus to broadcast hatred against Tutsis, moderate Hutus, Belgians and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda?)

Will media coverage be different during the next international armed conflict?

As Barbie Zelizer and Stuart Allan (2002: 2) put it, 9/11 represented a period of "trauma" for journalism in the Western world, calling upon journalists to "assume a far broader range of tasks, none more important than contributing to the reconfiguration of identities, both individual and collective, that have been temporarily shattered".

Africa had already been brought face to face with media "trauma", largely because of the genocide in Rwanda. Referring to what she calls "a traumatised media industry", Marie-Soleil Fréré, in her book *The Media and Conflicts in Central Africa* (2007), makes the point that: "... the media constitute a two-edged sword. They can be the instruments of both destructive and constructive strategies, especially in societies undergoing change, destabilised by conflict, or in the throes of political stabilisation."

History provides us with a multitude of examples that show the ability of journalists, from behind the shelter of their microphones or pens, to incite hatred, provoke violent mass movements, voluntarily manipulate information in the service of war-mongering strategies, and, more or less consciously or perversely, create the roots of deep divisions within society.

It has thus become important to rethink the way the media's roles are defined in view of the pressing issue of conflict prevention and peace building. There is now an assumption that the media are critical to strategies aimed at conflict prevention and peace building. This assumption has thrown up a plethora of interpretation and intervention approaches to the role of the media, such as "peace journalism", "conflict-sensitive journalism", "proactive journalism" and "mediation journalism" (Fréré, 2007: 5; Loewenberg and Bonde, 2007).

The question that emerges is thus: Can or even must the journalist go further, by directing his or her professional practice toward supporting peace initiatives? If so, does such a commitment mean that the journalist

has renounced his or her role as neutral and impartial informer?

The view of a "committed" or "morally courageous" journalist demands extrication from the doctrine of objectivity that has generally defined the practice of Euro-American journalism. It is here that African journalism education requires a critical rethink of its epistemic and ontological foundations which, in the first place, are fundamentally inherited from the colonial past, and which continue to be influenced by Western debates about what constitutes good journalism. At the same time, African journalism education must address the double trauma the practice of journalism is suffering from by virtue of the public expectations of post-Rwanda genocide and post-September 11.

Although this is rarely acknowledged, 9/11 has had a profound effect on the context within which African journalism operates. For example, Uganda, following the US's enactment of the Patriot Act, has enacted its own Anti-Terrorism Act, whose maximum penalty for journalists found guilty of "terrorism" is death. But whereas national security is a valid concern, the state has often used it as a cover for stifling freedom of expression. The same is true of Zambia which recently enacted the Anti-Terror Act of 2007. These laws are a reflection of the general legislative trend in most Western countries which waged war against Afghanistan and Iraq. This is a subtle way through which Western legislative hegemony is perpetuated in the postcolonies. The only difference here is that such legislation plays into the hands of ruling elites across Africa who are only too willing to muzzle the press.

African journalism education is dependent upon the libertarian epistemic orientation, which works against the very human impulse towards being a committed or morally courageous journalist in this age of international terrorism. But, despite its western-dependency, African journalism is characterised by a dissociative tendency. And such a postcolonial impulse provides fertile ground for a critical rethinking of African journalism education, so that it can live up to the tenets of committed and morally courageous journalism.

## The Western-dependency of African journalism education

The continuing dependency of African education on western systems of philosophy, and I use the word "philosophy" in its generic sense of knowledge, is uncontested, largely because of the imposition of colonialism and its postcolonial legacy.

One of the "instrumentalities" used by the imperial nations to "civilise" the natives was education. Its cultural foundations were those of the imperial nations, uprooting the natives from their own histories, epistemologies and ontologies. African journalism education reflects, in almost every conceivable way, Western forms of journalism training and education.

In the study *Contextualising journalism education and training in Southern Africa* by Banda, Beukes-Amiss, Bosch, Mano, McLean and Steenveld (2007), it is clear that African journalism training and education continues to look to

the West for its legitimation. African media trainers and educators have few or no resources to generate indigenised knowledge. Whenever such knowledge is produced, it has to be legitimised by Western institutions through funding, peer review, and other validation processes. While there is a case to be made about the globality of knowledge production, distribution and consumption, Africa does not seem to have attained the levels of economic self-sufficiency that are needed to assert its own epistemic and ontological independence and identity.

Largely as a result of the paucity of theoretical knowledge about journalism and media, most training and education institutions in Africa have tended to emphasise the practical components of their curricula. What little theory is taught is Western-oriented, usually uncritically packaged together with the journalistic skills imparted. This paucity of African theorising about journalism and media has implications for the kinds of journalists produced to deal with the complex, postcolonial continent that Africa is. Questions of electoral democracy, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, race, etc – are so complex that their potential to cause conflict cannot be underestimated. The very invocation of the slogan "global terrorism" assumes so many meanings that it requires a resurgence of the potential agency and creativity of journalists as committed and morally courageous human beings who have a sophisticated understanding of local and global issues.

Although journalism education in Africa does not seem to have caught onto the need to teach the subject differently, it is evident that the practice of journalism is itself rediscovering journalistic agency. Now, this agency can be creatively tapped into by African journalism training. After all, "it is no use encouraging journalism students to collect interesting theories as if they were geological or biological specimens, by way of a hobby. The responsibility is to give them tools to apply a critical self-awareness to *their own journalism*" (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005: 228). To understand *their own journalism*, I turn to how African journalists seem to dissociate themselves from Western reportage of international conflict.

## The dissociative impulse of African journalism

Emmanuel C. Alozie's analysis of the African online newspapers in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa, demonstrates that the newspapers assumed an anti-war theme and orientation in the coverage of the political rhetoric that led to the US-UK invasion of Iraq. This critical trend was also evident in the privately-owned e.tv's broadcasts of the war. The state-owned South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) was ambivalent in its reportage of the conflict (Buchinger, Wasserman and De Beer, 2004: 218). While the "minds" of African journalism educators seem captive to the West, the "hands" of African journalists seem to be moulding a revolt. It is time for journalism education to move at the same pace as journalistic practice.

I would like to suggest that African journalism education is now better placed to redefine itself than ever before. It has the raw materials to engage in a deconstruction of Western libertarian journalism and construct a more responsive journalism that resembles the realities of the African context. The revulsion against "embedded journalism" as a form of "tribalisation" (Tehrani, 2002) provides fertile ground for this. Let me suggest that such a reconstruction must take into account two factors, a deconstructive questioning of the Western epistemic and existential underpinning of journalism; and a reconstructive synthesis of critical forms of Western journalism and Afrocentric forms of journalism.

## Towards a critical journalism education for Africa

The starting point of any effort at deconstructing the Western epistemic straitjacket African journalism education finds itself in is the epistemological-ontological debate about the fundamental philosophic and cultural issue of an individual's relationship to society. Stark (2001: 145) captures the issue: "Is the individual a product

of society, or is society the product of the individual? Who decides what is right or wrong? What ought to be the values and obligations of journalists? Only when basic and bold questions are raised will we begin to understand what constitutes a moral society and develop a coherent expectation as to what represents appropriate ethical journalistic performance. Such concepts as communitarianism ..., discourse ethics ... minority voices in society (eg indigenous peoples, immigrants and women) may seem far removed from daily journalism, but the need to understand these better has potentially important consequences for journalism and the pursuit of democratic principles."

If these questions are being posed of journalism within the Western academe, it is high time African journalism educators and trainers started asking them. Journalism education in Africa must contend with defining a new academic identity for itself, extricating itself from dependency on Western-oriented models of journalism education and training. A less instrumentalist approach, and a more critical-paradigmatic approach towards journalism education (Hochheimer, 2001) is needed.

The idea of Western journalistic agency is more effectively framed as journalistic autonomy. Journalistic autonomy can be understood in the expanded sense of *personal* and *institutional* freedom to practise journalism. In this way, it shifts responsibility to both individual journalists and media-institutional executives for decision-making about peace reporting as a possible genre that they could adopt. This kind of freedom can easily be reconceptualised within the context of African journalism. Hochheimer (2001: 110-111), reflecting on African journalism in particular, stretches this point in his conceptualisation of "journalism of meaning". According to him, such an approach would embed journalism curricula within the students' own historical, cultural and social experiences. The latter point agrees with Ali Mazrui's concern that Western-based curricula, based on rationalist-scientific detachment, tend to uproot African students from their history and culture, making it difficult for them to engage in reflexivity and critique their own governments from the vantage point of engaged and constructive citizenry (in Murphy and Scotton, 1987: 18-20).

A second point to make is that African journalism education must be explicitly linked to the philosophical foundations of peace education. Page (2004: 5) suggests that peace education is underpinned by five ethical orientations:

Virtue ethics: an emphasis on the importance of the development of character.

Consequentialist ethics: that what we teach and how we teach have an important effect in forming the sort of society in which we live.

Aesthetic ethics: judgements as to what is beautiful and desirable. As such, if we believe that peace, that is harmonious and co-operative relations between individuals and societies, is beautiful – a valuable – thing in itself, then we should not be ashamed about having it as a stated objective within the curriculum.

Conservative political ethics: This approach is averse to violent social change and emphasises a strong and stable nation-state, both of which are critical to the notion of peace education.

The ethics of care: This approach is based on establishing and nurturing supportive relationships, rather than just insisting on rights and duties, as a way of promoting peace.

I would add to this list the *ethics of ubuntu*. The idea comes from the maxim "umuntu ngumuntu nga bantu", which is translated to mean that "a human being is to affirm one's humanity by recognising the humanity of others and, on that basis, establish humane relations with them" (Ramose, 2002: 231).

In this way, African journalism education would need to equip students with the existential and constructivist insights as to why journalistic autonomy should be directed towards peace-building. However, theorists would need to ground any reform "in an understanding of the actual working conditions and belief systems of journalists. But such a theoretical reformulation would need to contemplate three interrelated distinctions about

news production: journalism and the news media industry; autonomy versus objectivity; and autonomy as a resource for, or a barrier to, civic activation" (McDevitt, 2003: 161).

A reconceptualised view of journalistic autonomy as moral independence is therefore not necessarily in conflict with peace keeping, particularly given a situation whereby media are implicated in the moral decadence of profiteering, elitism, politicking, parochialism, and so on. Autonomy becomes that liberating force which propels the journalist to reflect upon his/her practices and disengage from the institutional and societal strictures of news reporting. It is emancipatory. It is human, humanising, and humane.

I can now confront the question posed by Fréré at the beginning of this article: Can or even must the journalist go further, by directing his or her professional practice toward supporting peace initiatives? If so, does such a commitment mean that the journalist has renounced his or her role as neutral and impartial informer? (Fréré, 2007: 5). Journalists, even if they proclaim a journalism of attachment, should not recant the discipline of verification. But, to pose the question differently: Can journalists be biased, as implied by peace journalism? I would like to answer the question guardedly. Firstly, the media *are* always biased in one way or another. The bias can be, or is a combination of all of the following:

*Personal*, when the journalist, wittingly and unwittingly, includes some story ideas and news sources and excludes others;

*Institutional*, when the institutional practices and culture enable or disable the journalist;

*Systemic*, when the extant media practices and codes of conduct influence journalistic practice; and

*Societal*, when the prevailing political, commercial and other societal pressures buffet the media practices (cf. Tehranian, 2002: 74-76).

Bias can entail a consciously-made decision to amplify the voices of the poor. It might involve a moral decision to counter messages of racial, ethnic or other forms of hatred. In my estimation, any such counter messages constitute *positive* bias. By implication, the media must not be biased against the poor, the hurting, the weak, the marginalised, the politically disenfranchised, and so on. But we know that the structured nature of the media, in times of conflict, results in all forms of marginalisation.

Much of what we do lies in the extent to which we are prepared to deconstruct what we know journalism to be. This extends to the classroom, to the ways in which journalism is theorised and taught. The normative nature of the media opens up avenues for negotiating what the media *ought to do* to deepen the democratic experience of both developed and developing countries. Given the normativity of media roles, it is possible to conceive of the place of peace journalism in the newsroom.

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# GETTING AND TELLING THE OTHER STORY

INDEPENDENT INFORMATION AS AN AGENT OF CHANGE

by Paula Fray



UN Photo/Stuart Price



UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

In the Iridimi refugee camp in eastern Chad, Fatne Abdaraman hauls a 20-litre plastic jug to collect her daily ration of water – one of central Africa's scarcest resources and a focus of the conflict in the region.

In the Agboghloshie market in the heart of Accra, Ghana, Annie Mbawinyi is one of the many young women working as a market porter to support her family despite extreme social conditions.

In Angola, Vivia Paulino plays with her twin sister in the sand unaware that she was on the brink of death only months earlier because of cholera.

In East Africa, Dr Willis Akhwale, head of Kenya's National Malaria Control Programme, researches previously unheard of malaria in the

highlands areas which is being driven by climatic change.

These Inter Press Service (IPS) Africa articles represent not only the voices of women and children whose stories are usually marginalised, but also the issues they face – health, development, poverty, exploitation and gender equality – which are largely invisible and overshadowed by a demand for politics, business and celebrity- and event-driven news.

If Africa's external story is driven by ad hoc coverage of disasters, elections and economic news, its internal stories remain largely national in focus with a few notable exceptions.

IPS aims to fill the information gap appealing to both international and national audiences on the continent. Since its inception in 1964, IPS

has operated on the premise that information is an agent of change. The IPS mission is "giving a voice to the voiceless" by acting as a communication channel that highlights the concerns and interests of the poorest and creates a "climate of understanding, accountability and participation around development".

As an institution, IPS supports capacity building; and, dissemination and networks between civil society, international institutions, policy-makers, donors and individual readers, to promote an ongoing dialogue about communication and development for a better world.

Our core, however, remains the provision of independent news and editorial content on our global website [www.ipsnews.net](http://www.ipsnews.net). The website recorded over 37 million page views a month last year – reflecting a need and an interest in the "other" story.

But getting – and telling – these stories is challenging.

In today's globalising world, economies and communities are becoming increasingly interconnected – and seemingly more polarised. Access to the media and media access to stories is constrained by limited financial and human resources. Africa is no exception.

Our first challenge is to overcome a resistance to issue-based coverage and to encourage recognition that development *is* news. The second is to help reporters unpack the story in a way that allows readers to relate to the coverage – sometimes finding a human face is not enough to answer the "so what" question; the story needs to relate to the reader in his or her own environment.

As a news agency that provides news to other media organisations, IPS needs to present the story in a way that is attractive and understandable to users – and so the quest is to find the nexus of news and development.

Who tells our stories? IPS prides itself on using contributors who live in the country or region they cover. Overseen by editor-in-chief Miren Gutiérrez, who is based in Rome, the stories are gathered through decentralised co-ordination. IPS Africa's regional editor Terna Gyuse co-ordinates content from bureaus in



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Cotonou, Benin, and Nairobi, Kenya, as well as from project editors who commission stories from reporters in about 50 countries on the continent.

This too presents a challenge as reporters migrate from freelance to full-time employment; operate in media-repressive regimes or have difficulty in gaining access to the tools needed in our Internet-based operation.

Furthermore, those impacted by the stories issue no press releases on their dilemmas; they are not listed online or easily accessed via telephone or the Internet and too often live at the end of disastrous roads as far from the newsroom as you could want. In terms of time and effort, finding their stories can be tremendously costly... and tremendously rewarding.

Our added challenge is to present Africa beyond event-driven news which is supported by a pyramid structure of news coverage that looks for a "who" (predominantly urban-based males in position of authority); a "when" (today is better than yesterday and therefore event-driven); a "what" (inevitably an event and/or a statement); a "where" (most likely to be urban areas which are more accessible), "how" and "why".

This structure precludes coverage of process-driven news and seeks to simplify complex issues in a way that removes nuances and complexities.

IPS Africa recognises that sometimes the real stories lie in the complexities; that the food riots on the continent relate to a process that has been building over time and are inter-related to under-reported issues such as the millennium development goals (MDGs); the empowerment of the continent's women; climate change; aid effectiveness and a host of other issues that underlie governance.

Our editorial products deal with economic,

social, political and cultural aspects of development. A distinctive feature of our editorial production is that we have made an explicit commitment to mainstreaming gender and the MDGs in our copy. This commitment, however, is not enough to ensure coverage. In support of our writers, IPS produces a range of toolkits and checklists to deepen coverage in line with this commitment.

IPS Africa sees itself as first the South speaking to the south and then the South speaking to the North. Our challenge is to reflect aspects of the continent seldom covered – issues of development which are normally marginalised, are our core.

How then do we cover stories in a way that relates complex development issues to people on other ends of the world; how do we encourage people to see their stories as newsworthy?

**Context is key:** the IPS story seeks to provide context that recognises the inter-relatedness of the issues facing the continent.

**Finding a human face:** relating complex events to their ultimate impact on ordinary people allows IPS to "give a voice to the voiceless".

**Relevance:** whether the story tackles the MDGs, aid effectiveness, integrated water resources management, research or women and elections, IPS Africa must seek to ensure that it is relevant to the reader.

**Highlighting marginalised issues:** in an era when the news agenda is often driven by "flavour of the month" issues, IPS Africa keeps a constant watch on development issues such as population development, the death penalty, South-South co-

operation, human rights, governance and poverty as they relate to news events being covered elsewhere.

**Clarity without losing voice:** our challenge is to achieve clarity without losing the writer's voice so that our ideas, sources and the structure of the storytelling reflect the diversity of stories and storytellers on the continent.

**Going beyond the easily accessible:** maintaining a flow of coverage beyond easily-accessed countries remains a constant challenge on a continent with varying degrees of press freedom, journalistic training and a variety of languages. This necessitates an ongoing drive to refresh our correspondents' base, seeking funding for unreported issues and seeking out untold stories.

**Localising language:** IPS Africa reports in English and French with translation into Portuguese and Swahili. Within the IPS network, these stories are trans-edited (translated and edited for local context) into more than 20 languages.

IPS believes that strong and independent media, and effective civil society communication, are vital for sustainable and equitable development. This requires the empowerment of both sectors. We believe that all citizens – especially those without access to power and influence – have a right to see their voices and perspectives reflected in news, information and public debate. In short, we cover processes, not events – and we attempt to stay with issues long after the media spotlight has gone elsewhere.

IPS Africa can be accessed at [www.ipsnews.net](http://www.ipsnews.net)  
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# Cartooning in a time of calamity

*For centuries it has been acknowledged as a necessary characteristic of civilisation that there should be a space set aside for jokesters to poke fun at the embarrassing under-achievement of kings, queens, pontiffs and politicians. In recent times, the jester's space has been a bustling thoroughfare. It's a great time for cartoonists.*

by Andy Mason

If nothing else can be said in favour of the shocking and turbulent six months that have just gone by, at least they've been good for cartooning. Political cartoonists, by their very nature, thrive on calumny. Catastrophe and ire add lustre to their ink.

But this is not to say that their only role is to wade triumphantly through the muck, hurling barbs at failed leaders. In the brief but heady period of national consensus that followed the 1994 elections, South African cartoonists provided celebratory images – Zapiro's jiving Madiba is perhaps the best example – that gave expression to the mood of optimism pervading the country.

But the Madiba years are over now and in a recent cartoon on the front page of the *Mail&Guardian* (22 May), Zapiro's Madiba and Tutu characters stand, sad and diminished, at the foot of a South African flag drenched in blood. If the cartoons are anything to go by, the euphoric rhetoric of the rainbow nation has given way to a depressing discourse of disillusionment.

Writing in the *Sunday Times* (29 June), Mark Gevisser cautions against thinking about our celebrated transition as a single historical moment. Rather, we should see it as "a perpetual journey", and, he warns, we can expect it to be long, drawn out and messy, characterised by intermittent bouts of blood and thunder.

It's been a good time for cartoonists.

For centuries it has been acknowledged as a necessary characteristic of civilisation that there should be a space set aside for jokesters to poke fun at the embarrassing under-achievement of kings, queens, pontiffs and politicians. In recent times, the jester's space has been a bustling thoroughfare.

Among the so-called leaders of the world are so many buffoons to lampoon that jesters are literally spoiled for choice. And here in our own back yard, Robert Mugabe, as a tragicomic icon of hubristic derangement, has over the last decade attracted more derisory ink than anyone since Idi Amin.

Looking at the recent proliferation of anti-

Mugabe cartoons, it is clear that he has come to symbolise what bourgeois South Africans fear most – the collapse of civilised society. There have been some outrageous Mugabe cartoons lately, but possibly the most savage was a Dov Fedler effort in *The Star* (1 July), which shows Mugabe, his tunic soaked in blood, holding up two severed hands.

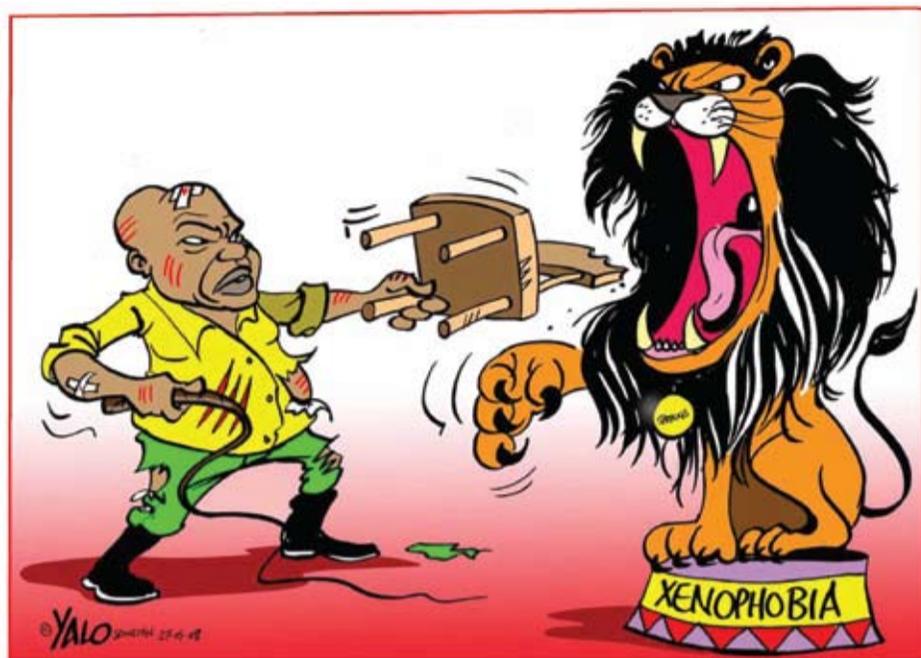
Hiding behind Mugabe, a lurking figure is often visible – our disappearing President Thabo Mbeki. But when it comes to our own national crises, Mbeki is nowhere to be seen. In a 26 May cartoon, *Business Day's* Brandon depicts South Africa as a burning Boeing. As the aircraft plunges earthwards, an announcement emanates from the captain's cabin. He's not there right now, but if anyone cares to leave a message...

The cosy bond between Mbeki and Mugabe is also a favourite topic for cartoonists. Zapiro recently showed the two out on a limb, holding hands, with Jacob Zuma sawing away at the branch (15 April).

This cartoon has a special significance for me because I was present at its creation – in the back of a taxi on the way to Oliver Tambo airport in Johannesburg. The vehicle was caught in a huge snaking traffic jam – the robots were all out as a result of load shedding – and Zapiro, who was sitting next to me, was beginning to sweat.

His cartoon for Independent Newspapers was due by 5pm, and it had been his plan to finish it in the airport lounge as we waited for our flight back to Cape Town. We had been at Wits University, participating in a lunchtime discussion on political cartooning with the eminent Canadian journalist Haroon Siddiqui, and the debate had carried on afterwards outside the venue.

Zapiro meanwhile had a cartoon to complete. He had started it on the plane in the morning and planned to finish it in the campus coffee bar, but time ran out and his last hope was to do it at the airport. Now we were stuck in traffic and there was no alternative but to haul out his oversized pencil box and attack the cartoon in the back of the taxi, which he did, punctuating his frantic scribbles with dark imprecations. "I can't go on like this," he grumbled, and indeed he couldn't.



It was the last cartoon he did before resigning, suddenly and dramatically, from his post as the syndicated cartoonist for Independent Newspapers, leaving *The Star*, *Pretoria News*, *The Mercury* and *Cape Times* without a cartoonist.

Fourteen years of committed political cartooning for the country's major papers, producing up to six or seven cartoons a week, had left Zapiro exhausted. Besides, he needed some time to work on his pet project, a collection of his Madiba cartoons to commemorate the great man's 90th birthday.

Zapiro, the quintessential cartooning activist, had been involved in the struggle since the 80s, and was on hand to give graphic expression to the great moment of liberation in 1994. But the optimistic symbols and icons of that miraculous moment are somewhat tarnished now, and his work has become increasingly bleak and pessimistic.

Also galling, as an audience member's question at the Wits lunchtime discussion revealed, was the realisation that he was being wilfully misinterpreted by some members of the public who were using his attacks on the government to bolster their right wing views.

The questioner likened him to David Bullard, who had just been fired from the *Sunday Times*. Zapiro leapt angrily to his own defence. While as a self-confessed "freedom of expression junkie" he supported Bullard's right to write whatever he liked, he said, he took exception to being linked to Bullard.

Recalling the incident later, he blamed what he called an "anomalous confluence" of critical voices, by virtue of which he was effectively grouped with people whose reactionary, anti-democratic viewpoints he deplored.

Zapiro's decision to quit his post at Independent Newspapers sent shockwaves through the local newspaper fraternity. While syndication obviously makes good sense to the bean counters who hover like vultures over newsrooms these days, the syndication of Zapiro in four of the country's leading daily papers and his weekly appearances in the *Mail&Guardian* and *Sunday Times* had the effect of leaving precious

little space for other cartoonists.

But in recent weeks we've seen a welcome shake-up of the local cartooning scene, as other jesters move to fill the spaces opening up. Dov Fedler, one of the true veterans of South African cartooning, is back with a vengeance, and Wilson Mgbhozi, previously an illustrator at *The Star*, has shown a promising aptitude for political cartooning. Another emerging cartoonist who has recently asserted himself is Themba Siwela, whose cartoons previously appeared in *The Mercury*.

Given the nagging racial imbalance in South African cartooning, the arrival of new black cartoonists is good news, bringing a welcome diversity to what was previously (with the exception of a handful of struggle cartoonists like Nanda Soobben and Mogorosi Motshumi) pretty much a whites-only game. Leading the new generation are Brandan Reynolds, who draws for *Business Day*, *The Weekender* and the *Weekend Argus*, and Sifiso Yalo, who draws for the *Sowetan*.

We certainly need a wider range of South African cartooning voices, and newspaper and magazine editors should do what they can to make this happen. In a political situation as contested as ours, one would expect to see more diversity in the portrayal of the nation's leaders. For example, a recent Yalo cartoon in the *Sowetan*, portraying Jacob Zuma as a heroic lion tamer tackling the problem of xenophobia, flies in the face of conventional portrayals of the ANC president, which usually focus on his seamy side.

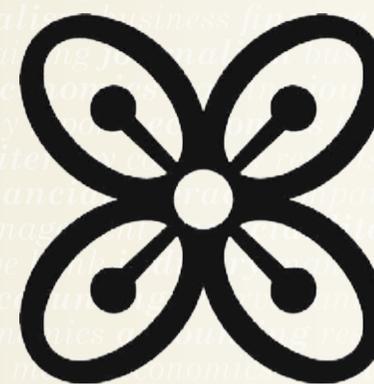
In the mid-90s the jester's space was cluttered with cartoonists of every persuasion, from rabid right-wingers to committed leftists, with all manner of prevaricating liberals in between.

Not only did progressive cartoonists criticise the state, they also provided positive images and icons that helped South Africans come to terms with the challenges of transition.

If, as Gevisser suggests, we are indeed in a new transitional phase, perhaps it is not too optimistic to hope for a similar blossoming of local cartooning in support of the ongoing struggle to turn South Africa into a country that we all can believe in.

*Given the nagging racial imbalance in South African cartooning, the arrival of new black cartoonists is good news, bringing a welcome diversity to what was previously pretty much a whites-only game*





**Centre for  
Economics  
Journalism  
in Africa  
CEJA**

# How do you train an economics journalist?

## A survey of what editors think

By Reg Rumney

**T**raining for economics journalism – and by this I mean business, finance and macro-economics – must be as much about journalism as about the subject matter. This was the message that came through in an extensive perception survey of the editors of the country's main economics media outlets.

The qualitative survey, fieldwork for which was done in January this year, was exploratory, confined to South Africa as a starting point, and designed to shape the work of the new centre I run, the Centre for Economics Journalism in Africa (CEJA).

The idea was to identify the further training needs of working South African economic journalists, by surveying their bosses, the editors.

Some questions were related to what areas staff needed to be trained in – or more precisely what they needed to be taught. Other questions aimed to get an idea of the constraints of the industry, so as to pinpoint training gaps.

Editors in general were not specific about any courses they believed would aid their staff, except to say they required some basic understanding of economics and finance. A phrase that cropped up twice was, "We don't know what we don't know."

They did in various ways express a strong desire that short teaching courses be oriented towards journalism rather than simply be theoretical finance, accounting or economics. This is in line with what CEJA is doing in its short courses, which emphasise economics journalism rather than facets of economics.

*Business Report* editor Jabulani Sikhakhane, for example, urged that training courses should be "less theoretical". "It needs to be journalism-based.

Even if it is the workings of the Reserve Bank, it needs to help the people you are training to do a real story. It needs to be practical."

Moneyweb editor Alec Hogg believes journalists benefit as much from overseas travel as from training courses, though he and other editors expressed their appreciation for the Sanlam Winter/Summer school.

This, one of the few training courses dedicated to equipping journalists to cover macro- or micro-economics, was mentioned positively by a few of the editors.

*Business Day* editor Peter Bruce believes the main training or teaching need is to broaden the ability of journalists to understand more than finance, and to have an understanding of industry and management as well.

"So what you want in business journalism is people not to sit down and be taught how to read a balance sheet. Quite frankly if you can't read a balance sheet, phone someone."

In contrast, financial literacy, in the sense of understanding company reports, was one of the areas the editors in general believed needed to be covered in short courses.

There was a strong realisation that the industry could benefit from having new entrants to the profession with some knowledge of economics and finance, including those who have majored in economics.

Some editors believe students with the more generalised knowledge of business afforded by a BCom degree would be helpful or even essential. Of the two editors who have MBA degrees themselves, one believes the media could benefit from having more journalists with MBAs.

There was also some evidence of hostility,

even anti-intellectualism, towards academic qualifications, with some editors displaying a quaintly old-fashioned notion of journalists as not needing much prior knowledge.

But even the two editors who saw little need or opportunity for external journalism training, because of time pressures, saw some value in it as opposed to on-the-job training.

Indeed, the tendency was to see that having time out of the office was essential for learning, because of the distractions of office pressures. Bruce noted that in his newspaper "there is no actual on-the-job training, there is just work".

In answering the question about the value of external training, two editors hit upon the essence of teaching: the change in thinking it can bring about rather than the simple transfer of fact.

Summit TV companies and markets editor Giulietta Talevi sees on-the-job training and external training as complementary, but notes external training resembled university education as enabling reflection.

*Financial Mail* editor Barney Mthombothi made the important point that any training or teaching has to be directed at the people who have the power to change the working practices in their newsrooms, or it would be wasted.

That is a useful pointer not only for CEJA but for other journalism teaching aimed at working professionals: it should start as far up the organisational ladder as possible.

Many editors are in a position to impart valuable lessons from their practical experience to others in such courses. They should do so soon to prepare eventual successors. The economic editors are ageing: the mean average of experience for all 18 editors interviewed was 22 years.

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# Being a reporter, being a human

by Pieter van Zyl

**M**y most terrifying experience ever was visiting a crime scene where for the first time I saw a brutalised body. On that day I did irreparable damage by harassing the family of a man who had killed three of his colleagues and then turned the gun on himself. I was sent back to his family three times to get quotable reaction and a photograph of the murderer. I was shouted at, shoved out of the door and sworn at. Not only did I do mental damage to myself, but also to the people I attempted to interview. I want to do something to try to prevent this from happening again.

Young journalists often start out reporting on crime. Journalists can play one of two roles in reporting on crime: we can further traumatise victims and their families by not being sensitive in our reporting, or we can aid the healing process by creating a positive and safe environment for victims to tell their stories in such a way that it empowers them. If journalists have the tools to be empathetic listeners, their contact with victims could be the first step on the road to healing.

I believe there is a place for a manual on sensitive reporting, and I would like to contribute to it. Such a manual would have been useful to me as a cadet reporter.

"We, the bystander, have had to look within ourselves to find some small portion of courage that victims of violence must muster every day," Judith Herman writes in her book *Trauma and Recovery*. "They remind us that creating a protected space where survivors can speak their truth is an act of liberation. They remind us that bearing witness, even within the confines of that sanctuary, is an act of solidarity."

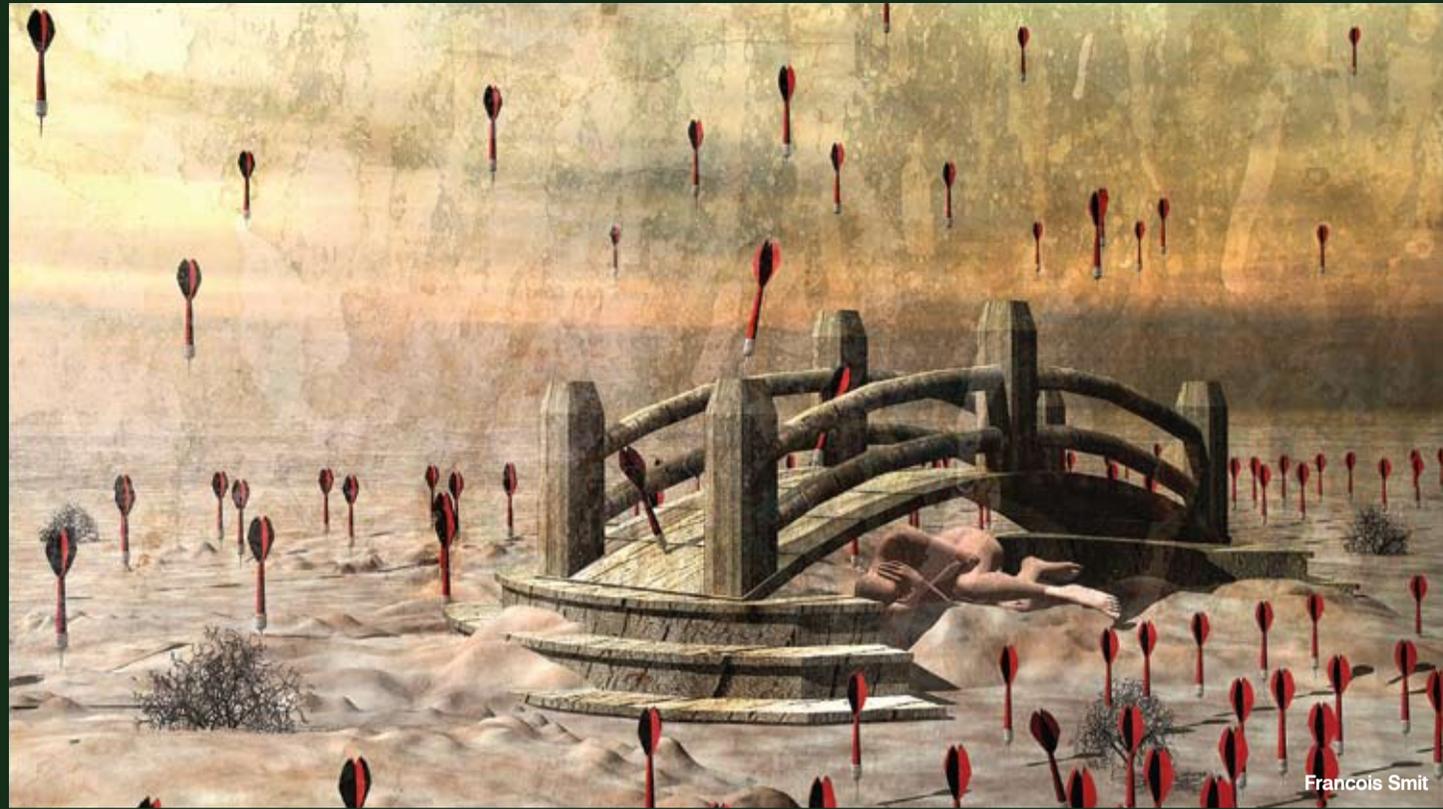
Herman was writing about the role of therapists, but the same could be said about our job as journalists.

For example: when you write about a "survivor of crime" – the preferred term – or any kind of traumatic experience, you should steer clear of "bulldog"-type interviewing. The person sitting across from you is vulnerable, not a corrupt politician or unreliable public worker. No ruthless grilling needed.

Most of the people I have interviewed, since I researched more sensitive ways of doing my work, have thanked me for the way I dealt with the information they gave me, trusting I would use it wisely. I hope this is something intrinsic to my personality and my experience with mental health issues and troubled times in my own life. I try to report on other people in the way I hope others would report on my life story and that of my family.

Recently I had to report on a 14-year-old girl who was held captive for 15 months in a hole in the ground as a sex slave. Two days after her abductor was arrested and she was found, media from all over the world pounced on her. She had to tell her story about cruel sexual abuse to men of the same age as the perpetrator, in a so-called safe house, but before therapists or welfare workers got to her. She was victimised all over again.

After this assignment I almost called it quits. But then I thought the best way to change the industry is from the inside. If I could persuade my colleagues to handle their



Francois Smit

## Triggering trauma: tips for reporting with care

**T**he scene is set and the main characters have been identified. As a reporter you will only play a cameo role. What is the impact that you want to make? A bad interview triggers re-traumatisation as the interviewee loses trust and control. You could give some control back by allowing the interviewee to set the pace, take breaks and end the interview when he or she feels like it.

**Don't fake compassion.** Treat those you interview as you wish to be treated if you or your family were in the same situation. At the outset, establish roughly how long you are likely to need for the interview. Never ask the most overused and least effective of journalistic questions: "How do you feel?" If you were in your interviewee's shoes, what would your answer be? Let your emotions inform rather than cloud your understanding.

**Listen!** The worst mistake a reporter can make is to talk too much. Shortly after an ordeal, survivors would rather have someone listening to them. Through active listening – tone of voice and body language that shows you are attentive – you may open up a person. You could, even just by switching on your sound recorder and allowing the person to unpack feelings and emotions in a safe space, unlock a memorable narrative.

**Being empathetic...** other people will be much more ready to accept our expression of our desires if we are willing to acknowledge theirs. This does not mean that we have to accept what others want. "We can disagree with others and still give them courtesy of letting them know we understand how they feel," writes Chris L Kleineke in *Coping with Life Challenges*. "As a press photographer I quickly realised the day I stop caring about what I see and what I photograph is the day I stop making a difference," says Lisa Skinner, *Mail&Guardian* photographer.

One of the single most traumatic mistakes a journalist can make is factual errors in a story. "A news article mentioned the day Jordan-Leigh was killed on her birthday. A few got the spelling of her name wrong. I would have preferred someone phoning me a few times to make sure of facts rather than reading it in print," said Vernon Norton, the grandfather of the baby who was murdered more than a year ago.

When using photographs of dead or injured people, allow relatives to suggest which ones to publish. In a report on the rape of Springbok rugby star Schalk Burger's sister René, a Sunday paper used a photograph of Burger with René celebrating with a glass of wine, together with a picture of the site where she was gang raped. This really upset the family.

subjects with more respect and sensitivity, that would help to soften the effect of crime on the psyche of our nation.

Journalists are also human beings, and the traumatic events we cover have an impact on us too. Every journalist has a way of dealing with trauma. "In *reiki* we learn: observe, don't absorb. Care, don't carry. This is a tremendous help to repeat this mantra to yourself when you have to cover a sad story," says Marie Opperman, a magazine reporter. "In a way it makes it clear to you that this is the pain of the other person, not yours. Life gave him or her this load to carry. It's not yours. All you have to do is report on it. I only got it after three decades."

When journalists don't deal with the responses caused by the stories they have to cover it can develop into post-traumatic stress. When we deny the mental impact of the work we do, dissociate from it by drinking or taking drugs, or take the violence we see at work and turn it into aggression at home, we become part of the vicious cycle.

"People ask: should we as journalists become soft and fluffy? The answer is: yes, sometimes," says Dr Merle Friedman of the South African Institute for Traumatic Stress in Pretoria. "You need help to be able to switch off your emotions when you go out on a job and then switch them on again when you need to," she adds. Know your limits and take a break after a series of emotional stories. You have to be able to say no and ask for help. That is the best stress management available. "If you don't set boundaries on what you are willing to do and to which lengths you will go to get a story, no-one else will."

Find a trustworthy colleague who is also a good listener for when the going gets tough. Every publication should have one. Natascha Kampusch, the Austrian girl who was held captive in a cellar for almost a decade, described her way of coping as "psycho-hygiene". She constantly reminded herself that she was not going crazy and that her

abductor couldn't take her sanity away.

Ask yourself: "Is this really going to matter a month from now? A week? A day?" Look at your expectations. Are they unreasonable or even irrational about your ability to change anything? One of the most fulfilling ways of dealing with the trauma caused by reporting is to follow the story to the end, through to the funeral and court case.

Simpfiwe Nkwali of *The Times* said: "I was really tired, and angry that we as the media did not really do enough to try and track down the victims of the xenophobic violence recently. We just see them, take pictures because they are unconscious, and download them on the system and put the caption down as: 'unidentified victim'. We did not do enough to give them dignity."

So Nkwali decided to trace the family of the so-called "Burning Man" (see story on page 15) who became a symbol of the violence in the townships. He spent hours in hospitals and gave the man engulfed in flames a name: Ernesto Nhamuave from Mozambique. "I really wanted to follow it up and investigate who this guy was. In the first place to get accurate information, and for my own sanity. And I wanted to cover his funeral back in his country and tell his children and wife, the elders from his village exactly what had happened to him. It helped them get closure."

"Helping fellow human beings is the greatest gift any of us can experience," writes Frank Ochsberg in *The Reporter's Humanitarian Role*. "It really is better to give than to receive. And your opportunity to give begins with listening. Then with learning. Then with understanding. Sometimes, all you have to do is be there."

**For more information:**

[www.DartCenter.org](http://www.DartCenter.org)  
[www.notrain-nogain.org](http://www.notrain-nogain.org)  
[www.trauma-pages.com](http://www.trauma-pages.com)

by Segun Ige

While we have received democracy through colonisation, and understood the freedom and liberties that it offers, Africa is yet to embrace the discipline that really is responsible for the articulation of these rights, freedoms and liberties. Rhetoric has always been the vehicle for the consolidation of democracy.

Most of the messages that are received in the South are deliberate constructs of media practitioners who are adept in rhetoric. Rhetoric in the US, for example, is studied alongside media and communication studies.

The usefulness of rhetoric is not limited to communicative acts; it is also a powerful tool for the enhancement and acceleration of democracy. Rhetoric lends the scientific basis for the interaction and the full participation of the public under deliberative democracy.

But do media and journalism curricula at tertiary level in Africa possess rhetorical components? Although Media and Journalism Studies as a discipline is concerned with the use of words and images for communication purposes, rhetoric does not really feature in the curriculum. The majority of African tertiary institutions are yet to realise the importance of rhetoric in media practice.

The African Association for Rhetoric was inaugurated at the University of KwaZulu-Natal Durban last year at a colloquium entitled *Rhetoric, Protests and the Economy*.

The association is being constituted into a body of scholars who have an interest in intersections of rhetoric with various other disciplines. An objective of the association is to promote dialogue in the public sphere with a view to enhancing democracy in Africa. It has as its mandate the creation of a forum for scholarly and intellectual debates. In an effort to subject emerging discourses around Aids in Africa to serious intellectual discussion, the association is organising a conference with the theme, Rhetoric in the time of Aids: African perspectives.

Africa has been badly affected by the Aids epidemic and, as a result, there have been several discourses produced by the disease. Some of them have been superficially treated, and

some policy statements and declarations have not received the required attention because of lack of expertise in interpreting such documents. As a result, it would appear that African states have been rather ambiguous about the Aids epidemic.

The conference will aim to examine media engagements with the public on the level of persuasion and behavior change. In other words, issues relating to the rhetorical packaging of the Aids media message, the presentation and the reception of media messages by the public and the consequent behaviour of the public.

Wayne Both (2004) has proposed the notion of "listening rhetoric". This includes "the whole range of communicative arts for reducing misunderstanding by paying full attention to opposing views".

Sadly enough, the integrity of the agency of the media has been called into question because of its perceived paradoxical role in the fight against Aids – message overload and mixed messaging.

Have the media constituted for themselves an intelligent audience for their enterprise? Do the African media possess the capacity to do so? What roles perhaps should the government play in facilitating this?

In comparison to the more technologically-advanced countries, Africa's media still require further development to be able to reach their potential audiences; and without presence, rhetoric cannot function.

How are media organisations going to address this problem? What (rhetorical) strategies do they have in place? What is the role that symbolic rhetoric plays in the media's rapport with the public vis-à-vis photojournalism and art?

George Kelly (1963), a renowned psychologist, has advanced the theory of constructive alternativism, which holds that the introduction of a new set of beliefs and frame of reference will result in the construction of a new self and ultimately change one's behaviour.

The question that one may ask the African media at this time is: how are they contributing to the renewal of societies and the reconstruction of their values in ways that reinforce positive social behaviour, definition and reconstruction of social "selves"?

Has Aids caused the African media to consider the reconstruction of their own values and how they have responded to the challenge? How have the media helped the public in interpreting their world with Aids and how effective are the series of arrangements made by the media?

*Rhetoric in the time of Aids: African perspectives, will be held in July 2009 and will be co-hosted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the Durban Health Economic and Aids Research Division and the Centre for Public Participation.*

*How have the media helped the public in interpreting their world with Aids, and how are the media contributing to the renewal of societies and the reconstruction of their values in ways that reinforce positive social behaviour, definition and reconstruction of social "selves"?*

**Media  
messages  
under  
the  
microscope**

# Mobilising mobile

*Cellphones by themselves are a very weak tool, but they can be used to link callers to empowering people and organisations, reducing the isolation that increases victimisation says Peter Benjamin.*



**T**hree facts about South Africa:

1. We have the greatest HIV pandemic in the world with more than 5.5 million people living with the virus;
2. SA is the most unequal country in the world (as measured by the Gini coefficient). Most HIV-positive people do not get adequate treatment and support, let alone treatment;
3. SA has the best technical infrastructure in Africa, especially the large cellphone usage – there are around 35 million<sup>1</sup> active cellphone users.

Cell-Life, a Cape Town based not-for-profit that develops technical systems for the HIV sector, is exploring how mobile technology can be of use in mass messaging around HIV.

The experience of being infected or affected by HIV is a state of multiple types of questions – from a research scientist investigating epidemiology and virology, to a person with the virus wanting to know about their body, the meaning of CD4 count and viral load, questions on sexual practice, childcare, nutrition, treatment and a host of others.

If the English phrase means anything, this information is “a matter of life and death”.

There are many organisations whose job is to produce professional content on HIV to answer this need for information – the Department of Health, Soul City, the Treatment Action Campaign, loveLife, Khomanani, HIV/AIDS Network and more

– but still there is a gap.

While various media are used (websites, TV, radio, leaflets, billboards, call centres, comic books, community centres), it is surprising how little use is made of cellphones.

In SA, over 70% of all youth and adults have a cellphone<sup>2</sup>. There are 180 companies providing data services over the mobile network, known as wireless application service providers (Wasps). While there is a great deal of creativity in offering money-making services to download pictures of stars, music ringtones, pornography, love tips and the other games, gimmicks and gadgets, there are surprisingly few projects exploring how this amazing technology can be used for social benefit. Cell-Life is running a three-year project, funded by the Vodacom Foundation and the RAITH Foundation to do just this.

This project will explore how a range of cellphone services can provide information and communication services that are useful to people infected or affected by HIV. This includes subscription services for people infected or affected; public information by interactive SMS; social marketing using cellphones as a form of mass media that can be interactive and targeted; internal organisational services for HIV organisations (such as TAC and Soul City); ways of linking patients and health providers; ways of supporting self-expression and self-help for affected people; and supporting monitoring and evaluation of the pandemic.

A range of technologies are useful. SMS will definitely be used, as will the chat-type systems (such as Mxit using GPRS). We will experiment with push to voicemail, cellphone games, video and more. An open source server system is being developed to deliver this.

Social usage is more important than the technology – how can we use the tool of cellphones to support the self-organisation, treatment, education and action of the HIV-affected community? We will endeavour to make the system free to the end-user, or as cheap as possible (for example, people can request services via free Please Call Me messages, and then receive information through a voicemail which doesn't require literacy), and information will be in different South African languages.

The project is new and we are learning what is and is not possible. Cellphones seem to be useful in providing information when people want it (such as the address details of service providers), but is very weak at changing behaviour.

It is laughable to think that an SMS would make someone decide not to have unprotected sex when they are drunk and excited on Saturday night. However cellphones can increase the reach of behaviour change interventions (for example by notifying more people of a local HIV-awareness football game), providing a means of communicating for isolated people facing stigma in their local community, communicating with people who might be lost to follow up of health services, and linking people to services.

LoveLife is using cellphone social networking to link to young people in their “Make your move” campaign. Cell-Life will be offering HIV information to the over six million people on Mxit.

What we do not know is whether targeted cellphone services can affect the power relations that drive and exacerbate the pandemic. Most new infections are through unprotected sex between older men and younger women – and cellphones have been listed with cash and clothes as the three Cs that drive “transactional sex”.

Can cellphones be used as panic buttons to reduce rape, could women be empowered to negotiate safe sex or to get out of abusive relationships through networks accessible from their phone? Cellphones by themselves are a very weak tool, but they can be used to link callers to empowering people and organisations, reducing the isolation that increases victimisation.

Technology is a passive tool that reflects the dominant interests of the society. For the first time, literally a majority of people have an interactive digital means of receiving and sending information. As a society, do we want to use this staggering potential to receive advertising, horoscopes, ringtones, game shows and porn? Or can we find ways to use mobile to mobilise against the real challenges we face?

## Endnotes

1. Wireless Application Service Providers Association, 2008.
2. World Wide Worx, 2008.

# Sacrificing the woman

*By prioritising the health of the baby in mother to child transmission prevention programmes, women are treated as dangerous carriers of disease and not as people with a right to information and choices says Marion Stevens.*

One of the striking features of the HIV epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa is that it disproportionately affects women. But the debate about HIV treatment in South Africa largely neglects the issue of women's sexual and reproductive health.

This is clear from the language used in the field of Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT): HIV-positive women are likened to an instrument or body for potentially passing on the virus to a child. Examples of this include health workers who refer to HIV-positive pregnant women as "suicide bombers", and proposals in the area of PMTCT entitled "Saving unborn babies".

The emphasis in PMTCT is on the unborn infant, not the HIV-positive woman (Eyakuze *et al* 2008). Many HIV-positive women, after dealing with the initial diagnosis and treatment, express a desire to have a child. For these women, there is a clear absence of guidelines for treatment, which could include Highly Active Anti-Retroviral Treatment (HAART).

There is a need to move from an HIV/AIDS maternal health paradigm to one that embraces women's sexual and reproductive health and rights.

And the media should present the bigger picture by including a focus on women's health.

## Contradictions

Efforts to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic are informed by various different kinds of prevention paradigms. Most prevention activities focus on limiting sexual activity; for example, the ABC (abstain, be faithful, use condoms) strategy. The prevention paradigm is a negative one. It is about denying and limiting sexual activity.

The language that informs prevention has also not managed to circumvent the negative reality of preventing: it is about "stopping, avoiding, standing in the way".

It is also closely related to the language of contraception and family planning. Women are instructed to engage in prevention activities, but do not have much power to do so in their relationships with men. They learn that life-prolonging HAART treatment is contra-indicated in pregnancy – though treatment can stop transmission to the unborn child.

These contradictions do not affirm women in the choices that they make, or allow them to control their fertility.

This is in contrast to the discussions at the International Conference on Population and Development which turned around the population control agenda. Women, empowered

by information and supported by development (housing, water and education), can make informed, life-affirming choices to determine their futures (United Nations, 1994).

## Stigmatised choices

A key gap is the area of sexual, fertility and reproductive intentions. HIV-positive women who would like to have a baby are not generally viewed as part of the continuum of care (De Bruyn 2004; De Bruyn 2006). Attitudes are often judgemental.

A study reviewing reproductive intentions noted that most respondents had not discussed their desire to have children due to anticipated negative reactions. Those who had, found the counselling environment unsupportive (Cooper 2007).

It's also notable that those who want to get pregnant wanted to ensure that they themselves would also have access to treatment, and not just have treatment to protect their unborn baby. It is, however, important to note that 50% of pregnancies are unplanned (WHO 2006; Gipson 2008) and that many women are not able to negotiate safer sex.

## Ignoring the central issue

Given an international epidemic that primarily affects women, pregnancy is clearly a central issue. Yet the Department of Health and Human Services' 127-page "Guidelines for the use of anti-retroviral agents in HIV-1-infected adults and adolescents", published in January 2008, devotes two paragraphs to this issue (DHHS 2008), suggesting merely that "... in women of reproductive age, antiretroviral regimen selection should take account for the possibility of planned or unplanned pregnancy... sexual activity, reproductive plans, and use of effective contraception should be discussed with the patient".

The WHO guidelines on "Sexual and reproductive health of women living with HIV/AIDS" begin to address these issues conceptually and suggest possible treatment options, yet the guidelines are tentative and exploratory (WHO 2006).

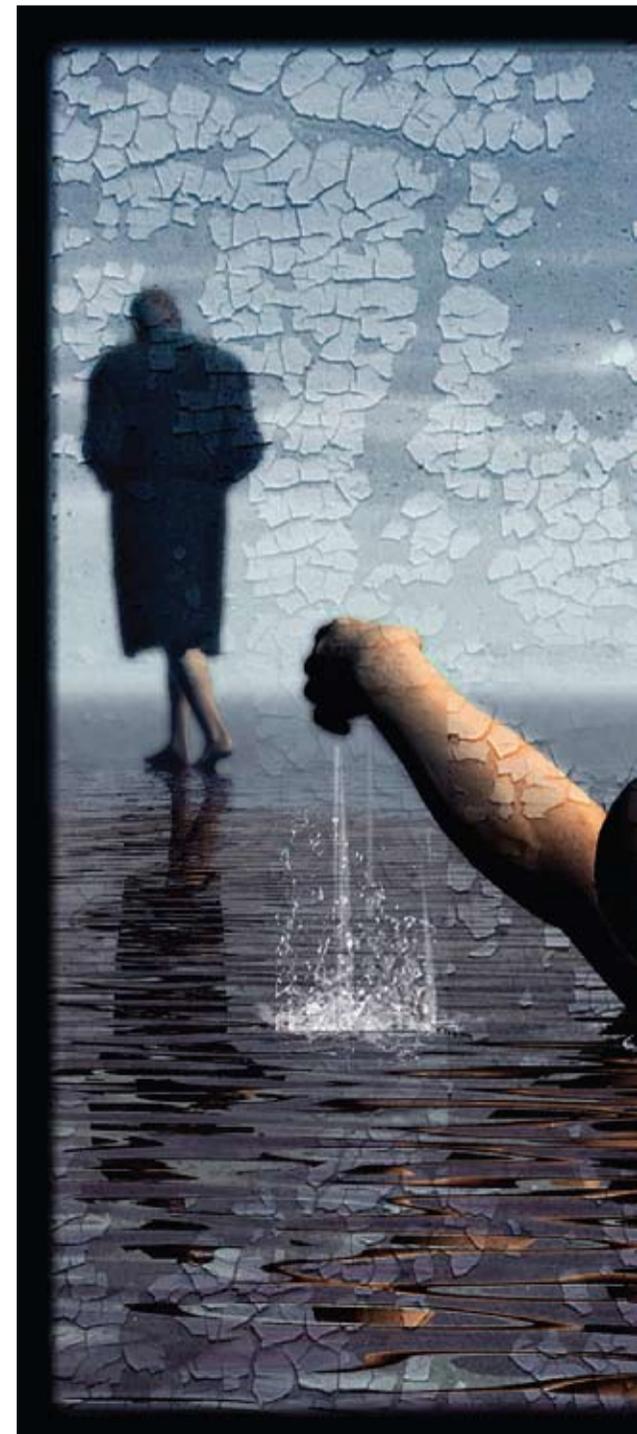
Currently the first-line regimen for women contains Efavirenz, which is contra-indicated in pregnancy. It is viewed as teratogenic, and there is positive evidence of human fetal risk. Tenofovir, which may become a first-line drug replacing D4T, has not been adequately tested for use by pregnant women. It is also currently not registered for use in children, suggesting that this is not a good choice for a woman of reproductive age.

In protests by treatment advocates in South Africa leading to the registration of Tenofovir,

women activists commented that they were keen to replace D4T with Tenofovir as they were "losing their figures" as a result of lipodystrophy, a side-effect of D4T which causes "tummy tyre" and thin arms and legs. The fact that they were aware of this side effect, but not of the potential consequences of Tenofovir for pregnant women, is significant.

## Contraceptives

At a meeting of the International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS in December 2007, it became evident that some women in South Africa and other Southern African countries were receiving injectable contraceptives as part of their HAART regimen to ensure that they would not become pregnant. Women were counselled to not become pregnant and had varying understandings of the side effects of the treatment. Some reported that it was only later on that they realised that they were receiving an injectable contraceptive and that



# for the child

this was not their informed choice.

This kind of treatment is like the era of population control, where women were not provided with information regarding treatment in a paternalistic fashion.

## Invisible guidelines

In most of the literature on and guidelines for treatment, the clear priority is to reduce transmission from the mother to unborn infant. "The intersection between HIV and pregnancy," says Eyakuze (2008), "exposes the ethical and legal inequalities inherent in a societal structure that places more value on a women's reproductive capacity than her own individual well being."

It is a missed opportunity to help women who choose to get pregnant while HIV-positive, and who find out they are pregnant and choose to have an early abortion (De Bruyn 2004). One can choose to be pregnant and then negotiate the treatment

options to avoid transmission, but the journey and processes guiding women along this path are invisible to them.

Women of reproductive age bear the brunt of the epidemic. For prevention to work, we need to be affirming women and providing them with better choices. There is a need to move away from a maternal paradigm that conceptualises treatment

for women only as mothers.

With the highest rate of infection, women of reproductive age need a continuum of care that takes into account their sexual, reproductive and fertility intentions. Most crucially, they need appropriate and well articulated information and support. And in this the media can play a constructive role.

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# Africa through the

## Introducing SABC News



Thulasizwe Simelane  
Zimbabwe



Thami Dickson  
New York



Sherwin Bryce Pease  
New York



Sarah Kimani  
Kenya



Richard Newton  
Brussels



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London



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Washington

SABC News changes lives through information. We now have an extensive network of news bureaus and correspondents based around Africa and the world. This gives us an advantage in gathering and packaging news from all over. We report objectively and with integrity and deliver factual and accurate news.

### What makes us the best news organisation in Africa?

#### *Bringing global news with an African touch*

As Africa's News leader we support the objectives of the African Renaissance and NEPAD. That is why we present news that is relevant to our audience. We are committed to ensuring compelling, professional and authoritative news and current affairs programming that tells the African and South African story accurately, fairly and in a balanced manner.

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When news breaks, we're often first on the scene. And because we have the capacity to provide comprehensive news coverage from the most unexpected places, our clients are guaranteed;

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- Our correspondents are based in Kenya, DRC, Senegal, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Brazil, China, Jamaica, Washington, New York, London and Brussels which means that they are better placed to identify stories of particular interest to South Africans and Africans
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# eyes of Africans

- Through our UN-based bureau we are able to get access to the General Assembly, UN official, raw footage and audio, plus other activities of the UN
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China



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DRC



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Jamaica

# What would an African Web 2.0 look like?

*Some thoughts on loneliness, community, social networking and new ways of being human*

by Jarred Cinman

**A**s a regular consumer of US technology news, I am currently bewildered and somewhat in awe of the flurry of new online services (what used to be called websites) which are springing up in the traditional cradle of Internet startups: southern California. As in the mid-90s, the valley is abuzz with every conceivable Internet startup innovation. And at their centre are two new turns the Web has made in recent years: the crowd and the cloud.

But as I look at my own continent, as war-torn and embattled as ever, dominating not technology news headlines but those involving violence, vote-rigging and starvation, it's hard to marry these two worlds. Over there, nothing less dramatic than the seeds of a new way of being human. And over here the great sorrows that perversely seem to define our species today. The shadows fall longest in the heart of Africa.

Johannesburg, I have always felt, is a point of convergence for these two global forces. It is why this city, is, I believe, one of the bleeding edges in the growth of human consciousness.

It is why I am drawn to be here, despite the many reasons to leave. It rises above crime and pessimism, it's two greatest flaws, and shows two paths forward, toward a better world or one from which we will all look back at this time as a paradise.

Starting with the personal computer in the early 80s, through the Microsoft age and into the explosion of the Internet in the last 10 years, we have been moving steadily toward something new not in degree but in kind. The world has seen nothing even remotely comparable with the Web. The Web is not, as many initially thought, an "information superhighway". That characterisation appears more naïve every day.

It is neither about information, nor the way that information moves around. It lacks both the order and routine the traffic analogy tempts us to imagine. And, most of all, it's not about getting anywhere.

The Web is an expression of the deeply human need to not be alone. It has taken some time for that version of the Web to emerge, but in what is widely being called "Web 2.0" it has done so. And with almost unimaginable speed.

There are maybe 100 million blogs on the planet, with a new one being put up every few minutes. Facebook has over 63 million users. And that's just to quote the best known and biggest numbers. There are countless millions who are users of thousands and thousands of other more humble online systems.

And what these all share, in my view anyway, is the promise of knowing you're not alone, and

knowing that you count.

I will return to Africa in a moment. But first I think it is useful to note that one of the most prevalent modern illnesses is depression. Many primitive cultures, anthropologists tell us, do not even have a word for this condition. And even if they know of it, it is an isolated and extreme phenomenon.

In industrialised countries, depression is epidemic. Despite our wealth and the endless time we have to entertain ourselves, the abundance of food and shelter and security, we are miserable. Anti-depressant drugs are bestsellers, and prescribed with little hesitation.

It would be far beyond the scope of this article or my knowledge to offer a definitive diagnosis for such a complex problem, but I will offer a gut-feel view anyway. Depression is a result of isolation, a sense of meaninglessness and the resulting sense of alienation from others and ourselves.

And the explosion of Web 2.0 and social networking is a direct result of the latent human need to re-establish those connections. I will give two quick illustrations of my point.

Blogging, while it comes in many forms, is primarily an opportunity for an individual to make their mark on a world stage. If that was where it started, a lot of effort is now being applied not to the blogging tools themselves, but the tools which enable the blog to be shared, discussed, rated and otherwise interlinked online. Make a valuable, interesting or useful post, and you are almost instantly acknowledged.

The unprecedented growth of photo- and video-sharing sites brings this kind of "lonesome no more" ethos to the forefront. By their million, people are generating images and video clips and sharing these with their networks. And it doesn't stop there. Services like Twitter allow your every move to be a known fact in your community. And newer systems like FriendFeed combine all of this into one view so that it's possible to share in the lives of your contacts – and they in yours – every minute of the day.

Again, there are many reasons why these forms of social interaction have emerged. But there can be no doubt that chief among them is the pressing human desire to feel important. To feel needed.

This is not an exclusively Western phenomenon obviously. The scale of some Internet applications in China, for example, or Japan, dwarfs that in the West. However, these are also highly industrialised countries. What of Africa?

Maslow might argue that Africa hasn't yet had the dubious opportunity to experience this kind of depressing alienation given the preoccupation with more basic aspects of life. But I would argue that in this respect, at least, the Web is yet another cultural phenomenon that has been invented elsewhere and



brought to Africa in a form that may ultimately not suit our temperament or our way of life.

For one thing, the sense of community that has been so effectively broken down in advanced industrialised nations, in the very process of industrialisation, has been preserved in Africa.

Yes, African cultures have been pressured in many other ways, particularly in highly urbanised areas, but it is plain to see that a sense of interconnectedness remains intact. A vivid symbol of this is the respect accorded the elderly in many African cultures. Unlike the West, in which old age is often associated with loneliness and increasing irrelevance, Africans have managed thus far to hold onto the idea of old age wisdom.

I would argue that cultures which have lost a sense of community have an increased problem with depression, directly linked to the removal of what communities create. For them, social networking, online dating and user-generated content have exploded because they are a manifestation of the desire to reform these communities. For cultures, of which many in Africa are still examples, in which this community has never been lost, the individual need to be noticed and affirmed has not been frustrated to the point of needing a digital alternative.



Francois Smit

The one technology that has enjoyed explosive growth in Africa is mobile telephony. Despite the high costs in South Africa, for example, almost every able-bodied person has a cellphone. This is not merely because of the success of marketing, but because the kind of communication that African communities desire is facilitated by mobile phones so well: on the move, outdoors and frequent. It is not an empty stereotype to argue that Africans are friendly. We are all about community, and cellphones are a glue for that community.

As social networking and the Web more broadly spreads across Africa, probably carried on cellphones or whatever the next mobile device will be called, it is my view that we will start to see the growth of an African Web 2.0 that differs sometimes subtly, and sometimes fundamentally, from its international counterpart.

And that difference will lie in the different kind of problems that it is solving for Africans. Not, I believe, an antidote to loneliness or a desperate desire to attain relevance in a sea of voices. But to enhance communities and to extend communication.

It seems reasonable to think the Internet will be a driver of social and political change and education in Africa, but perhaps, again, because

it will offer a way for communities to organise. The continent has a long history of revolution and struggle – with not always positive outcomes, of course. And this new communication channel holds the promise that it can be co-opted for change.

Which brings us finally back to Johannesburg. Seen as the “New York of Africa” by some, and certainly one of the continent’s most important cities, Johannesburg represents the best of what the first world has to offer technologically but still is, at heart, an African city. As Johannesburgers start to use new Internet technologies, it is here first that we may see the emergence of the first truly African social networking tools. Not merely copies of Facebook or Technorati or YouTube, but (like, for example, Mxit) tools that are expressions of a new digital face, an African digital, which may skip past all the egoistic nonsense that so mires the content on many Web 2.0 sites and, instead, breathe new life into the notion of an African Renaissance.

Because, in a lot of ways, at the heart of the Internet are principles that Africa has never lost. If we can overcome the many contextual challenges, we may yet have in our hearts and minds the seeds of the next version of community that no-one could do better than we can.

# DIGITAL NATIVES ... pffff

## IT'S NOT AN AGE THING. IT'S A CURIOSITY THING

by Mark Comerford

I have some issues with the digital native/digital immigrant meme.

I do not think it is a useful dichotomy as it makes age an arbitrary measurement of digital understanding. It makes it seem that if you are young enough, then you automatically have a digital mindset. I have seen no evidence of this. My j-students are often rigidly locked into an analogue vision of the industry, see print (or radio or TV, or even a mixture of all three but in an analogue manner) as their future and do not easily understand the principals of conversation contra lecturing that many of us propagate as the (only) future for journalism.

When I say analogue I am talking about mindset, not technology. One can master digital technology and still have an analogue mindset. This is the situation for more and more journalists today. They have some degree of technical knowledge (though that is often over-estimated) but no great conceptual grasp of the shift from analogue to digital.

The follow-on from this is that journalism educators develop courses that are tech-based and program-oriented which play to students' strengths but never challenge their underlying “analogue-ness”.

Another problem with the meme is that it leads employers to believe that by just recruiting young people they will be gathering a base for change. This is leading to young, tech-savvy people being placed in leadership positions without them having the journalistic skills to make good strategic choices.

I know of one example where the publisher is 34, has very strong tech skills but no journalism background and is making decisions that will have a long term impact on the publication. This is a danger to the journalistic development of our industry. A danger that the “digital native” argument perpetuates.

Also, looking around me, the people making a difference seem to be over 30. Have a look at your own area and see if that is also the case for you.

I am over 50 and believe (possibly wrongly of course) that my grasp of the shift to digital and my immersion in and understanding of the process by far outstrips many (if not most) of the so-called natives. This is not to say that there are not many under 30 doing great things in journalism, just that they are not doing them because they are under 30.

It's not an age thing. It's a curiosity thing. Which makes me a bit sad that so few journalists get it. Curiosity should be our stock-in-trade.

<http://markmedia.blogs.com/markmedia/2008/05/digital-natives.html>

# 66 When the audience decides

*What happens when an audience refuses to participate in reality TV's textual meaning-creation?*

by Megan Knight

New media technologies have changed not only how content is produced and distributed, but also the audience's relationship to it. The line between audiences and producers is becoming blurred, whether the media is produced for commercial purposes or subversive ones. The rise of "the public decides" games and telephone voting on reality TV shows have given the audience power in a way that Stuart Hall could only have imagined.

In *American Idol* participants compete for the audience's vote to win. Although a panel of "judges" presides over the show, they do little more than comment; who is eliminated each week, and who eventually wins, is decided by the vote-casting audience. The show has an inherent tension – between the expertise of the judges (who score contestants' singing ability), and the will of the audience (which is more likely to be swayed by admiration of or sympathy for other traits).

For the producers and participants, the show's ideological *raison d'être* transcends the immediate gratification of viewing and the revenue it generates.

The emphasis on accepted musical standards, the use of guest artists, the credentials of the judges as arbiters of taste and their centrality even once the decision-making power moves to the audience, are all part of the conceit that the show is engaged in something important – the discovery of talent.

In addition, the show deploys the "democratic" process – the slogans "America decides" and "you choose" are heavily used – and in the voting phase the studio audience is encouraged to disagree with the experts.

Reality TV has always had a complex relationship with the material it presents. Several shows have a kind of dual meaning: the official meaning, and what the audience gets out of it. *American Idol* panders to voyeurism in the beginning, and then changes tack, expecting the audience to accept the seriousness of the enterprise and the influence of the judges.

Of course, the audience doesn't always do what the producers want, and alongside the fan sites there are anti-fan sites. During season three of *American Idol* (2004), *Votefortheworst.com* was launched.

The site's stated purpose is to "support voting for the entertaining contestants who the producers would hate to see win". To them, the entertainment value of the show lies not in the ability of the contestants but in their awfulness.

This "decoding" is not necessarily

aberrant, but it is not in line with the show's stated purpose. Yet the producers clearly understand the appeal of watching people embarrass themselves: why else would the auditioning focus so often on the cringe inducing?

On the other hand, *American Idol* is at pains to ensure that it is not seen as simply about watching people do awful things. Simon Cowell and his colleagues insist they are not a Chuck Barris or a Jerry Springer, but serious music producers with successful careers.

In 2007, *Votefortheworst.com* succeeded in keeping contestant Sanjaya Malakar, the site's choice for "worst" from March 8, on the show until the week of April 18, when he was ranked 7th of 20 contestants.

In the weeks leading up to his elimination, as it became increasingly clear that he was outclassed by the other contestants, but was consistently not voted off, the show began to unravel in interesting ways.

The judges stopped critiquing Malakar's singing, focusing on his hair (which had always been a subject of commentary – the "nice" judges Jackson and Abdul had in previous weeks said "the hair is rocking" and "nice hair").

Cowell stopped playing the game in top-10 week, when he commented to Malakar: "I don't think it matters any more... I think you are in your own universe, and if people like you, good luck" (season seven, episode 2007a).

The following week, the judges threw up their hands: "I can't even comment on the vocals any more," said one, and Cowell could manage only a single, ironic "Incredible". The following week, the comments on Malakar's performance were minimal, and the week after that, Cowell pronounced the performance "utterly horrendous... it was as bad as anything you see at the beginning of *American Idol*". He later added, "I know this has been funny for a while, but based on the fact that we are supposed to be finding an *American idol*, it was hideous," with explicit reference to the vote for the worst campaign.

The *Votefortheworst* phenomenon goes beyond simple aberrant decoding,



and beyond fan culture, which, despite its disagreements with the producers of media texts, is largely appreciative, even adoring.

There are elements of culture jamming, of a refusal to participate in the media's textual meaning-creation. There is some protest-movement polemics, but the overall mood is one of mockery, of a court jester poking holes in the pompousness of the show, of the genre and of television itself.

It will be interesting to see, given the fickleness of viewers, and the importance of maintaining viewership in the face of continued fragmentation of the sector, how producers engage with this newly-empowered audience.



*This is an abbreviated version of a paper given at Transforming Audiences 2007 at Westminster University. The full paper can be accessed at <http://transforming-audiences.googlegroups.com/web/Megan%20Knight%20-%20Rise%20of%20the%20rebellious%20audience%20-%202007.pdf>*

**W**hile any number of online video sites are making an impact around the world, perhaps none is more influential than YouTube, home to three billion videos and counting. From diaspora Rwandans in the United Democratic Forces FDU-Inkingi lashing out at the regime back home to comedian Khaya Dlanga's humorous take on life in South Africa, the King Kong of video file-sharing has enabled a plethora of users to reach across borders and potentially garner a worldwide audience.<sup>1</sup>

Google-owned YouTube raises interesting questions about the ability of new technologies to change the well-established communication patterns that historically have led to Western, particularly American, dominance of news, information and entertainment around the world.

While services such as the South African-based Zoopy represent a local alternative to YouTube, such initiatives are unlikely to catch on globally, and thus provide mainly a South African-to-South African distribution channel. YouTube, meanwhile, is busy launching specific country sites ranging from Japan to Brazil to Poland.

Over the past year, I explored the presentation of African images on YouTube, focusing specifically on Kenya and Ghana, two countries with growing economies, which are showing increases in Internet use.

I kept the question simple: If you typed "Kenya" or "Ghana" into YouTube's basic search box, what sort of image of those countries would you be offered?

#### What I initially found was:

Western voices, in particular, Americans, were dominant overall. Despite much hype about the fact that more YouTube users are now found outside the US than in it, the Americans topped the list of those posting videos about Kenya or Ghana, continuing their historical role of presenting the images of the rest of the world to itself. Interestingly, many of the Western-created videos

were produced by amateurs – frequently tourists on safari or on missionary work. Neither group provided new images of Kenya or Ghana. Instead, they reproduced some of the most basic stereotypes: Mating lions and thirsty giraffes, or Africans eager for Western tutelage in Christianity.

African content was almost all entertainment. Africans did in fact post videos that featured Africans but these were almost all music videos, quite often appearing to have been taped off satellite television being viewed in the West by diaspora Africans. These videos too were stereotypical, imitating US hip hop music and video styles right down to their objectifying of young women who appear as sexually ripe props for the almost always all-male music groups. More African-produced television shows were posted for Ghana than Kenya; whereas Kenya tended to be associated with Western productions set in Kenya such as reality shows.

News and information were in short supply. In the videos I examined, YouTube was rarely being used as an alternative news distribution channel for African information, even though this was one of its most intriguing potential uses from a journalism perspective. In addition, information or news style videos were

also just as likely to come from NGO public relations efforts as from traditional news outlets.

In the summer of 2008, I made a repeat search on YouTube and found that Ghana has not really changed its YouTube image. This was not the case for Kenya.

#### Kenya's election crisis on YouTube

In December 2007, Kenya's disputed presidential election resulted in large scale, unexpected violence that spilled into the new year as Raila Odinga and Mwai Kibaki both sought control of the country.

The unexpected death and destruction combined with several other factors to create an opening for YouTube videos about Kenya to take a dramatic turn.

The Kenyan government banned live television and radio coverage of the violence. However, Kenya's Nation Media Group had just a few months earlier launched its own branded YouTube channel, NTV Kenya, providing it with an alternative outlet for its reporting.

At the same time, the election violence meant that many tourists left the country, and were thus not filling up YouTube with their safari/missionary videos. Finally, the Western media began paying more attention to the country, producing more content that quickly made its way onto YouTube.

Kenyans working in concert with other Africans and Westerners interested in the country's welfare were feverishly trying to get images of the violence out in hopes of generating the political will to help end the crisis.

A YouTube channel was used by the Kenyan Red Cross to document the upheaval. A new channel set up by the US-based National Democratic Institute for International Affairs represented its organisation, Kenya Votes, which initially intended to help educate Kenyan voters, but turned to documenting abuses during the election.

Amateurs taped coverage from professional news media such as Al Jazeera or CNN and reposted it to YouTube. Some shot their own footage with cellphones or created montages of professional video and still photos to fashion pleas to stop the violence.

Much of this content was distributed through blogs, social networking sites like Facebook or other similar spaces; even with these other sites, YouTube was frequently the host for their video, so that the video service became a key alternative information clearinghouse.

This sudden, intense burst of activity in early 2008 appears to have had some impact on Kenya's representation on YouTube.

First, news items currently appear more frequently in the first few pages of a search based on "relevance," pushing down tourist or music videos. (Such videos also are more likely to emphasise violence and mayhem, common tropes for much of Africa.)

Also, whether because of the violence or YouTube's push for more "partners" to furnish content and hopefully draw in advertising money, more professional voices, especially from traditional news outlets, are now appearing on Kenya YouTube searches such as in reports from Al Jazeera but also from Kenya's own news channel, NTV.

The volume of additional content combined with the high interest level from visitors to YouTube may well have changed the nation's image on YouTube – at least for now – from amateur tourist and missionary content along with entertainment videos to news and information.

It should be noted, however, if the search is based on number of views, then tourists' animal videos and music return to the top.

Compared to Ghana, which remained fairly static in terms of types of content producers and images over the same time period, this suggests that a crisis may shift the sorts of videos being posted onto YouTube about a particular country or region. A search for "Zimbabwe" similarly turns up news videos first, likely as well due to the on-going political crisis and decline in tourism.

In the case of African news outlets such as NTV, this video file-sharing site represents a new means of gaining a potentially global audience as well as an ability under the right circumstances to skirt local control.

But will it change traditional communication patterns in which the West sets the tone and provides the most content? The results both before and after Kenya's election crisis suggest not.

# YouTubing Africa

## old patterns and new possibilities

#### Endnotes

1. Yi-Wyn Yen (2008) YouTube looks for the money clip. *Fortune*. <http://techland.blogs.fortune.cnn.com/2008/03/25/youtube-looks-for-the-money-clip/>

# Lessons from a converging newsroom

by Andrew Trench

The *Daily Dispatch*, the Eastern Cape newspaper where I work, is experiencing a revolution: our newsroom is transforming, our jobs are morphing, our workflows are changing and, best of all, ideas are blossoming. And it's all thanks to this thing we call newsroom convergence.

Over the last 18 months we have begun changing from being a print and ink, single edition, six-day-a-week publication to becoming a 24/7, cross-platform operation that sees staff shooting video, recording audio, blogging and reporting for web and print. Our new website, launched six months ago, is a lively buzz of community interaction, breaking stories and innovation and has found an audience of some 100 000 unique browsers a month.

I'd like to say we have some grand blueprint that we're working off but we don't and maybe that's why it's working for us. We're making it up as we go along but that also makes us nimble and able to change and innovate daily.

I've learned some lessons along the way about how to bring an editorial team along for this exciting ride which, as we know, can be met with suspicion and downright resistance.

## Lead from the top

Such fundamental change in a traditional newsroom must be led from the top by someone who understands the traditional audience and the dynamics of the newsroom and who has the clout to make decisions and see they get implemented. In our case, besides being the deputy editor of the paper I am also the online editor and it helps ensure things happen.

## Lead by example

Find strong role models within the newsroom and win them over to the new ways of working. For example, I was the first staffer to begin blogging and engaging our

audience and next up was Eddie Botha, our veteran investigations editor who is over 60 and who makes no bones about being a technophobe. His enthusiastic blogging sent a powerful message: if Eddie could do it, anyone could! We have over a dozen staff blogs now.

## Sort out your environment

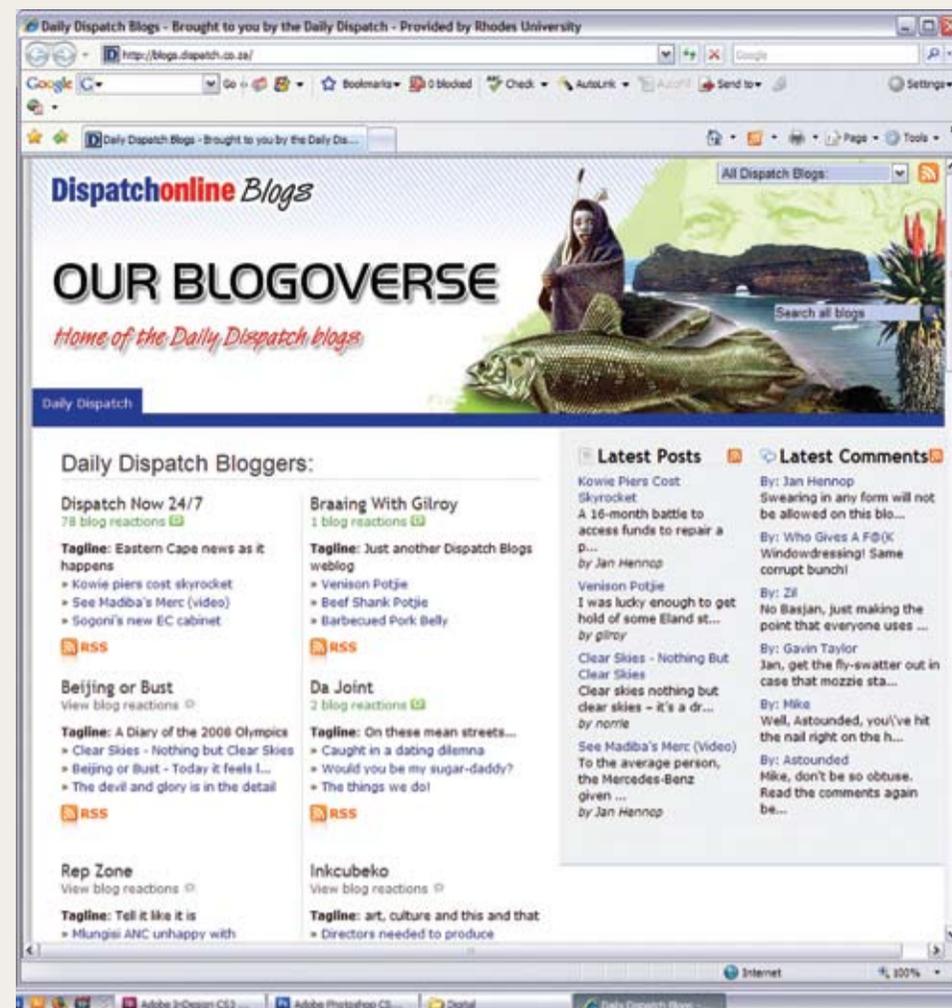
Shortly after launching our new website and blogs we underwent a physical redesign of the newsroom. The design is based on the UK's *The Telegraph's* which incorporates a central hub of editors with reporters, photographers and so on, seated in spokes radiating out of the hub. The design encourages communication and rapid decision-making. Our online news editor is located here and can quickly pick up on stories coming out of the newsroom and brief reporters on online requirements at the same time as the print news editors brief for the paper.

## Don't force change down people's throats

We have tried to implement change by infecting staff with our own enthusiasm. Not everyone has embraced the new way and that is fine with us. There are a small number of staffers who have been swept away and who are happy to blog, shoot video and record audio. In particular, several photographers have really thrown themselves at it and we've equipped them with small, cheap video cameras with which they are producing great web footage. As time goes on we will bring everybody into the converged fold.

## Sell the benefits

We have been able to show print reporters how rapidly online reporting can produce leads and story sources. When we had a flash flood in East London at the beginning of the year we were able to direct reporting teams to scenes of damage and drama thanks to reader contributions coming in on our breaking news blog. We were also flooded with eyewitness accounts and pictures which would have taken days to locate otherwise.



## Flatten decision-making

We have a small newspaper and a tiny online team with most of our content coming from traditional print reporters and photographers working in the field and providing information for the web on the fly. We have opened the door to our reporters to speak directly to our audience without mediation from editors and subs on many occasions. We have had to due to the realities of our operation and it has worked for us.

Some of what we put out there on the web can be a bit rough but we're yet to encounter any serious complaints from our readers who appear to appreciate the immediacy of our news offering and the chance to be a part of the action.

Finally, we still have a lot to learn and a lot to get right but a lot of what we are doing is working for us.

The big lesson I have learned so far in our converging newsroom – besides the fact that this new world of journalism is the most fun I've ever had – is also a simple one: stop talking about it and just do it!

# SOUTHERN AFRICAN EXPERIMENTS

Elvira van Noort researched attempts at convergence in South African, Namibian, Botswanan and Mozambican newsrooms. Here she details different strategies and ongoing challenges.

The *Mail&Guardian*, Johannesburg: the main challenge this newsroom faced in integrating online ([www.mg.co.za](http://www.mg.co.za)) and the newspaper was communication. This was particularly difficult because the paper has a weekly production cycle while the website is daily and ongoing. In 2007 there were no converged diary meetings; one of the online editors would sit in with the newspaper but have no input. Attitudes of journalists and editors at both online and print were positive towards convergence but implementing this into the daily routine was difficult. In 2008 newspaper

and website were redesigned and journalists are now blogging. But complete convergence, as Matthew Buckland (the former publisher of M&G Online) said in 2007, would take a while to achieve. The strategy anticipates a slow process towards convergence and an investment in training while keeping a close eye on high quality of content in the newspaper and online.

The daily newspaper *Die Burger* (News24) in Cape Town, has a different strategy towards full convergence. They have already implemented an integrated environment consisting of a newspaper newsroom and a multimedia newsroom that has daily diary meetings. De Waal Steyn, the multimedia editor at [www.dieburger.com](http://www.dieburger.com), argues that the way forward is to have a budget to train journalists and editors on, for instance, writing for online and blogging.

The *Times* newspaper, Johannesburg, opened with a converged newsroom in 2007 where a desk with multimedia editors decides on which stories will be covered for which platform. This is another strategy again: the multimedia reporters are straight from university and are plunged into the publication with the idea of the ideal newsroom.

At the SOICO Media Group in Maputo, Mozambique, where a cross-media newsroom has recently been put in place, the television journalists are now successfully writing for the newspaper and online. They are investing in training for newspaper journalists to handle video cameras and to edit. The last barrier seems to be implementing one workflow system that incorporates all platforms.

Other private media companies like

Dikgang Publishing/Mmegi Newspaper in Gaborone, Botswana, and One Africa Television in Windhoek, Namibia are struggling with more basic needs. There is no website, journalists use private cellphones and convergence or the adding of additional platforms is not part of the company's short term strategy. For example, access to the Internet at Mmegi newspaper is an issue. It takes almost 10 minutes to download a one megabyte file. They also share one cellphone with 35 other office workers from the newsroom, advertising and administration. The land line phones on the desks of the journalists can't reach cellphones. Other challenges to multi-platform publishing in Botswana and Namibia include the lack of human resources, budget for ICTs and IT solutions that will cover all areas of the production to archiving of content.

# Convergence business as usual

by Hilton Tarrant

The intersection of online (new) media and other more traditional forms of media has simply always been part of how Moneyweb has operated. Journalists have produced “converged” content daily, long before the word “convergence” became popular.

Founder and CEO Alec Hogg started the group’s flagship website Moneyweb.co.za in 1998 by simply posting transcripts of his evening business radio show (then on 702 Talk Radio).

The transcripts which provided valuable content were posted online, and together with Hogg’s column “Boardroom talk” provided the bulk of the website’s content in the early days.

Audio downloads and streaming were added to the transcripts providing a multimedia experience, which continues to garner a daily core audience.

The newsroom and editorial processes operate as a unit. While there is distinction on some levels between the 20-plus journalists focused on specific forms of media, stories are largely reused in different formats in different media.

Journalists at Moneyweb don’t really think about any theory behind creating content for various media, it’s just part of daily editorial planning and production. Virtual editorial meetings at 10am via instant messaging software plan the day’s content and allow journalists to join in the discussion remotely from media events or press conferences.

A story that gets broken on Moneyweb’s evening radio show on SAfm, for example,

will be written for the web by a journalist as the interview is happening live and will be published together with the full transcript and audio clips.

The daily diary also sets the tone for content on the radio platforms. Radio-specific content is also often produced by the same journalist for both the English (SAfm market update) and Afrikaans (RSG Gelsake met Moneyweb) evening radio shows. The content and guests across both shows regularly overlap substantially, providing common content in different languages. The group’s radio journalists are also involved in producing written content for online platforms.

The trial of stock market news-related podcasts in 2007 also provided the opportunity to leverage existing content. A daily Sesotho personal finance show also offered the opportunity to experiment with repackaging content in another indigenous language. Moneyweb’s soon-to-be-launched 15-minute market update and personal finance “show-within-a-show” on a regional radio station will allow journalists to further repackage and repurpose audio (from and for the other radio shows) as well as written content.

Journalists focused mainly on producing web content will typically record audio at press events and, after filing their stories, edit down the audio clips for use on evening radio shows.

Content from the group’s various websites is also used to provide daily business news content to print partner *The Citizen*.

The finance pages (CitiBusiness) are produced as a joint venture between Moneyweb Holdings and Caxton. Content from the web is edited for print and packaged into story units spanning a total of four pages. Content from the group’s various websites is also repackaged by KwaZulu-Natal’s *Weekend Witness* “Weekend Money” pages.

Hogg’s mantra that “content is king”, sees content continuously reused and leveraged across multiple platforms.

The latest of these are a number of so-called mini-sites, which are standalone websites focused on a number of verticals outside of Moneyweb.co.za’s core finance area. These include property, deal-making, tax, politics and a site aimed at a younger audience. Here too, content is often produced for the niche websites, as well as for radio or even a related core-business news story.

Moneyweb, through a joint venture with satellite channel CNBC Africa, also leveraged the content it produced for television in a year-long experiment (this came to an end in May 2008). Video was provided as multimedia for streaming on Moneyweb.co.za (along with transcripts) and an archive of this still exists.

This experiment allowed Moneyweb to cull audio from the video interviews and reuse that on the group’s evening radio show(s) as well as provide interview-based content for journalists to rewrite as news for the web.

The group is currently testing the use of YouTube-hosted business-related video content produced by news organisations such as Reuters and the Associated Press.

69



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# From content to conversation

by Guy Berger

Rhodes' School of Journalism and Media Studies has R8m to try and turn cellphones into interactive journalistic devices over the next four years. The work takes place under a project titled "Iindaba Ziyafika" – meaning "the news is coming".

What it means, in short, is that – courtesy of cellphones – citizen journalism news will come to mainstream audiences via the *Grocott's Mail* newspaper in Grahamstown, and that mainstream news (at least the headlines) will reach those citizens who are generally outside the information loop.

The cash for this all is coming from two sources: there's a Chair in Media and Mobile Communications, sponsored by MTN, and a grant won in a competitive challenge issued by the Knight Foundation in the US.

What the Iindaba project is about is a triangle between the Rhodes journalism school, *Grocott's Mail*, and high school learners in Grahamstown. It involves:

- Five different sets of journalism students working on the project at various stages – some producing diverse content (including, ultimately, audio and video), others training citizen journalists, yet more developing a business model, and a group that researches the civic significance of it all.
- Eighty grade 11s learners workshoping about how to send information in 160 character SMSs (after exposure to Twitter-postings and Haiku verse).
- Open source technology for *Grocott's* to receive and publish cellphone-generated content on its pages and website – and to disseminate citizen journalism to other cellphones as well.

There's a lot of thinking that needs to roll out in all this novel effort to bridge the digital divide in both directions.

For instance, young people contributing as citizen journalists will have to learn the difference between contributing a personal opinion, and generating factual information. They need story ideas – like polling their morning assembly on a hot topic, or reporting on continued blocked toilets at their school.

And should their reports avoid sms-abbreviations? A policy needs to be debated.

Then there are the skills needed to write tight, with each letter and comma counting. Short synonyms anyone? What if the business model wants to try out adverts within the sms text – would that be 40 characters already gone?

Can cellphones be used for journalism?

Another issue is that for a newspaper to send out selected content streams, you have to have professional journalists tagging their stories with requisite meta-data categories – like education, entertainment, sports, or other categories. Then they also have to add free labels – like "racism", or "Nombulelo High School", or "cricket", as the case may be. Else, you don't have viable database publishing.

Also in the content management system there needs to be an extra field for entry of headlines by the reporters – this one catering for words that are tailored specifically for sms, as distinct from those to appear in the paper.

In time, there will be experiments with other cellphone communications technologies like the USSD interface, MMS, and GPRS (such as is currently used to access Mxit).

There's a new world out there for the making, and the results of this project will be widely disseminated. The software will be available freely, and because it's open source, will be easily adaptable (including being translated) elsewhere.

Canadian commentator Cory Doctorow has argued that it's a myth that content is king; saying instead that conversation is what's sovereign. "Content is just something to talk about." Anyone observing the huge uptake of technologies for talking would have to agree with him.

But there's a challenge for anyone who thinks that journalism ought also to be about a community in conversation with itself. That is: to try to increase the quotient of this particular kind of discourse and content within all the conversing.

It's summed up in transforming a one-to-one personal medium into a multi-point informational device in a way that extends the boundaries of journalism production and which brings new information and people into the public sphere.

If the project can pull this off, it won't just be the news that's coming to each side of the digital divide. It will be a community that better understands itself, and becomes accustomed to communication as a way to progress.



by Erik Hersman

“Neo-geo”. That’s the slang term used among mapping gurus when they talk about the new world of web-based map mashups and location aware services. Most of us don’t want, or don’t have the time, to read a lot of news anymore. Our world of web surfing means quick hits and scanning. Map-based information, and other visualisations, allow us to understand at a glance what is happening and where.

### Activist mapping in Africa

Individuals in the activist communities are generally the first to latch onto new technologies as they move to sidestep older and more powerful institutions, government or otherwise. It has happened with mobile phones, online video and blogs. This couldn’t be truer than what we’re seeing with activist mapping projects.

Activist mapping projects have been seen most recently in Kenya, during the post-election violence with Ushahidi.com, with UnitedforAfrica.co.za in dealing with xenophobic attacks in South Africa, and with Sokwanele right now in Zimbabwe.

Each of these map deployments are important for two reasons. First, they augment the mainstream media by adding voices that couldn’t be heard easily before – many times with stories that are taking place where the media are not. Second, they provide a way for people to glance at a map, gather information quickly and then dig down into the details if they so choose.

So we see it serves two end-users, the people the news is happening to, and the people who want to find out what is happening.

### Visuals matter

It’s amazing how simple visuals can take a bunch of data and make it real. Below is a chart showing the mayhem, broken down by type. It’s a serious and shocking story, but one that can be told in almost real-time because of our current technology.

This is why mapping and other visualisations are so important. Sokwanele is simply collecting the news reports then archiving and parsing them for information. When those stories come in ones and twos throughout the week, it’s easier to ignore. When they’re put forward as a body of evidence using visuals to show their aggregate statistics, it becomes damning and impossible to ignore.

# Digital mapping a tool for getting attention quickly

Apply that information (data) to a map, and a whole host of opportunities arise. First, aggregating that information at the country and region levels allows

people to see and understand patterns hidden within mountains of data. Second, the information can be archived and stored for future use when doing historical fact-finding.

Ethan Zuckerman says: “User-generated content, on average, is a lot less interesting than professional content. But there are a lot more people creating their own content for fun than those doing so for a living, and in aggregate, that content is at least as interesting.” (<http://www.ethanzuckerman.com/blog>).

### Some final thoughts

It’s important to remember that mapping for human rights violations and mapping for activism are two separate things. The first needs both exacting detail and verified incidents, whereas the second doesn’t and has a primary goal of getting enough data to gather attention to a specific issue.

Finally, a digitally-connected world not only grants us a front-row seat to the rest of the world, but also the power to influence events and create change in a way that was impossible just a few short decades ago.

Events that may occur thousands of miles away are in fact – quite literally – in our digital backyard.

Which makes it a lot harder to just sit back and watch.

### Beyond activism: rural Africa, mobiles and maps

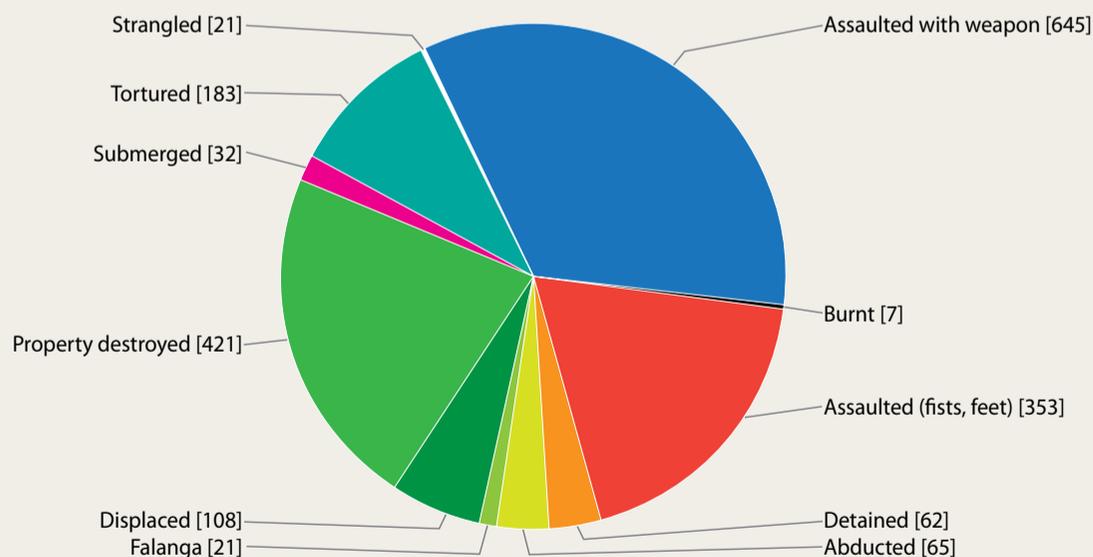
Though I’m not a journalist, I know it’s expensive (in both time and money) to travel to parts of rural Africa. This is why news from both international and in-country media organisations in these areas is so rare.

Enter the mobile phone, another big technological breakthrough without which the mapping portion would be less effective.

Once individuals in rural areas know that they can report their local news and information to someone with a simple text message things begin to get exciting. What we’re seeing is the beginnings of a move towards citizen-generated information about news and events in near-real time.

We’re suddenly realising that we can actually tap into the collective citizenry for information on things as they happen. Best of all, distance from a larger town or paved road no longer matters, only one’s distance from the nearest cell tower.

Sokwanele violence-type graphic



### Breakdown by violation

Information here is based on victim’s testimony. Sokwanele believes that the figures for those ‘displaced’ is a gross underestimate: at the time of giving the testimony, many will not have known they could not return to the area they have left and may not have described themselves as ‘displaced’.



# On the importance of imagining

work for most of the year at the Gorée Institute off the coast of Dakar where we are engaged in trying to see the world at large and Africa in particular as clearly as possible.

We know that “seeing” is also an act of imagination and, particularly, that in the present void with its absence of horizons of expectation, we need to explore and promote a collective moral imagination and the fearlessness of creative thinking shot through with the doubt brought by uncertainty, in order to be of use to the younger generations. I tried to formulate part of this idea during a workshop of Africans involved in artistic and cultural facilitation.

We from the institute proposed an open-ended endeavour: to imagine Africa. And then to start making it concrete through specific actions, even if small. To “imagine Africa” is simply, among other meanings, the recognition of the dialectical relationship between the imaginary and the real.

I take it as common cause that part of the human condition, maybe the essential flame, is the process of imagining ourselves. We are who and what we are only in becoming. We survive, we live, because we conceive of the nature and the purpose of being. Our consciousness is invention, or recognition bounded by the possible.

Maybe this is not unique to the human species. After all, do birds not imagine their territory and perhaps also the nature of their being through flight and song? Animals come to an experience of themselves through movement leaving traces as markers of memory.

It could be that life as we know it is awareness because it knowingly strives for imagining existence and thus questioning the sense and the finality of the process.

Leaving traces of ourselves, as in creative productivity, could be read as part of the definition of consciousness for us as well.

We know that in order to progress we must strive for something just out of reach – if only for an existence that will be more compassionate and decent than the cruelty, paranoia, greed, narrow corporatism or narcissism we mostly indulge in and find such ample justification for.

And so we dream. There’s the personal dream to come to terms with the inevitability of being finite; there’s the communal one of justice and freedom upon which we hope to secure the survival of the group. And then there is the dimension of a moral imagination.

This is our world. We know no more than people before us did. Every generation lives in the fullness of its own comprehension. Our minds are as ever bordered by darkness, except that we now live in an infinitely more dangerous place.

But by the same token we cannot indulge ourselves – for reasons of political correctness or tribal guilt or cynicism or common greed – in the rainbow intoxication of knowing and understanding less than those before us did.

What is our horizon? Globally, that behind the burning fields as smokescreen of worldwide insecurity we encounter poverty

– endemic and brutalising and deepening. And the greed of the insatiable predators: the arms manufacturers and the oil guzzlers and the smugglers of people.

At the core of our barbaric new age, however much dolled up by the gadgets of modernism, we find fundamentalists exterminating thousands of innocent people as “collateral damage” – from despair for what they believe to be the religious cause of their cruel and jealous god. In demagogic chambers of states claiming to be liberated and democratic, the cynical rule unrestrained in their lust for power and profit.

In the whitewashed institutions of our so-called enlightened societies we see the same obdurate and institutionalised discrimination against women. At the heart of this deep forest of cruelty we still lack any compassion for the children.

What we experience in Africa may not be worse than other parts of the world. Maybe our problems are just more acute and intractable. A new American president may well close down the penal colony of Guantanamo and start recognising and making up for the war crimes committed in Iraq and in Afghanistan.

The rulers of China may be obliged to start looking after the interests of their peasants and workers and to stop polluting and cheapening the world, even Israel may conceivably be prevailed upon to stop trying to exterminate Palestine as an entity and start giving back what they have stolen.

But who in Africa is going to put an end to the impunity of the criminals ruling over us? Who is going to resolve the genocide in Darfur and the mass raping of women in the Congo? Who in Africa is going to face the consequences of something like 200 000 child soldiers?

How are we going to come to terms with the fact that our nation states are a fiction for the benefit of our dictators and their ruling clans? Who is going to get back the money our politicians stole from the people? Who is going to take responsibility for condoning the rule and extending the protection of international legitimacy to a maniac like Robert Mugabe? And how are we going to stop this seemingly irrevocable “progress” of South Africa to a totalitarian party-state?

This is our world. Fiction/imagination is an unveiling of what we didn’t know we knew. In so doing we write into and from the pre-existent underground of images, memories, thoughts, etc – “uncovering” the shared Atlantis of the imagination.

Perhaps we know no more than those who preceded us, but it is as true that we have to transcend our limitations, that we must cling to the notion of an utopia (call it “clean and accountable government” or “common sense”) as justification and motivation to keep on moving and making a noise.

For the mind has to be kept free if we want to stay it from reverting to despair and narcissistic self-love only. To survive, we must assume the responsibility of imagining the world differently.

Imagination gives access to “meaning”. Storytelling is a system of knowledge; the very act of narration carries a presumption of truth.

Writing as the production of textured consciousness is the



by Breyten Breytenbach

mediating metaphor between fact and fiction. It is in the movement of the heart-mind and the thinking awareness of physical and/or cultural displacement that creativity is born – as sequences of perception bringing about new combinations of past and present, projecting future shapes and thus helping to shape the future.

We are hardwired to see intention in the world, and thus predisposed to the art of learning by intervention. We become by making. We realise ourselves through acts of transformation.

And these journeys bring with them implications of accountability. By imitating the forms of creativity we apprehend the contents of meaning; by enacting the prescriptions of ethics we learn about the will to have being emerge: together these constitute the freedom way.

Ethics inform aesthetics when there is exactitude in telling – and the other way round. The act of writing – surface, texture – will suspend the demarcation between “subject” and “material world”.

Marx, echoing Hegel, believed that artistic production was at bottom a form of self-representation or even self-production. But the “I” is a fiction, a construct concocted in part by culture and history and theology, by the need to believe life is worth living.

It is of course also a crutch to consciousness as passage for observations, the dark glass through which we look. The less “I”, the less self-indulgence and false indignation, the less we are obsessed by a predicated “right” to happiness and “private space”, the less we think of ourselves as victims, the less infantile our crying for “understanding” and for “healing”, the less judgemental and moralistic we are – the more room there will be for things and events to speak for themselves.

Through rhythm and texture you will promote textual space – and no creativity without space, no hope for conscience without the creativeness of awareness. We need to leave the reassuring and self-caressing domain of the “possible” to extend the reach of the impossible/unthinkable (such as, respect for the sacredness of the individual human life in a country like South Africa).

And these ethics, this neutrality demand that one allows emptiness for a certain moral imagination – that is, spaces for the promotion of doubt and for the unexpected, even and perhaps especially for what we as writers did not expect to find, but always with compassion for the weakness and the human dignity of the other.

In the interview Njabulo Ndebele gave to *City Press*, he also says: “The South African of the future will live comfortably with uncertainty because uncertainty promises opportunity, but you have to be robust about it, you have to be thoughtful about it, you have to contemplate it to get the full richness of it, and I think that is the challenge of

being South African: to run away from unidimensional and definitive characterisations of ourselves... The capacity of the country to imagine the future depends on nurturing imaginative thinking from the beginning of a child’s life right up to the end. We’ve somehow given all that up along the way.”

When a few writers visited Mahmoud Darwish, the Palestinian poet, some years ago in the besieged ghetto of the West Bank, he spoke to us of the role of poetry. He ended by saying: “It is true that all poetry stripped of another life in another time is threatened by a quick dissolution in the present. True that poetry carries its own future and is always

being reborn... But it is as true that no poet can put off for later, in some other place, the here and the now. In our time of storms it

is a matter of the existence, the vital energy of poetry... To give life to words, to give them back the water of life, can only be by way of bringing back the sense of living. And all search for sense is a search for the essence which confounds itself with our questioning of the intimate and the universal, that interrogation which makes poetry possible and indispensable, that questioning which has as consequence that the search for sense is also a search for freedom.”

I may have sounded a pessimistic note here. (In defence I may say I came neither to praise Caesar nor to bury him but to ask what he has done with the trust of the people.) But of course I believe that, with accountable leadership and full participation, this continent can be turned around.

Our dreams can be realised – and when I say this I very much have in mind the examples of Steve Biko and of Robert Sobukwe.

I dream, and I will continue to strive, for an integrated continent of generosity, economic justice, creativity, civil and civic responsibility. A continent that will develop its own sustainable modernity far away from Western universalist models of globalisation serving only the masters.

A continent that knows its primary riches is its diversity of cultures. A continent whose citizens will stop blackmailing and whitewashing one another and the world with politically-correct subservience and the “blame-us-on-history” syndrome.

A continent that will understand the sense and the importance of the public good. A continent that will stop begging and stealing, and where the totalitarian conflation of nation and state and party in power will be abolished and where prancing will be confined to the catwalks of fashion shows.

A continent where the ancestors are alive, certainly, to dance with. A continent that will never again accept second-class citizenship and will be neither the playground for Western phobia or self-interested charity nor the dumping

ground for Chinese junk.

A continent that will respect and celebrate life – the life of the planet.

A continent that will plant crops and feed itself. A continent that will eradicate small arms and have no purpose for submarines and other criminal and corrupting nonsense. A continent that will be the guardian of the past, all the pasts, and the custodian of our future – and where we will know that future lies with the women.

A continent of profound metissage and thus of reciprocal enrichment. A continent where no racism will be tolerated – and by that I also mean the racism and the humiliation of poverty.

I believe we writers, wordmakers, rooted in civil society, need not be the clowns and the fools of those in power. In fact, I believe we should think freedom of the mind as a conscious and constant attempt to unthink order and authority.

To think against hegemony of any variety, including the liberationist and the nativist – particularly the insidious, moralistic mawkishness of political correctness.

To think against the dictates, the values and the property of consumerist societies. To think against the laziness of narcissism.

We need to remember that as wordmakers we are bastards and forget that we’re obedient citizens.

Let us go to the further edge of thinking, to where the hand sings. For who will take us to the underworld of belonging and of growth except the movement of creativity?

*This is an edited version of the keynote address given by Breyten Breytenbach at the 11th Time of the Writer International Writers Festival hosted by the Centre for Creative Arts at UKZN on 25 March 2008. For the full version go to: <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/ccal/tow2008NKeySpeech.htm>*

**“We need to develop the ability to embrace uncertainty from a position of intelligence and imagination. The more of us who admit to our vulnerabilities, the more trusting the public space.”**

**Njabulo Ndebele in a recent interview in *City Press*.**

