

This Issue



THE TRC needs the media. And the media needs the TRC. Why? Because the nation cannot begin to know what the TRC is uncovering without the co-operation of journalists. And for its part the media cannot ignore the biggest, and longest running, story of our times.

But dependency does not breed harmony. The TRC and the media have a complicated relationship with dangerous assumptions being made on both sides about the national process both are engaged in.

The TRC is assuming that the media — and the nation — accepts its definitions of “truth” and “reconciliation”, and in particular the very religious sentiment that “the truth will set you free”. The TRC assumes that if the mass media simply relays the outcome of the hearings to the nation, healing will take place on a vast scale.

Journalists have assumed that they can cover the hearings in the same way and with

the same tools they have always used.

The transition to democracy has already chipped away at standard ideas about how journalists should operate. Journalists who found themselves easily combining roles in the 80s (journalist and activist) balk at combining roles in the 90s — journalist and nation builder. The definition of what journalism is fits more easily with an oppositional stance than a championing stance. Journalists are for democracy, but they would rather muckrake than muck in.

These difficulties are thrown into stark relief when reporting on the TRC.

Not only is the testimony deeply emotional and drags in those standing on the sidelines observing, but very often it highlights how journalists, through shoddy reporting and their own blinkered experience, allowed themselves to get sucked into propping up the white status quo and, more seriously, into the apartheid

disinformation campaign.

These issues were debated by commissioners and journalists at a workshop in Cape Town in January hosted by the Media Peace Centre and sponsored by Medico International and Bundstift. The discussions there were sharp, full of clashing opinions and deeply questioning of the ground rules of both the Commission and of journalism. In this special edition of the *Rhodes Journalism Review* we take the debate further by drawing in a wider group of journalists, all of whom have strong feelings and relevant points to make.

At the conference Stephen Laufer from *Business Day* said journalists make a contribution to society by reflecting the complexity of things. Well, journalists and truth is a very complex matter as you will find out in the following pages.

Anthea Garman & Guy Berger

Catch these conferences

● **New Media 2000, 10 - 12 September** ● **Train the online trainers, 7 - 8 September** ● **Pjourn 97, 5 - 9 September**

● **NEW MEDIA 2000 CONFERENCE**

... is where African and international journalists and IT experts gather to consider the impact of online technology on the media in Africa.

Hosted by the New Media Laboratory, Rhodes University Department of Journalism & Media Studies in Grahamstown, New Media 2000 takes place on September 10-12, 1997.

Present will be representatives from South Africa's large media houses — Naspers, TML, Independent Newspapers, the SABC, community media, journalist trade unions, the Freedom of Expression Institute, the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism, Southern African member states of the Media Institute of Southern Africa, and other media organisations. From abroad there will be speakers from the University of the South Pacific, Fiji; Deakin University and the University of Queensland, Australia; the Poynter Institute of Media Studies, Florida, US; California State University, Fullerton, US; Dublin City University, Ireland; Stockholm University, Sweden; the Centre for Culture & Media, Norrköping, Sweden; and the School voor Journalistiek, Utrecht, Holland.

Conference themes include electronic data retrieval, robot-assisted research, the virtual newsroom, the global library, the wired journalist, multi-platform publishing, the state of Internet connectivity and usage in southern Africa, broadcast media and the Net, online advertising, computer

assisted reporting, ethical questions related to new media, and other relevant topics.

COSTS:

Students R150
Professional individuals R300
NGO/Academic institutions R500
Corporate R700

● **TRAIN THE ONLINE TRAINERS**

... is the learning event for anyone teaching online journalism skills. The aim is to share international experience and expertise in the new field of teaching online publishing, plus computer-aided research and reporting, with a focus on the needs and possibilities in Southern Africa. The format consists of short inputs and panel discussions, some formal papers and hands-on training sessions.

International experts taking part include Nora Paul, Poynter Institute; Mark Comerford, the Swedish Association of Investigative Journalists; Stephen Quinn, Deakin University, Australia; Paul Lester, professor of Communications, University of California.

Read more at our website:

<http://nml.ru.ac.za/nml-new.htm>

● **PJ 97**

... is the 2nd annual conference of South African photo-journalists and photojournalism instructors, 5-9 September.

Seven major seminars will deal with:

- Education and Photojournalism;
- Documentary developments in South Africa;
- Community Photojournalism;
- Photojournalism Ethics;
- Copyright on the Internet;
- Photojournalism on the WWW;
- Digital technology — where is it going? Has it threatened the fate of Photojournalism?

<http://www.photojournal.ru.ac.za/conferences.htm>

CONFERENCE CONTACTS:

email: media2000@nml.ru.ac.za or contact:

Prof Guy Berger, head of department,
berger@thoth.ru.ac.za

Roland Stanbridge, Director of the New Media Lab,
roland@thoth.ru.ac.za

Monty Cooper, lecturer, photojournalism,
cooper@thoth.ru.ac.za

**Also... “Teletraffic”
Rhodes University Computer
Science conference
8-10 September
<http://teletraffic97.ru.ac.za>**