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VIVA RADIO

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Viva Radio Viva!

"Radio exists in response to one of the oldest instincts on the planet: telling a story. It is essentially about narrative," says Pippa Green in the introductory story in this first *RJRAlive,* our new online publication of *Rhodes Journalism Review*.

This resilient medium, which relies entirely on the sense of sound and our brain's extraordinary ability to make that message three-dimensional and full of meaning and power, needs to be not only celebrated but prioritised. It remains essential on our continent despite the attraction of TV and the growth of mobile technologies and social media.

So this is where we have started our online presence, by paying tribute to radio: Commissioning Editor Annetjie van Wynegaard has assembled an array of stories from across the continent and from those for whom radio still continues to matter regardless of how free their politics or how sophisticated their technology.

Anthea Garman, Editor

Ricardo Gangale/Africa Media Online

Making every beat count

Radio exists in response to one of the oldest instincts on the planet: telling a story. It is essentially about narrative

By Pippa Green

This was one of the key messages at the recent What is Radio? conference held at the University of Oregon in Portland, Oregon, in late April. It was spelled out by veteran radio journalist, Charles Jaco, who was described as having a "robust career" with NBC, CNN, CBS and Fox. He has won two Edward R Murrow awards, named for one of the greatest narrative broadcasters, and now hosts his own talk-show on a radio station in St Louis, Missouri.

But Jaco provided a somewhat glum view of radio today. Rarely, in the United States, is it used as a vehicle for narrative journalism anymore.

Of about 14 000 radio stations in the US, 61% are music stations. Of the rest, the majority are talk stations, and a large chunk of those (about 1 200) are largely conservative, Christian stations. So the place for narrative news radio is rapidly diminishing, except in pockets such as National Public Radio.

And NPR is largely privately funded by foundations and donors. It is also perceived to be the preserve of the intellectual upper classes. "How in the name of heaven did compelling story telling on radio become the province of the upper 5%?" asked Jaco.

His was one story among the many from around the world told by radio practitioners, academics and advocacy groups who came together at the conference to talk about the medium of radio. Is it dying? Is there a place left for narrative radio?

"Behind community radio sits the idea of extending the public sphere to people who are ordinary"

The vast majority of radio stations in the US are not interested in narrative, but in making money, according to Jaco. And there is less public money in public broadcasting in the US than in any other country in the world.

The conference allowed for interesting comparisons between parts of the world.

The UK has public radio, which ranks among the best narrative radio in the world. But it is tiny and its sound is almost drowned out by the loud noise of music and talk.

India has a massive public broadcast system, but tightly controls the content on private radio stations. TV was allowed to privatise in the 1990s, but the first private FM radio station was established only in 2001. And no private FM radio station in India is allowed to broadcast news, according to a paper presented by Biswarup Sen of the University of Oregon. It is an anomaly because India has a commercial print media and TV stations which carry news.

Nonetheless, the more than 140 community radio stations in India can and do take up news and political issues that are pressing for local communities. "Community radio is important because people are looking for ways to find a place in large and growing democracy," said Priya Kapoor, an academic from Portland State University.

"Behind community radio sits the idea of extending the public sphere to people who are ordinary."

Community radio's mandate is also not to broadcast news, nor to engage in storytelling beyond the confines of that community. Yet it can do invaluable work.

For instance, the Chipko movement, an ecological movement that opposes the government cutting down trees in community-owned forests, is actively supported and driven by a community radio station. (Chipko means "to embrace" and comes from the passive-resistance technique practised by followers of the movement of wrapping themselves around trees to prevent their being felled.)

One of the more effective community radio projects presented at the conference was one that focuses on broadcasting to prisoners.

Phil McGuire, of the Prison Radio Association in the UK, told the conference that prison radio first emerged in the 1930s at a Texas prison in the US called "Thirty Minutes Behind Walls". It was intended as a counselling service for those who were due for release.

Today, the UK is a leader in the field, although there are prison radio services elsewhere: in Trinidad and Tobago, and even one in South Africa.

Britain's National Prison Radio was launched in 2009 and aimed at reducing recidivism in prisoners, and on counselling and education. It began at a prison in Feltham, broadcasting "to young boys between the ages of 15 and 21 who were very vulnerable, especially when locked in small dark cells at night".

Today, Prison Radio broadcasts in a number of prisons, with the support of government. Prisoners produce and host the shows, which focus on education, counselling, and information. In the evenings, book readings are broadcast.

"Half of UK prisoners arrive drug addicted, and can't read as well as the ordinary 11-year-old," said Maguire.

So radio in both the developed and developing world still occupies a central place.

In South Africa, radio is still the most important medium of news for over 26 million people. Most of that is broadcast over stations owned by the SABC. But unlike in India, commercial stations can and do broadcast news.

But as in the United States, the trend is away from narrative radio and towards talk or music formats.

Even public broadcast stations such as SAfm are moving further into the realm of talk, although it still broadcasts five hours of current affairs a day and has a daily book reading. The African-language stations broadcast between two and four hours of current affairs a day, a format that allows for narrative journalism, but this is less often, and less well, used.

The broadcasting landscape has changed dramatically since the early 1990s, with more than 200 radio stations, public, commercial and community, broadcasting in South Africa. The public broadcaster still dominates the radio landscape with eight of the top 10 being owned by the SABC.

Many of South Africa's stations are small community ones which don't have the capacity to gather their own news. And the commercial stations broadcast bulletins, although few use the medium for narrative story-telling combining voice with natural sound.

Yet it is a growing and robust medium here, and compares favourably with anywhere else in the world.

It was fitting, perhaps, that a conference which encompassed such a wide spectrum of the sounds radio makes, ended on a quiet, reflective note.

"Radio brings you into touch with your being," said John Durham Peters of the University of Iowa. "It is a highly philosophical medium... because it brings us face to face with two fundamental facts. One is about our socialness, our humanness; the other is about our being in time."

Think what would happen, he asked, if sound "hung around". It has meaning precisely because it vanishes. The real message of radio is "of time beating away".

Perhaps the challenge for radio today is how to make every beat count.

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COMMUNITY RADIO

No net, no cushion

Community radio matters. It can contribute significantly to the quality of life of poor communities, through information, education, and entertainment and as a platform for discussion. These stations can be the electronic equivalent of a community meeting, giving voice to people usually ignored by the mainstream media.

By Franz Krüger

John Robinson/South Photos/Africa Media Online

But they face enormous challenges: it is no easy task to keep an organisation running in a poor community, and to ensure that a team that tends to consist mostly of volunteers remains focused on a mission of independent community service. Many things can go wrong, from a breakdown of equipment to conflict between board and management, or the station being misused by some local power. The reality is that there are some community stations who do very well, and many others that don't.

Top of the list of concerns for most stations is the simple battle for survival, particularly for stations in the global south. The search for sustainability has become a major preoccupation: for the stations, people's livelihoods are at stake, while funders naturally want to see projects survive and prosper independently. The search for solutions is conducted through research projects, conferences, seminars and the like, but a magic formula has not yet been found.

Fairbairn and Siemering define sustainability as being "the ability of a radio station to maintain a good quality developmental broadcasting service over a period of time" (2006: 5). Lush and Urgoiti make the point that this cannot just be about money, as important as that is. The challenge of generating an income needs to be connected to "democratic principles of community broadcasting". They write: "(S)ustainability has been seen to be a much broader

Community support enables donations, voluntary work and other practical assistance; while a loyal listenership is what attracts both large and local advertisers

and more complex concept, and should be seen in the context of a concerted, on-going effort to make any community media initiative viable and functional" (2011: 10).

Gumucio-Dagron describes survival as being like the "art of aerialists", or circus tightrope walkers: "They sometimes fall on the net and they ascend to begin again. The difference is that in community media most of the time there is not a net to cushion the fall. Therefore many projects were frustrated just after they began, and so they were not able to settle down inside the community" (2003: 1). He identifies three elements of sustainability – this "tripod" model has been taken up by several other writers.

Social sustainability refers to community support, both by feeling a sense of ownership and in practical ways. Gumucio-Dagron writes: "Without community participation, the communication experience becomes an island amid the human universe in which it operates" (2003: 4).

Support is expressed in many different ways,:through voluntary work, donations, participation in activities and constructive criticism. For the radio station, it means making sure there are ample opportunities for participation and for making sure it is in tune with its community, in terms of the issues focused on, language use and other aspects.

Institutional sustainability refers to organisational frameworks within which the station operates. These include external factors, like the legal framework, government policy and the licensing regime: in some countries, government has defined a special space for community radio and even formulated policy to support stations; in others the government remains uninterested or even hostile. Internal factors that play a major role include the infrastructure and technology available and organisational structures.

Financial sustainability: community radio stations need funds to be able to pay salaries, produce programmes, buy equipment, repair it when necessary, meet operational expenses, pay transmission costs etc. The demands always seem to be growing, and the struggle to earn enough money is unending. In addressing this challenge, the first task is good budgeting and financial management, so as to keep costs under control.

The challenges of generating enough income are particularly acute for stations serving poor, rural communities, and can easily overshadow other concerns. In a major review of the impact of community radio, the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (Amarc) notes that the struggle for money often distracts practitioners from the tasks of improving community involvement, programme quality and relevance (2007).

A review of the Namibian community radio sector finds this pattern, too: "Over time, community broadcasters have become pre-occupied with financial sustainability, and seem to have lost sight of key issues such as community ownership and participation, and the independence of their stations" (Lush and Urgoiti 2012: 16).

Certainly, money is critically important, like the fuel that keeps an engine running. But it is the other two aspects of sustainability that keep the tap open: they lay the basis for financial sustainability in a very real and practical way. Community support enables donations, voluntary work and other practical assistance; while a loyal listenership is what attracts both large and local advertisers. A stable, well-run organisation can offer donors and others a reliable partnership. In the pointed phrase used by Lush and Urgoiti as the title of their review of Namibian community radio (2011), participation pays.

The challenge of achieving sustainability with independence

The common fixation with generating income can often threaten a station's independence, since money often comes with strings attached. It is easy to be tempted by a large contract, but it is essential to make sure that it does not jeopardise the station's relationship with the community.

That relationship is built on trust which can be lost if the community sees a station as simply a vehicle that can be bought by an interest group, to further their particular interests. Once lost, trust is hard to restore.

There are pitfalls in excessive dependence on any single source of income. Southern African stations tend to accept advertising, unlike some countries where community stations are forbidden to do so (Girard 2007: 43). Accurate figures for the overall significance of advertising flowing into the community radio sector are hard to come by.

Some effort has been made by South Africa's state-backed Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA), and its 2010/11 annual report suggests that almost R40 million in advertising spending might have gone to some 130 community radio stations in that year (2011: 75).

The amounts are still far below the share of audience community radio achieves: while 25% of the potential adult audience are now listening to

David Goldblatt/South Photos/Africa Media Online

these stations weekly, the sector's share of the total adspend on radio is estimated at 1 to 2% (Milne 2012). Nevertheless, it is a significant amount of money, partly boosted by deliberate government policy to direct significant parts of its advertising spending into community radio, which also influences decisions at parastatal entities.

On the other hand, such figures exclude local income. Advertising in other Southern African countries is unlikely to amount to even a fraction of these amounts. However, the issue is not so much the amount, but the extent of dependence on advertising, and whether it influences the station unduly.

Government support, both at local and at national level, can – and should – be an important source of funding. "(R)adio stations and community telecentres should receive the same support as public schools, the libraries or national cultural projects. This does not mean that the state should intervene in the political and communicative project of community media, but should support their development as autonomous, and decentralized entities," writes Gumucio-Dagron (2003: 18). This support may come in various forms: through direct funding, subsidised transmission costs, tax concessions, paid-for public interest campaigns or advertising. Local governments may make office space available, sometimes with free services. These contributions have become a significant factor for community radio in South Africa.

Unfortunately, there have been instances where government entities have used their position in an attempt to influence content. South African municipalities in Grahamstown, Eastern Cape, and in Hartswater, Northern Cape, have mounted advertising boycotts of community media over critical reportage (Parliamentary communications committee, 2011). And the Alfred Nzo community station, also in the Eastern Cape, had its electricity supply summarily cut when the district council heard things it did not like (personal communication).

A recent discussion paper by the Independent Communications Authority of SA (Icasa) notes that some stations "have been presented with challenges from local government representatives who seek to have undue influence on the administration of the stations. If not regulated and managed properly by the community broadcasters local government funding option might exacerbate such a trend" (2012: 42).

A different set of challenges arises in relation to funding by international donors. Organisations like the Open Society family of foundations, Panos, Unesco, national development foundations from the Nordic countries, Germany, Switzerland, Britain, the US and many others have been attracted to community radio because of the contribution local, participatory communication is seen to play in furthering the development agenda.

Many stations would not exist if it was not for this kind of international support. However, case

Funding is not the only potential threat to independence. Interest groups in the community itself – parties, factions, churches, or even an individual business – may try to exercise undue influence, or even try to "capture" the station.

studies from Kenya and elsewhere demonstrate the dangers of excessive dependence on foreign funding. Da Costa warns "communities and their leadership to beware of strangers bearing gifts".

But funding is not the only potential threat to independence. Interest groups in the community itself – parties, factions, churches, or even an individual business – may try to exercise undue influence, or even try to "capture" the station.

Radio Atlantis FM, outside Cape Town, has seen conflict between two community groupings over the years: churches and trade unions. Both have tried to bus in enough supporters to take over the board at an AGM, even though this would pose a direct threat to the station's licence, which in terms of South African law must be non-partisan. Factional battles have also affected staff, who have on occasion used the airwaves to attempt to muster community support (this description based on Fairbairn and Siemering, 2006: 77 – 90).

From sustainability to health

"Sustainability" is the term generally used in the literature dealing with the challenges faced by community radio. However, the word points in some directions which are not helpful to clear thinking.

It suggests sustainability is a happy state of prosperity and stability that can be reached by a station, and which will then endure. The concrete – and understandable – expectation from funders is that after a certain period of time, stations will be able to stand on their own two feet.

In reality, stations have their ups and downs: many have failed after seeming secure, while others have fallen apart and then picked themselves up again. The struggle for survival is an ongoing one.

It's preferable to talk about a station's health, since health is understood as something that is not fixed, but can change from time to time. It also helps us reduce an excessive concentration on financial issues, in favour of a more holistic approach that gives due weight to social and institutional factors.

This is an edited extract from Chapter 1 by Franz Krüger, Romanus Monji and Mike Smurthwaite. The Healthy Community Radio Station (Johannesburg: Osisa and Wits Radio Academy. Available at http://osisa.org/other/media-and-ict/regional/healthy-community-radio-station. The booklet was launched at Joburg Radio Days in July 2013.

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Monique Rakotoanosy

ORALITY, ILLITERACY AND RADIO

By Monique Rakotoanosy

What has to be known about the Malagasy radio landscape? As a popular medium, thanks to its accessibility, radio plays an important role in recreating the political, social and economic life of our country, as we come near the end of our four-year-crisis.

There are about 250 radio stations all over Madagascar. In spite of the fact that, according to the existing legislation, only the national radio can direct broadcast live through the country, some private stations broadcasting from the capital can cover many regions thanks to signal transfers and re-broadcasting via internet.

Some community radio stations broadcast in rural areas. Most of the private stations deal with local coverage, and in the capital city of Antananarivo evangelical radio stations use most of the radio frequencies available.

Few workers in those 250 operating stations have received formal radio training for radio-related professions, particularly about handling and managing information, and most of them work without contracts, and consequently without work security.

For the majority of the workers in the regions, the average salary is about $75. Many agents are volunteers. In large cities, particularly in the capital, the average salary is about $150. This rate makes people live on the very edge of economic survival and weaken them toward politicians who often tend to "buy" information according to their interest. Many politicians build their own stations in order to establish their reputations and to have a determining tool to use during elections.

Oral tradition is part of the Malagasy cultural background and illiteracy rates remain high, which makes radio the most convenient medium for the majority of the population.

Faced with the stakes of the future, the radio landscape has to evolve so that it can serve as a tool to strengthen citizenship, to create social bonds, to stimulate creativity, and to bring about development compatible with national realities and the population's aspirations.

It requires the setting up of a regulatory framework which aims at making stations more professional, to ensure the free and responsible circulation of ideas and the strengthening of public or private radio workers' skills.

Various training workshops have been provided within sectoral projects promoting human rights, gender, citizen participation and public health, but due to bad timing they have rarely improved the radio stations involved.

Recently an international project has provided radio stations from different regions with consistent training, including the creation of pilot broadcasts whose common topic is living together. The training impact cannot be assessed yet but considering the high importance of communication, the state has to work with its partners for the setting up of a national centre providing training for workers in the field of communication, especially for radio.

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Informed and hopeful IN EXILE

By Issa Sikiti da Silva

Women in the Djabal Refugee Camp in eastern Chad listening to *Women's Crossroads* on Radio Sila, a programme produced by Internews. Photo: United Nations

Living in exile far away from home can take a toll on one's well-being. Just ask the refugees of Darfur living in harsh and dire conditions in eastern Chad. But, if you at least have a radio that broadcasts news, music and weather reports, and debates current affairs, survival doesn't seem so far off

Non-profit organisation Internews has released a report outlining its media project in eastern Chad, where it has built three humanitarian radio stations to help those fleeing the violence in Darfur to receive critical news and the information they need to survive.

The three stations are Radio Sila in Goz Beida, Radio Absoun in Iriba and Radio Voix de Ouaddai in Abeche. Internews left eastern Chad last year, seven years after the first station went on air, as funding significantly decreased.

The NGO said it spent a full year preparing these stations for independence, including establishing rent-free premises, community governing boards and marketing strategies.

The report, compiled on the ground by journalist Celeste Hicks and photographer Meridith Kohut, is a complete documentation of the work that has been done since 2005, and a perspective for the future for these radio stations, as they prepare to fly solo.

Internews will train and employ about 60 local Chadian journalists and Darfur refugee correspondents. Their aim is to highlight the voices of real people in the refugee camps and to establish a powerful medium in a country where national literacy levels are only 28%.

Startling testimonies emerged from staff and audiences about the impact of radio on their communities, where resources are scarce.

Radio Absoun director Aoussa Mohammed recounted in the report what it was like in 2004 when the refugees started arriving.

"It was really horrible. The image that stays with me was a woman who arrived from the border with a baby on her back. The baby was dead but the mother hadn't even realised.

"It was really difficult to communicate with anyone at that time. It was before mobile phones, there were a few satellite phones but they didn't work everywhere. The only way to communicate was by word of mouth or by writing letters, but it was so slow."

Establishing radio stations in these areas not only changed the face of these communities, but also inspired young people to start dreaming about becoming journalists.

"I would really love to be a journalist one day because I see what an important service they provide in the community," 18-year-old Rahma Mohamed Ibed told the staff of Radio Sila, a station serving the Djabal Darfur Refugee Camp.

Ibed said he was able to turn to Madjihinguem Nguinabe, a Radio Sila journalist based in Goz Beida, when he needed help.

"One day I lost my six-year-old brother when we had gone out wood collecting. I called Madjihinguem and I told him to broadcast a message for people to look for him. Someone in the community found him and called us to tell us where he was," he said.

This story first appeared in Moon of the South*, and was reprinted in* RJR *with permission from the author.* Moon of the South *is a news website for readers who believe in Africa as a place of prosperity, unity, diversity of opinions and tolerance.*

Issa Sikiti da Silva is the editor and founder of Moon of the South *and an award-winning African journalist. His work has been published in more than 40 media outlets based in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Europe and Qatar. issasikiti@gmail.com*

Graeme Williams/South Photos/Africa Media Online

DIGITAL DIDN'T KILL THE RADIO STAR

Shortwave and satellite help radio reign supreme

Radio threatens many of Africa's big men. Thugs working for Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe have recently been confiscating and destroying receivers. Eritrea's President Isaias Afewerki stopped issuing import licenses. Other iron-fisted rulers such as Swaziland's King Mswati III and Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir rarely hand out frequencies, thus reducing the range of independent radio.

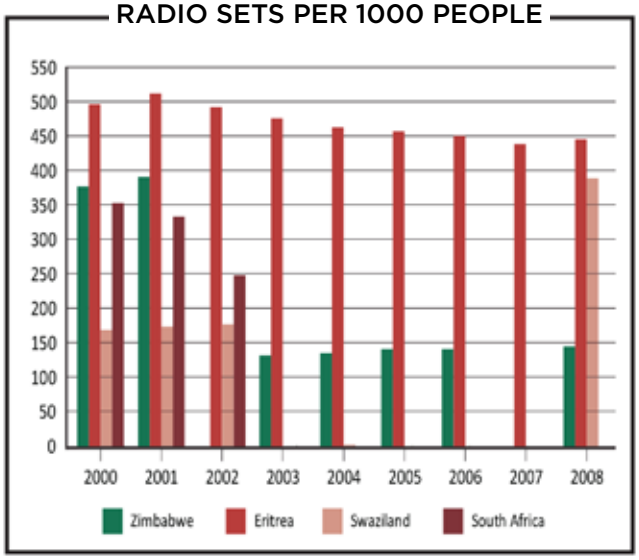
By David Smith

The actions taken by these big men merely confirm radio's supremacy in Africa. It may be old technology, but it is still relevant and appropriate. While not everybody owns a radio, most people have access to one.

Zimbabweans have grown adept at finding alternatives to the state mouthpiece, the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC). A combination of old and new technology permits people to hear stories that the authorities in Harare prefer they did not. Shortwave is one of the old-school tools people have counted on for decades.

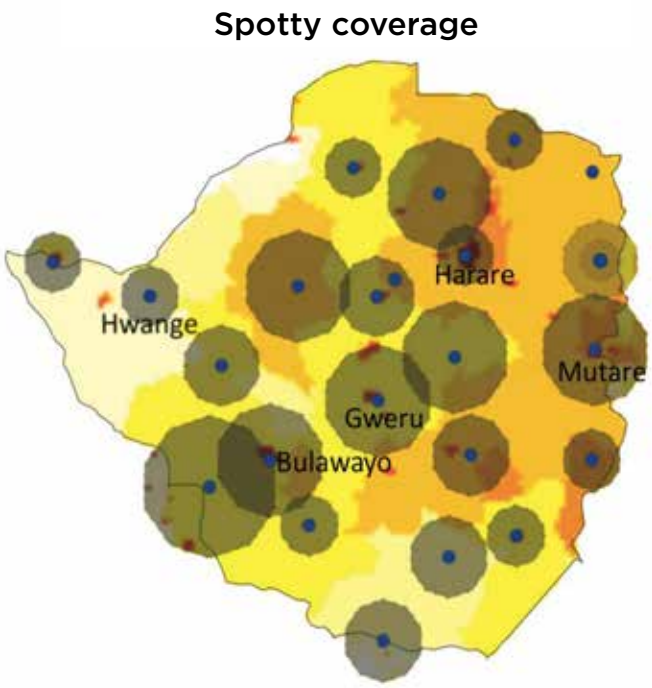
A number of radio stations based outside of Zimbabwe's borders rely on reports from in-country correspondents who use mobile phones and the internet, particularly social media, to send their reports to distant studios.

Stations such as SW Radio Africa, the Voice of the People, and Studio 7, staffed mostly by Zimbabweans, are based as far afield as Johannesburg, Washington



Empty spaces indicate years for which no data was available.
Source: World Bank

ZIMBABWE'S POPULATION DISTRIBUTION OVERLAID WITH FM TRANSMITTER COVERAGE, SEPTEMBER 2011.
Source: infosaid.com



and London. They reach their target market using old-fashioned high-frequency transmitters originally built, for the most part, to broadcast news during World War 2.

Barely a fraction of the world's public who listened to shortwave 50 years ago is listening today. In Zimbabwe, however, FM frequencies are restricted to the ZBC and a select few with friends in high places. But shortwave has the advantage of sending signals over vast distances, irrespective of borders and local broadcasting restrictions.

Throughout today's modern digital world, shortwave radio is given short shrift. But in Zimbabwe, on the verge of holding presidential elections, police staged a nation-wide crackdown, declaring possession of shortwave radios illegal, without any basis in law.

Radio Dialogue, a local community station based in Bulawayo, has been trying unsuccessfully for years to obtain an FM license. Instead, it uses short-wave to send its signal around the world to an audience that is within shouting distance of its studios.

Just before the constitutional referendum held in March, police raided the station and seized several dozen shortwave radios. Its manager, Zenzele Ndebele, was charged with contravening import and export regulations.

Next door in South Africa, one of the lesser-known legacies of apartheid is the near impossibility of buying a shortwave receiver. During the 1970s the National Party government attempted to dissuade South Africans from listening to foreign broadcasts, particularly ones they deemed undesirable. To satisfy the listening public, they built one of the world's most advanced FM transmitter networks to carry South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) programming.

A mixture of music and carefully-vetted talk shows went out on African language stations previously known as the Bantu services. Pretoria's hope at the time was that the clear sounds of an FM signal would stop people from listening to the poor audio quality of short wave stations such as the ANC's Radio Freedom, the BBC World Service, Radio Havana Cuba and Radio Moscow.

Zimbabwe is not the only country where short-wave is used to bypass restrictive broadcast legislation. Pirate, or clandestine shortwave stations, often staffed by members of the target country's diasporas, use high-frequency transmitters to send uncensored programming to dozens of countries, including Libya, Madagascar, Sudan, Western Sahara and all the states in the Horn of Africa.

In Eritrea, President Afewerki is determined not to give dissenting voices any space on the airwaves. He forbids any radio service that is not the state operator. He also places restrictions on the issuing of import permits for radios, making it difficult for Eritreans to buy the most basic of receivers in local shops.

The general public, whether in Eritrea or the remote equatorial rainforests of the Democratic

Republic of Congo, always finds ways to bypass these restrictions. The Africa services of the BBC and Radio France Internationale are filled with the voices and sms messages of people who somehow manage to find a way of listening to banned broadcasts.

Without laying a single centimetre of copper wiring, the mobile phone has allowed much of Africa to skip landline technology and move straight to digital. More importantly, the cellphone has played a leading role in turning radio into a social tool.

Radios no longer simply transmit. They also receive. The convergence between these two communications devices has created a new community and international platform for lone, isolated voices. The list of radio stations that do not have a sms or social network relationship with their listeners, despite their location, is getting increasingly shorter. Stations that fail to interact with the public, risk going the way of the dodo.

The Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services do not tolerate content or listener comment criticising King Mswati. Social media and proximity to South Africa provide a partial outlet for his critics. On any given day, considerable traffic on Facebook is devoted to denigrating the absolute nature of the monarch's reign.

When Swazis want an update on current affairs, they do not have to listen to his majesty's voice or the uninspiring Voice of the Church radio station. They can turn their radio dial to one of the many SABC stations that can be picked up in various parts of the country, Ligwalagwala FM and Ukhozi FM in particular.

In Zimbabwe, and to a lesser extent in Swaziland, the great thirst for credible and non-state content has strongly boosted digital technology. In virtually any part of Zimbabwe where there is a cluster of houses, chances are there will be a satellite dish affixed to some if not most of the homes. Although some of the dishes are linked to a DSTV pay-TV subscription, most are not because it is too expensive.

Instead Zimbabweans in their millions are watching South African television and listening to South African radio using relatively inexpensive free-to-air satellite receivers commonly known as Wiztechs. South Africa's SABC1 and Metro FM have loyal and significant followings north of the Limpopo River.

Pirate radio stations have also discovered the added value satellite offers them. The infrastructure is already in place. Unlike shortwave radio, most people, especially in urban areas, have access to a dish. In the not-too-distant future it will be as easy to listen to an alternative Zimbabwean newscast as it is to watch *Generations*, a popular SABC soap opera.

If they want to secure an audience for the ZBC, authorities in Harare will have to do much more than confiscate shortwave radios.

Video and digital did not kill the radio star. Radio is stronger than ever in Africa, thanks largely to its ability to absorb and adapt to changing technology.

Deposed despots, Libya's Muammar Gaddafi, Tunisia's Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali and Egypt's Hosni Mubarak, would agree.

Pirate radio stations have also discovered the added value satellite offers them. The infrastructure is already in place. Unlike shortwave radio, most people, especially in urban areas, have access to a dish. In the not-too-distant future it will be as easy to listen to an alternative Zimbabwean newscast as it is to watch *Generations*, a popular SABC soap opera

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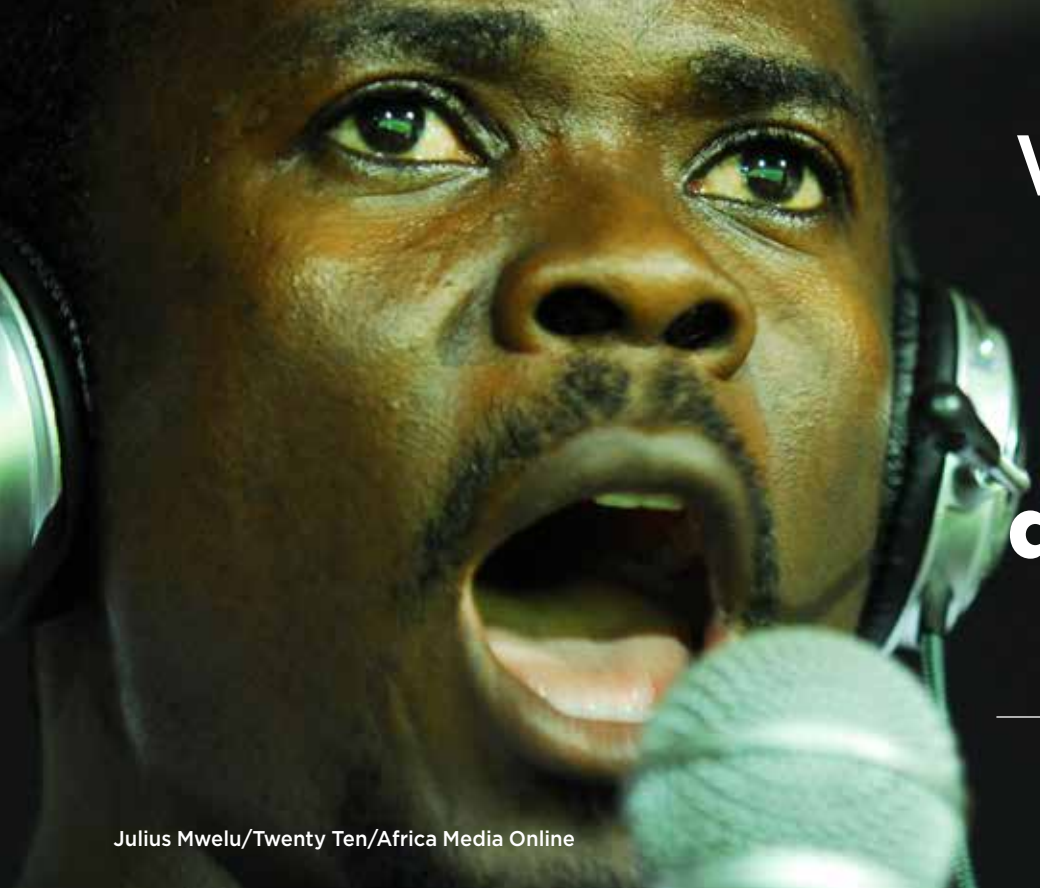

Julius Mwelu/Twenty Ten/Africa Media Online

When radio becomes a weapon of mass destruction

By Zenzele Ndebele

Radio plays an important role in especially third world societies, because of its wide reach and low cost.

However it is disappointing that we have few radio stations in African countries and we still have countries like Zimbabwe where there are no independent stations or community stations.

In Zimbabwe the authorities see radio as "a weapon of mass destruction".

In many African countries radio is the most important medium communities rely on to keep informed about news and events. Low literacy levels and poor circulation make dependence on newspapers negligible.

The cost of a television set is beyond the reach of the majority as many people live on less than US$1 a day. Poor infrastructure is also another reason why people depend on radios, because in most rural areas there is no electricity and televisions are too expensive. Internet use, although rising in some countries because of internet on mobile phones in many major cities, is still nominal.

Radio remains the medium of choice.

In Zimbabwe the broadcasting has always been a contested field. In 1980 the new Zimbabwean government inherited the Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation which had been used as a propaganda tool during the liberation struggle.

The new government did not change the situation. The monopoly of the state broadcaster remained constitutional until 2001. In September 2000 the Zimbabwean Supreme Court declared section 27 unconstitutional but still the government refused to liberate the airwaves. The government came up with more strict media laws, and as in colonial times, radio is used as a propaganda tool for the ruling elite.

The refusal by the Zimbabwean government to liberate the airwaves has resulted in a number of organisations setting up pirate radio stations outside the country. Since 2000 there have been more than a few radio stations broadcasting on short wave and these include Studio 7 broadcasting from America, Voice of the People broadcasting from Madagascar, local station Radio Dialogue and SW Radio Africa from London.

On 19 February 2013, police spokesperson Assistant Commissioner Charity Charamba said at a news conference in Harare that possession and distribution of solar-powered radios was illegal.

She accused opposition political parties of distributing the devices to unsuspecting members of the public with the intention "to sow seeds of disharmony within the country". What followed was a series of raids on civic society organisations and villages. A number of radio sets were confiscated from organisations and individuals.

As the editor of Radio Dialogue, I was arrested and charged with possession of smuggled radios in contravention of Section 182 of the Customs and Excise Act. An alternative charge of possession of a radio receiver without a valid Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) licence in contravention of Section 38 of the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA) was also added. The case is still pending in the courts.

The same tactics that were being used by the colonial regime are now being used by the current government. During the colonial era people would secretly listen to radio broadcasts that were run from foreign countries by the liberation movements. The police also claimed that the radio sets are promoting hate speech. The authorities know that it is not the radio sets that produce hate speech but the radio stations. If they are genuine that there are stations that broadcast hate speech they will not solve the problem by confiscating radio sets.

Zenzele Ndebele is a Zimbabwean journalist who has been working in the community radio sector for the past 10 years. He is the editor of Radio Dialogue, a community radio station based in Zimbabwe but which is not licenced. He holds a Masters of Science degree in journalism and media studies. bayethe@yahoo.co.uk

Julius Mwelu/Twenty Ten/Africa Media Online

Has the transformation begun?

(or is it a false change?)

On a bright blue morning in February this year, ZiFM radio station, one of Zimbabwe's two new radio entrants, was broadcasting live on-air sms, Facebook, twitter and WhatsApp messages from listeners about their preferred presidential candidate, should elections be held that day. This programme caught my attention and I parked by the side of the road to listen, first with awe, as this was my first time to hear such a public debate on national radio in Zimbabwe's highly-polarised and dangerous political arena.

By Rashweat Mukundu

The listeners were equally daring, expressing their preferred candidates and attacking Zimbabwe's long time President Robert Mugabe, saying that they would prefer a young leader. Others were in support of him.

Zimbabwe's opening up of the radio sector remains confusing, with questions on whether this represents real change, more so by a government known for its repressive media policies and fear of the independent media.

Sceptics point at the fact that the two stations, ZiFm and Star FM, are aligned to the dominant political party, ZANU-PF. Star FM is owned by Zimbabwe Newspapers Holdings, a media house in which the Zimbabwe government has a controlling equity. It is not surprising therefore that Star FM's news bulletins follow the state line, and largely pull from Zimpapers newspapers, *The Herald* and *The Sunday Mail*.

ZiFM on the other hand is owned by Africa Business Communications whose major shareholder, Supa Mandiwanzira, is the ZANU-PF Treasurer for Manicaland province and a former senior staffer at the state-controlled Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC).

Admire Taderera, Star FM's station manager, and Supa Mandiwanzira both strenuously deny that their stations are extensions of the state controlled ZBC and ZANU-PF's propaganda machinery.

Both point at the fairly balanced public affairs programmes in which leading political rivals in ZANU-PF and the Movement for Democratic Change parties engage with each other on their political views and party programmes.

While there is a noted semblance of balance on radio talks shows, Star FM's news bulletins have a remarkable state media, meaning ZANU-PF, line while ZiFm simply lacks depth. There equally remain concerns on the licensing process that resulted in the two being licensed by the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ).

Many in civic societies argue that the process was secretive, lacked transparency and the criteria used to put the licensed two above other license applications have never been made public. Civic-owned aspiring radio station, Voice of the People, has thus launched a court challenge to compel BAZ to explain itself. The opaque licensing process is even more evident by the denial of community radio licences to such aspirants as Radio Dialogue of Bulawayo.

While this continues, Zimbabweans, used to the state-owned ZBC, are experiencing a new radio setup, albeit with underlying suspicions. The sinister and unnoticed puzzle in all this is that while there has been some opening, ZANU-PF, through its control of the Ministry of Information and Publicity overseen by its Party Commissar, Webster Shamu, has maintained a tight grip on the ZBC vernacular station, Radio Zimbabwe. Radio Zimbabwe is the most popular station, listed to by 80% of the population and mostly in rural and poor urban communities.

In the final analysis, Star FM and ZiFM matter less in influencing public opinion. Yet the two are a perfect cover as examples of a reforming regime and media opening. On Radio Zimbabwe no other party except ZANU-PF is given space. If this were to change and other individuals/companies with no links to ZANU-PF are licensed, then Zimbabwe would indeed have joined many Southern Africa states in opening the media sector. Since my February experience with ZiFM, I have not heard a similar morning live programme again; maybe the station's young and unassuming presenters had simply stepped over a line, and gone too far.

Rashweat Mukundu is a Zimbabwean journalist, media and freedom of expression activist. He has worked for the Zimbabwe Independent *newspaper, the Media Institute of Southern Africa in Zimbabwe and Namibia and Freedom House Regional office in Johannesburg and is currently a research consultant with International Media Support. rmukundu77@gmail.com*

NOTES FROM JOBURG RADIO DAYS

Going bravely where no radio has gone before

A last tweet, from Dan McQuillin, of the British firm Broadcast Bionics:

Dan McQuillin@BionicsDan
Departing SAfrica, have to declare at UK customs a bag stuffed full of ideas & passion for radio.
Thanks @franzkruger
#jhbradiodays *(On Twitter)*

By Franz Krüger

Key themes at this year's Joburg Radio Days, hosted annually by the Wits Radio Academy, revolved around the opportunities and challenges of new and social media. Some of them included:

Tweeting a revolution
Andy Carvin, of US public radio network NPR and the author of Distant Witness (@acarvin), talked about how he used Twitter to report the Arab Spring. Renewed protests in Egypt had him working his Tweetdeck during the conference, trawling for eye-witness accounts, verifying information, passing on tips for use by colleagues at NPR. On a single day, he sent out 750 tweets, largely on events in Cairo. It was a vivid demonstration of a new kind of journalism.

Internet pioneers
A panel of three people broadcasting on the internet provided some of the liveliest discussion of the conference. Soli Philander, of Cape Town's Taxi Radio, accused FM stations of being smug: "Radio is now an industry where the innovation is being done by young people in their garages," he said. Seth Rotherham, of 20ceansvibe.com, demonstrated his station's app, while Shaun Dewberry, of Interwebsradio, said anybody can get involved: "Online radio is the true decentralisation of radio. Streaming embraces all the original values of the internet."

Options for DAB+
This new technology, offering clearer sound and space for additional channels, is the radio equivalent of digital terrestrial television (DTT), and use is gradually increasing in Europe, the US, Australia and elsewhere. While some European countries are contemplating the end of FM, countries like Australia see the two technologies co-existing for some time to come. In SA, a trial of DAB+ broadcasting is planned for the coming months, but further implementation is likely to be slow.

Pop-up stations
James O'Brien, of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), talked about the use of the opportunities of digital broadcasting for pop-up stations – stations that exist for a short period, and serve a particular purpose. So the ABC put together a station to mark International Women's Day, using archival material from a women's show in the 70s and the responses of present-day women presenters to the issues dealt with then. The show was a hit, and its page was the third most viewed page on the ABC website. Other examples paid tribute to an indigenous Australian musician, marked the Chinese New Year or provided disaster information after a terrible bush fire. "Remember," he said, "with all of the additional spectrum comes the opportunity for you to remember why you got into radio in the first place, and that is to be creative."

New music platforms
Gillian Ezra, of the new music platform Simfy Africa, said radio stations had no reason to be anxious about new music streaming services like Pandora, Spotify and her own: they simply offer a different opportunity to music lovers. Peter Malebye, of MTN, described the company's new business strategy which sees subscribers being offered music channels as part of their contracts. As broadband costs come down, the network providers see themselves as being less "pipe" and more content provider. But Nick Grubb of Kagiso Media argued that radio still has great advantages: "Radio is about real human relationships."

Other topics included the National Community Radio Forum's 20th birthday, radio in war zones, public broadcasting, regulation, innovation in news radio, comedy shows, radio stories from Zimbabwe, Malawi, Madagascar and much else.

The future for radio as one of the oldest legacy medium is uncertain, just like it is for other media, with rapid technological changes and audiences getting new options. As opening speaker Randall Abrahams, former station manager, Idols judge and now managing director of Universal Music South Africa, said: "Thinking about the future of radio means admitting that we know nothing about what the future looks like."

See www.journalism.co.za, under the tab "Radio Days" for further reports. Plans for the 2014 conference, scheduled for the first week of July, will be posted there as they become available.

IMMEDIATE INTRIGUING ACCESSIBLE PORTABLE CHEAP YOUR MIND YOUR IMAGINATION

Radio truly is a marvellous medium. It can go with you anywhere, and take you anywhere, all within a few minutes. You can also get away with a lot more. With just the right sound effects you could be reporting live from somewhere in the Bahamas, or you could walk right out of bed and into studio and no one would know better. I have done both. As an ex-radio student who fully advocates the theatre of the mind, I've learned, I've played and I've experimented with the airwaves, learning the possibilities and also adding a little bit of myself to them in the process. But what does it all mean to a young South African journo like me?

By Stephen Mina

A salute to radio

Paul Weinberg/South Photos/Africa Media Online

Radio is a personal medium: it broadcasts like a conversation between you and the anchor, yet it can also play a role in building communities. Radio is immediate: it brings updates, news and opinions in a heartbeat, yet it often takes days to plan segments. It is a multi-task medium: for all Twitter's immediacy, you can't look at it while driving. Radio is an intriguing medium, made all the more so by its many paradoxes.

At the recent conference in Oregon, asking "What is Radio?", Pippa Green answered, it is the most important medium for news in South Africa. In many ways she is right. The strong need for opinion in radio, combined with the intimacy mentioned earlier, can form a powerful platform for debate. The immediacy of the medium also gives listeners a sense of being involved in an active, often heated, conversation (Radio 702's slogan: "You're invited to join the conversation").

Let us not forget the benefits of live reporting. A famous example like the Hindenburg disaster ("Oh the humanity!") serves to show the power that cannot be captured in print. Though sometimes I think reporters cheat with the Bahamas trick I mentioned earlier, it is hugely effective in putting the listener's mind into a scene as it unfolds.

And the best part of it all? It is accessible. The most widely-used medium in the country, you don't need to pay license fees or more than R100. One radio can reach many ears; it is portable and cheap. This, if nothing else, would definitely make Pippa Green's statement ring true.

Never underestimate the power of the imagination. The real power of radio for me does not lie solely in news, but in entertainment. From music, to anchors that make you wait those extra 10 minutes in the car.

To me radio dramas are the best part of radio (kind of lousy coming from a journalist). I listen to them every day. From 1940s plays, to ones only produced last year, I enjoy the stories, the engagement with imagination and the fact that I could be driving or out for a walk while doing so.

I've written two, produced one and love the playfulness and opportunity it brings. If a narrator tells you about a horribly deformed villain, everyone will imagine him differently – and everyone will be right.

In radio lies the power to cultivate your own mind, take you to wild and exotic places. You make your own pictures, not buy someone else's version of a dashing rogue as you would on TV. It is that special person telling a story just for you. It is truly wonderful.

So, it is quite sad that such wonderful potential is not exploited in the South African media landscape. Commercial radio is bound by advertising and competitions to rake in the revenue, while other stations focus too much on the music and what people want. Icasa makes sure the SABC keeps producing radio dramas, but only on one or two stations. The BBC has a celebrated tradition of some excellently produced radio dramas, showing their relevance in contemporary society. While there's traffic, there'll be radio. Yes and no. It is much more welcome in our lives than just those two spaces in the day. It buzzes while we are in the kitchen, rattles on merrily while we're in the garden, stays up with us while we're writing assignments and travels with us when we're going on holiday.

It offers us news, opinions, lifestyle tips, comedy, tragedy, entertainment and music. It offers us a slice of life because it is so much part of our lives.

Radio, I salute you.

Stephen Mina graduated from Rhodes University with a BJourn in 2013, specialising in radio. He currently works with all forms of media in advertising at TBWA. stephen.mina@gmail.com

Diaries and detritus

ONE PERFECTIONIST'S SEARCH FOR IMPERFECTION

A story about a cough.

It was 1963, in a stuffy South African courtroom, during the trial of Nelson Mandela and other anti-apartheid activists. The prosecutor was beginning his opening statement when somebody coughed, an ordinary cough, lasting two seconds. The prosecutor's words and the cough were recorded on tape. At the end of the trial, Mandela and the other defendants were sent to Robben Island, the tape to government archives. It remained there, mislabeled and unheard, for four decades.

By Joe Richman

John Robinson/South Photos/Africa Media Online

In documentaries, the key to getting lucky is time

Radio presents a simple challenge, recreating reality with words and sound. If the story is too clean and perfect, the messiness of life gets lost. The most real moments can be found in margins and jagged edges, in audio detritus. An important speech may be recorded and saved, but left out is the anticipation of the crowd, the feedback of the microphone, the clearing of the throat before the speaker begins. Brief backstage glimpses, unofficial, accidental, mundane bits of sound, help a radio story come to life and pierce the armor of our memory. These moments can be two seconds long.

I spent the summer of 2004 rummaging through archives in South Africa looking for sound to help tell the history of apartheid for our series, *Mandela: An Audio History*. I pulled out a tape in bad shape. I kept splicing it back together as it played. I was listening to a recording from Mandela's trial, thrilled to hear the prosecutor's actual words. It wasn't until somebody coughed that I heard the echo and dimensions of the room, the stillness of the afternoon, the hushed anticipation of the trial. The cough put me in that courtroom.

A good radio story does more than just convey information or tell a story. It allows listeners to feel they are experiencing the story first hand. Facts, narrative, and characters are important. Some stories have a mysterious, elusive quality, bringing listeners inside the action, transporting them into another world. It's the punctum.

Punctum is a photographic term we should steal for radio. Punctum is a point or precise location of something. In photography, courtesy of Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida*, punctum is the unintentional detail that "fills the whole picture", the lucky accident that helps us understand the true nature of a story, or person.

I saw a newspaper photograph of a young woman at her husband's grave. The woman is barefoot, almost hugging the ground. She doesn't look especially mournful, just quiet. Something routine and ordinary about the scene makes it poignant. The photo haunted me. Later I looked at the photo again and noticed a detail I hadn't noticed before, a disposable water bottle next to the woman. That juxtaposition of common and cosmic, eternal and every day, the water bottle got to me.

In photography, punctum is a detail. In radio, a temporal medium, punctum can be a scene or a moment, a cough or a conversation. You can't create or plan punctum. You recognise it when it happens. The moments on the edges are the easiest to miss, hardest to work with, and first to edit out. You stumble on an odd moment that amuses or haunts you. When you find it, you have to fight your editor, and yourself, to keep it in the story.

Looking For lucky accidents

At Radio Diaries, the non-profit production company I founded in 1999, we give tape recorders to people to document their lives. The diarists record for around a year, collecting about 40 hours of tape: sounds, scenes, conversations, late-night thoughts. This is edited and shaped into documentaries for NPR's *All Things Considered* (and in some cases, BBC and other international outlets.)

I've done diaries with prison inmates and guards, elderly people in retirement homes, an illegal immigrant, a judge, and teenagers. One of my first and favorite diaries was Josh Cutler's, a 16-year-old with Tourette Syndrome, a neurological disorder causing involuntary verbal and physical tics. What made Josh a great diarist was I never knew what he was going to say next, and neither did he.

"People are always taught to think before they speak. Everybody has deep dark things that they don't want people to know they're thinking about. [Scream] The bottom line is sometimes I actually have to teach myself not to care. I can't care because most of the time I can't control what comes out of my mouth. I control what comes out of my ass better than I control what comes out of my mouth. But, the last thing I want people to think is 'Oh, poor Josh.' It's not like I'm in a wheel chair or I have snot dribbling down my chin. I really just don't want anyone to be feeling sorry for me. This is not a Sally Struthers commercial." Josh's Diary, "Growing Up With Tourette's".

Josh could not control what came out of his mouth, a kind of metaphor for this type of documentary journalism. The process of going through hours of raw diary tapes is like mining gold. Ninety percent is junk, but every so often unexpected little magical moments occur. Details emerge I would never have asked about. Scenes happen on tape I would never have looked for: lucky, happy accidents.

In documentaries, the key to getting lucky is time. Spend enough time to gain trust, and to be there when things happen. By turning the tape recorder into a constant companion, diarists take this process a step further. They bring the microphone backstage to a place where truth and understanding are found between words, in the pauses and accents, the sighs and silences.

Over the past decade I've lost confidence in my ability to predict who will be a good diarist. I always looked for good talkers, extroverted, funny, energetic personalities, talk-outers. Now I am more drawn to talk-inners, soft and intimate voices that make you lean in closer to hear what they have to say. The best diarists are a bit of both.

Radio is the perfect medium for diaries. Equipment is inexpensive and easy to use. A microphone is less intrusive than a video camera. People can be themselves. It takes time and practice

John Robinson/South Photos/Africa Media Online

to be natural. With all the diarists there comes a point when they get bored. That's what I'm waiting for. They no longer sound like Tom Brokaw. They relax and become themselves.

It's like a photographer who takes portraits that are just a little bit off. They don't snap the expected picture. They wait until the subjects let their guard down, lose their pose, their smiles slacken. That moment happens in radio too, and it's when you get the most interesting and authentic tape.

The real value of doing audio diaries is that diarists can record things you can't. Most diarists find it easiest and safest to sit in their room and talk. The real magic is when they record things happening on tape, when conversation, scene or action unfolds and lets the listener experience life along with the diarist.

Cristel was 18 years old when she recorded her diary inside a juvenile detention facility in Rhode Island. Late one night, while Cristel was recording, she heard a faint tap on the wall from the cell next door. It was a recently locked up 13-year-old. Neither girl slept. They took turns knocking on the cement wall, tapping out syncopated rhythms. After about 10 minutes the knocking stopped. Cristel picked up the recorder, walked to her window, the microphone close to her mouth.

"Sometimes, you know, I look out the window and I just sit here and think, something I decided in 10 minutes changed my entire life. Not even 10 minutes. I mean three years have gone by and I'm still sitting here. What would I be doing if I was out? What would my life be like? Would I have finished school? Would I have settled down? Would I have done something worse? I just look out the window and I think about all this stuff." Cristel's Diary from Prison Diaries series.

To hear Cristel speak quietly into a tape recorder late at night, it's almost possible to enter her world, to imagine ourselves in that cell. Moments like these can't be captured by an outside reporter. Some stories can only be told by those who live them.

Diarists play two roles, subject and reporter. Negotiating the two can be tricky. My rules are different from traditional journalism. Each diarist has final editorial control, to record as honestly and unselfconsciously as possible. They don't need to censor themselves in the moment if they know they can edit later. I pay most of the diarists a stipend. These ground rules are no different from any newsroom. Consider the diarist the reporter and me the producer.

One of the few things most of us have control over is our own story. Removing the professional filter of a scripted reporter allows the diarist to communicate directly and intimately. Audio diaries are uniquely valuable for telling the stories of the marginalised, the forgotten, and the voiceless.

I met Thembi Ngubane in 2004. She was 19 years old and living in a township shack outside Cape Town. I was interviewing teenagers with HIV/Aids. At the time, I wasn't sure I wanted to do a diary on such an overwhelmingly heartbreaking topic. Then I met Thembi. She told me how she starts every morning by looking into the mirror and talking to her HIV virus. She called it her "HIV prayer".

Hello HIV, you trespasser. You are in my body. You have to obey the rules. You have to respect me, and if you don't hurt me, I won't hurt you. You mind your business, and I'll mind mine. Then I'll give you a ticket when your time comes. Thembi Ngubane from "Thembi's AIDS Diary".

I realised this would not be a documentary about Aids. It would be a story about Thembi. She is my window into an incomprehensible epidemic. She's my reminder about what diaries do best.

People feel differently about issues that affect someone they know and love. I picture a person driving home, listening to the radio, with Thembi, Cristel or Josh in the passenger seat. It's not me in the car telling the listener about Thembi. It's Thembi. By the end of the story, the listener feels Thembi is somebody they know and care for.

How do you turn a statistic into a real person or make listeners love or understand the characters? How do you bring the audience into the story and let them experience it for themselves? The key is the poetry of the everyday: a cough in the courtroom, a soft knock on a prison wall, a teenager's prayer in the mirror: the stuff on the edges.

One moment in Thembi's diary taught me an important lesson. Thembi and her boyfriend, Melikhaya, are home. He puts on music. Thembi says, "Let's dance." As the music fades, she asks him a question.

Thembi: Melikhaya, do you ever wish that maybe you would have never met me?

Melikhaya: No, [laughs] just because the only thing is that I love you. You know that?

Thembi: Yes, but I am the one who has infected you.

Melikhaya: I don't want to blame you. You didn't chase after Aids. You didn't go to the top of the mountain and say you want to have Aids, you know? And I don't want you to blame yourself. Just be strong.

In an early draft of the documentary the scene ends here. It felt moving, but listening through old tape I discovered a part of their conversation I edited out. It had seemed too peripheral, too frivolous, and too imperfect for the story. When I put this moment back into their conversation, it became an earnest and humorless scene ending in something playful, and surprisingly powerful. These are probably my favorite 30 seconds of Thembi's diary.

Thembi: For me what scares me most is I think we are not going to die at the same time if we die.

Melikhaya: I know that you think that if you die first I'm going to have another girlfriend. [Both laugh]

Thembi: No! [Laughing] No! Really I'm thinking if one of us dies, how would it be. At least if we were going to die [Thembi and Melikhaya speak simultaneously] die at the same time. [Laughs]

Melikhaya: Give me a kiss for that. [Kiss]

The juxtaposition of eternal and every day, silly and profound: two teenagers joking about death. It's one of those throwaway moments that doesn't seem to say much, but says everything. I thought it was an imperfection. I had to rediscover magical imperfections that, while hard to recognise, are worth searching for.

Adapted from the essay "Diaries and Detritus: One Perfectionist's Search for Imperfection" published in Reality Radio: Telling True Stories in Sound *edited by John Biewen and published by the University of North Carolina Press and the Centre for Documentary Studies at Duke University, 2010.*

How do you turn a statistic into a real person or make listeners love or understand the characters? How do you bring the audience into the story and let them experience it for themselves? The key is the poetry of the everyday: a cough in the courtroom, a soft knock on a prison wall, a teenager's prayer in the mirror: the stuff on the edges

Joe Richman is the founder and executive producer of Radio Diaries (radiodiaries.org), a US non-profit that produces documentaries for public radio. He lived in South Africa from 2003-2006, when he produced Mandela: An Audio History *and* Thembi's Aids Diary. *joe@radiodiaries.org*