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Review

17



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The way we
were in the
20th century

*Racism in a time of ubiquitous racism
Crooked nations, crooked journalists*

RHODES JOURNALISM Review

Founding Editor Kerry Swift

Editor Anthea Garman

Design & Production Jane Burnett

Design of pp23-25 Leon Lazarus
Fox Publishing

Proofreading Lynette Steenveld

Administration Chloë O'Keeffe
Sonwabo Niwa

Advertising, mailing list Anja Bradley

Cover photograph Pia Marangoni

Illustrations Caroline Melton-Thorpe

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All correspondence to:

The Editor
Rhodes Journalism Review
Department of Journalism and Media Studies
Rhodes University
Box 94
Grahamstown, 6140
South Africa

Telephone:

046 – 603 8336; 046 – 6224577

Fax:

046 – 6228447

email:

editor.review@journ.ru.ac.za

Website:

<http://journ.ru.ac.za/review>

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ANTHEA GARMAN

In this issue

REVIEW is usually a one-person operation (me). When it's seriously under construction it involves another two (an ad seller and a designer). This review has been under construction since last year and it has gone through several incarnations to get to the state you will see it in when it reaches your desk. There's nothing like the process of putting together a major production almost single-handedly to convince an editor that publishing on paper is still a labour-intensive occupation.

There are many journalists around the country who have Review on their hearts and they contribute wonderful ideas and stories to share with their colleagues — many of the writers in this edition are among that group. I'm very grateful to them for their support and for being a network so that Review can reach across media into newsrooms all over the continent.

Our African mailing list is growing by the edition thanks to the training groups who come to Rhodes for skills upgrading and who then find and want Review too. The challenge then is to make Review more Africa-focused, so that other Africans don't feel that they're eavesdropping on South African-specific conversations all the time.

Our other challenge is to our growing group of student readers. Lecturers around the country are prescribing Review as study material. It makes us proud to know we're this kind of resource. An exciting development from our links with tertiary institutions is having students write for us. In this edition a Pretoria Technikon student evaluates cigarette smoking and the role magazines play, and our own Rhodes students tackle the issue of the election and the low registration turnout of first-time voters.

There is no shortage of issues to debate: racism, Section 205, the spies, the Lesotho aftermath, the election, community media, gay-bashing, corruption. This Review has it all!

'STOP THE PERSECUTION'

As we go to press Sanef and the SA national committee of the International Press Institute have appealed to President Robert Mugabe to stop the persecution of Zimbabwean journalists.

Mark Chavunduka and Ray Choto of the Standard, Ibbo Mandaza, Grace Kwinjeh, Fernando Goncalves and Ferai Mungazi of the Zimbabwe Mirror have all been on the receiving end of legislation used by the Smith regime against its opponents.

The organisations told Mugabe: "As subscribers to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the Southern African Development Community protocols on media freedom, it is incumbent on Zimbabwean authorities to release these journalists immediately."

"Sanef and SA IPI are also deeply alarmed by the view that news media that defames the government forfeits the protection of the law. Zimbabwe professes to be a democracy and there can be no question of the media 'defaming' the government when it publishes news reports however much they reflect on the competency or efficiency of the administration. That is the news media's right in a democracy."

TALKING WITH THABO

With Nelson Mandela in power, Sanef set up several discussions with the President's Office about issues of concern to journalists. Some of the meetings were heated and fraught but many others were cordial and frank. I attended the last one last year and while the Sanef members were gathering early outside Tuynhuis to arrive en masse and on time, Mandela appeared at the door to say: It's cold, come inside and have a cup of coffee.

That was Mandela. Often aloof and austere, often very disapproving of the media, but always engaged.

Fast forward to Feb 16, 1999. Sanef is now embarking on the same process with the President-designate Thabo Mbeki. Things are far stiffer. We're at Tuynhuis again, early in the morning. We all sit in that bizarre, horse-shaped, wooden, table structure that some apartheid architect designed for conferencing, and Mbeki decides he doesn't want to hold lengthy introductions. Nevertheless Mike Siluma, Sanef chair, decides we should all introduce ourselves. It becomes clear that when Sanef members want assurances (that the SA government is taking seriously the situation in Zimbabwe, is serious about legislation that inhibits free media in SA, will hold the ANC firebrands in check during electioneering) Mbeki is not going to get into any intense discussions or honest talk. While he did promise that his advisers would set up a mechanism to meet directly with media people and to talk about how government is communicating and what concerns media the most, the lack of trust on both sides was palpable. The respect editors accord Mandela was not quite there (people interrupted Mbeki in mid-flow quite casually) and Mbeki commented that he will no longer say publicly when he has a problem with certain reporting ("I get accused of strangling press freedom"), he will go directly to the media owners and talk to them about specifics.

As we left — exactly on the hour, no lingering here for an autograph for the kid or some chit chat — Tony O'Reilly, Shaun Johnson, Ivan Fallon and Liam Healey arrived for an Independent Newspapers meeting with Mbeki.

It seems that the incoming president doesn't see the editors as significant enough or united enough to engage in straight talk. He has a small group around himself of journalists he trusts (people like Thami Mazwai — see the report on the African Renaissance conference on p20) and there are a few others he works with when he needs to. But it seems his style will be to refer big issues directly to the media owners.

It's become an overused cliché, to say Mbeki is an enigma. We've seen enough evidence to know he's a very clever politician. He juggles things many of us consider very contradictory (like outright support for capitalism and a strong commitment to improving the lot of the poor and dispossessed). But he also surrounds himself with yes people and seems to be insecure about exposing himself to strong criticism.

It's going to be interesting to watch his developing relationship with the mass media.



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BY CHARLENE SMITH

Guest editorial

Charlene Smith on the latest batch of foreign correspondents and their lack of respect.

IN SOME WAYS you can judge the level of international news interest in a country by the quality of the foreign correspondents sent to cover it.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, South Africa had the world's best. Joe Lelyveld, who became the New York Times foreign editor, wrote with astonishing clarity and insight about South Africa, in brilliantly researched pieces. Michael Parks, who is now the Los Angeles Times editor, was meticulous and humble, he hired South African researchers, he consulted with the widest range of South Africans to try and figure out a story we ourselves did not agree on or fully comprehend.

The Lelyvelds and Parks were brilliant because they respected the people of their host countries and their quirks, even if they did not agree with them.

But democracy brings unexpected difficulties, ours is that the story has been downgraded as a major foreign correspondent posting, we now have the foreign correspondents' kindergarten corps. The brat pack in all their big mouth, brainless glory.

That does not mean we do not have some fine foreign journalists in our midst. We do. Buchizya Mtseka of Reuters is one, Victor Mallet of the Financial Times another, but their careful prose is drowned out by the self-opinionated drivel of the brat pack.

Of which, the prune-like John Pilger, who so many left-leaning journalists had for so long admired – myself included – until he came here and produced a documentary of the most puerile banality, and where the most important opinion was his own.

September's conflict in Lesotho again showed what a bunch of incompetents most were. Never have so many journalists been injured in such a short space of time, despite years of far more violent incidents in South Africa's turbulent past. It was often because of arrogance, and an absolute lack of respect for Africa and Africans.

One idiot managed to be in two such incidents. In the first he passed a two finger insult at an approaching mob, and then when the vehicle he was rapidly reversing stalled, and the mob caught up with him, he tried to punch one of the leaders. This is a man who should rather stay at home and write about the consumer price index. Fortunately, he was with a woman foreign correspondent, also a

novice to Southern Africa, who instinctively did the right thing. She got out of the car, focused on one person who seemed to be a leader and calmly talked their way out of it. But not before the mob had destroyed the vehicle.

In the second incident, Rambo was travelling with another Boys Own hero – the class of foreign correspondents who sit in hotel bars and trade war stories, as their runners bring back information about what is really happening at the front for a few measly dollars. The two had gone through some roadblocks when they had a bad feeling about another looming before them. Did they turn the car and flee? Nope, they stopped some 50m or so away from the roadblock, an incredibly suspicious act in a war situation. The soldiers at the roadblock opened fire, Rambo's pal was hit and only then did they turn and race for the border.

After that, SA readers were astonished to read the opinions of Sam Kiley of The Times of London, reproduced in the Sunday Independent here, containing the most vitriolic racism I have ever read in this country. Africans, he expostulated, were not only chronically war-prone, but amazingly inept, their housebuilding capacity, he wrote, extended only to the construction of "biodegradable houses". Actually, I would have thought environmentalists would have applauded.

Then the Mail&Guardian carried an article by Suzanne Daley, the New York Times bureau chief here about what an awful bunch of sexist South African men are. This is a correspondent from a country that has bemused the whole world with its obsession with the sexual exploits of its president, a society where women keep semen stained dresses and actively pursue the president. By contrast SA has shown minimal interest, other than approval, in the love life of our 80-year-old president who lived with his wife before marriage, and of two past presidents, who have shown, well over the age of 60 that we probably don't need Viagra in this country.

The evidence she presented of sexism was indeed shocking. Our 80-

year-old president jested of her skinny frame, that he preferred women with more meat on their bones. Daley wrote that she was humiliated. In my view, humourless seems a more appropriate term. The 70-year-old leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party made a gentle joke about her carrying her husband's business cards that would infuriate only the most insecure of feminists. A bank and a removal company worker wanted her husband to co-sign documents. Gee whizz, what signs of awful repression, what is a woman to do?

What really infuriates women are people like Daley, who claim they are feminist and give such trivia as examples of our oppression.

This is a country where a woman is raped every 26 seconds, where many battle to support their children because maintenance laws are inadequate, or endure spousal abuse because policing and laws to prevent domestic violence are not as good as they need to be.

It is also a country that has some of the most far-reaching anti-gender discrimination laws in the world, and where these are put into place in the workplace and political forums. There are more women in senior government posts in SA than in the US. Women can safely and cheaply have abortions here, without fear of being shot at or jeered by anti-abortion protesters outside clinics. Lesbians can proudly announce the fact and ensure their partner shares company medical and pension benefits with them.

Mandela and Buthelezi have more women in their political parties at senior level, and have more strategies to empower not only those women but all women than all US parties combined – and we don't do it for sound bite value here. We do it because it must be done. There is a recognition that there can be no human liberty if sectors of humankind – women, the disabled, the aged – are discriminated against.

A liberation struggle slogan of the 1980s notes: an injury to one, is an injury to all. But then again Daly, who wrote that she anticipated "snakes, elephants, malaria ... racism, bug-filled hotel rooms and the heartbreak of watching children die", clearly didn't research the country at all, but applied the generic racism Americans apply to Africa: it is not a continent of many peoples, countries and norms, it's just a single mess.

And sexism is not confined to SA men and our society. I was married to an American for 10 years, he and the US news organisations he represented thought it was fine that I should give up my career to follow him around the world. I didn't. I've had US journalists, academics and politicians make passes at me in less than discreet ways here and in the US. More than one approach would have made good tabloid copy.

There was the very famous Washington correspondent who arrived at my door at 1am after receiving a brush off at a cocktail party hours earlier. He extracted my address from others, scouted an after hours town for a magnificent bouquet of flowers and a bottle of France's finest champagne, then believed that not only would I be thrilled to see him at 1am, but so overawed by the buying power of the US dollar in after hours Johannesburg that I would sleep with him. Not a chance.

While pornography flourishes in the US, SA showed an initial flurry of interest in pornography when censor laws were eased in the early '90s, then all of SA society yawned and the pornographers went bankrupt.

Real women aren't hung up about their sexuality. It's part of us. We can be feminist without having to wear hiking boots and military khakis.

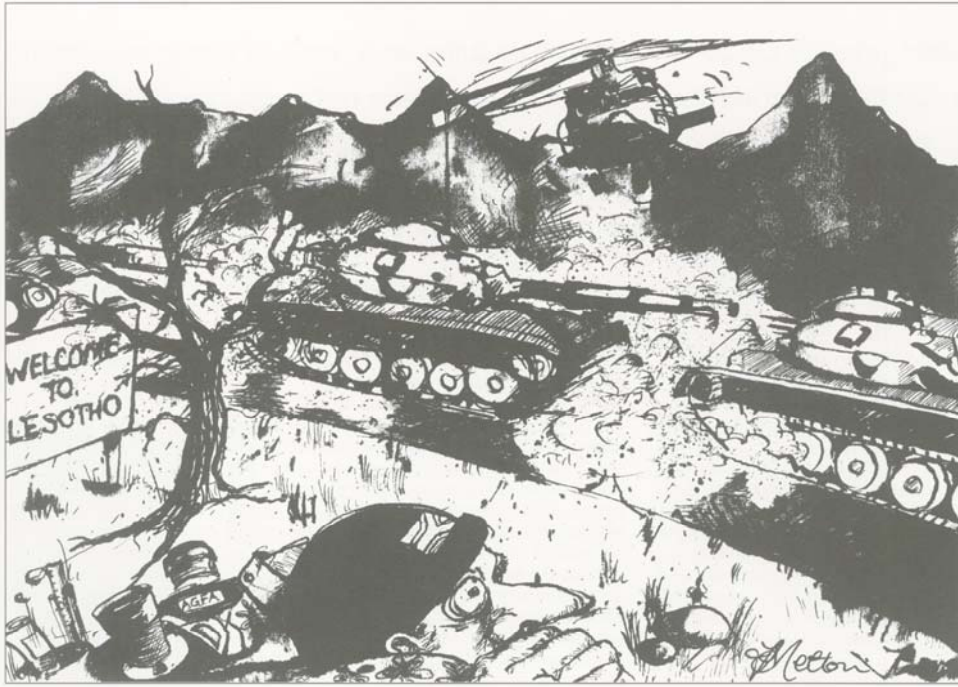
In the 1990s when wars were being launched from hostels in SA townships and no man would dare enter, I as a woman journalist reported extensively on them, because I bothered to think about the psychology of the people who inhabited them. Of course they were sexist. So I wore conservative calf-length frocks and was able safely to enter and speak to people no man could. If I'd worn jeans I would not have had a chance. But getting the story by understanding the culture of those I dealt with was more important to me than the lowbrow whinging of post-feminist suburban whiners.

And that's the bottom line Suzanne, if you want to deal with people who behave like Americans (according to your version) stay in the US. If you want to be a serious foreign correspondent, show respect to the people, the culture and the countries you work in, even if you don't agree with them.

And yes, there is sexism here, but sexism too doesn't deserve bland brushstrokes. Finding the reasons why is far more fascinating. Let's read a great story from you delving further into that.

Charlene Smith is a freelance journalist who has lived and worked as a writer, radio journalist and television documentary maker, specialising in politics and economics in South Africa – her home, and in Japan, the USA and Argentina.

South Africa has been downgraded as a major foreign correspondent posting. We now have the foreign correspondents kindergarten corps. The brat pack in all their big mouth, brainless glory.



From a grass verge safely

BY ADIL BRADLOW

“I couldn’t believe my luck ... instead of being safe at home recuperating from flu I hadn’t been able to shake (I’d planned to go to the doctor that morning and log a day’s sick leave) ... I was lying behind a grass verge in the middle of no-man’s land somewhere between South African and Lesotho troops, pinned down by sustained and heavy small arms fire.

I tried to piece the whole thing together: 15 minutes ago we – fellow AP staff writer Andrew Selsky and BBC cameraman, Alistair Lyne – were standing at the top of the hill overlooking the Mapoanyane Military base.

We’d heard there’d been some fighting there; South African troops had landed there at dawn, choppered in by air force Oryxs, and from the accounts of locals, had been met with quite a warm reception. It looked deceptively calm.

Our minds were made up for us when a convoy of 15-odd Ratels came barreling past us, down to the base. We jumped in my car — a 4x4 Subaru Impreza — and raced after them. We figured it was a routine troop movement into a forward position ... it turned out to be a recon patrol, and as we turned the corner to drive past the barracks, we came under a barrage of machine gun and semi-automatic fire. The car immediately took some hits and I saw bullets flash past me. I accelerated and pulled the car alongside the last Ratel using it for cover. With both Alistair and Andy shouting for me to keep cover, I’d jammed my Subaru on to the verge alongside the road, and we hurtled along, next to the Ratel.

Then suddenly I saw the road was running out, and the convoy had come to a grinding halt. Still taking fire, we bailed from the car ... the Ratels looked very inviting and we figured they would give us a ride. Unfortunately our boys in brown and green had other ideas, and when we realised they were about to leave, we had to look for other options.

Hence the grass verge. While those two or three minutes had been seriously intense, the following 15 were off the wall: we were railed upon by those elements of the LDF who were holed up in the mountain overlooking the base, with what seemed like everything they had. Why the LDF took such a dislike to us, we had no idea, but they made it clear that we were not going anywhere.

Thankfully the verge provided sufficient cover and after it became apparent to them that they were wasting lead, they eased up. That was my predicament. For the next six hours I played and replayed this over in my head ... how could I be so dumb ... why didn’t I just say no to the assignment and go to the doctor ... why did we follow the Ratels, and so on.

Dwelling on the past didn’t help much. We needed to think about getting out of this mess.

We came up with two plans:

Plan A was to get the SANDF to come and fetch us. Using that miraculous little cellular device, we started working the phones: our office, the local SANDF military liaison (Major Ben van Zyl) and just about anyone we knew who might be able to help. At about 3.30 we thought our prayers had been answered. We saw a convoy of Ratels come slowly down the road. We’d heard from Van Zyl that an earlier “rescue” mission had failed to find us — the grass verge also obscured their view — so we all started screaming and waving to attract their attention. The lead Ratel then came around us and pulled up behind us in open ground. The hatch opened and the officer asked if we were OK? “Just peachy!” I replied. I guess the sarcasm was lost on him because he closed his hatch and then lead his patrol away.

When we called Van Zyl for an explanation, he informed us that that particular patrol had orders not to pick us up! About an hour later he told us: “You are on your own; we don’t have enough men for a rescue mission.” So much for that idea.

Then on to Plan B: make a run for South African lines after dark. We all hoped we would not have to do this. The LDF knew where we were, and kept sniping at us during the course of the afternoon, just to let us know that they knew. We had 10m of open ground to cover and then there was another rise to another road and, we hoped, another drop off. The plan was to run the 10m, dive over the road and leopard crawl to a house some 150m off to the right. From there we would improvise.

We knew the South Africans weren’t far off. We could hear a Ratel moving forwards and backwards and someone shouting commands in Afrikaans (I never thought the sound of the language could be so comforting). We had no idea what they were up to and even called Van Zyl to tell him that a unit was close by and maybe they could help us (“Get up and walk to them if you can hear them,” he advised!).

As dusk approached the minutes seemed to get longer. Then just as we were about to make our move, we noticed that while the sky was getting darker, the ground was still quite well lit. I popped my head up for a look-see and was horrified to see the mountain ablaze — the South Africans had been pasting the hillside with 90mm cannons and 81mm mortars and had set it on fire. Our hearts sank but our minds were made up. After giving the flames a chance to die down a bit, we went.

I doubt any of us will ever cover that much ground in such a short space of time in our lives again; I was first over the rise and led the way into a sewerage trench we found on the other side; bonus time: it headed off in the general direction of the Ratel engine. I charged down the trench with Alistair and Andy on my heels and within minutes we came upon a bunch of very surprised soldiers whose Ratel had got stuck in the mud!

We ended up spending the night with a South African mechanised unit some 2km further up the hill. While totally bulletproof, don’t let anyone kid you that a Ratel is a comfortable ride. With the exception of the hour or so that the LDF was mortaring the South African lines we opted for the freezing cold of the night over the relative warmth of the sardine can.

Also don’t let anyone kid you that miracles never happen. All three of us are testimony to the fact they do!

Adil Bradlow is a freelance photographer.

I popped my head up for a look-see and was horrified to see the mountain ablaze — the South Africans had been pasting the hillside with 90mm cannons and 81mm mortars and had set it on fire.

THE independent press in Lesotho continues to suffer as a result of the crisis which engulfed the country in September. However, they have not been cowed into silence and continue to publish despite many obstacles. Lesotho's six independent newspapers, who were all affected by the looting and burning which followed the virtual invasion by South African and Botswanan troops into the country, are caught in a vicious cycle of mounting losses and unforeseen expenses. MISA reports.

Two of Lesotho's worst affected newspapers, MoAfrika and the Sun/Thebe, whose offices were both burnt down, have been able to relocate to other offices but now face the prospect of prohibitive rent. Southern Star, whose offices were also completely burnt down, has to date not found new office space.

Candi Ratabane Ramainoane, the editor of MoAfrika, told MISA that following the destruction of numerous buildings in the Maseru city centre, the lack of available space had resulted in a considerable hike in rent costs. Both MoAfrika and the Sun have only missed publication of one or two issues, while Thebe, the SeSotho-language sister newspaper of the Sun, has not been published yet since September due to lack of advertising. Both newspapers, however, are still having to work with an alarming lack of equipment, most of which was also destroyed during the burning and looting.

Both newspapers, along with another independent newspaper, Public Eye, are operating without any computers. In addition, these and other newspapers such as Mopheme and the Mirror, have had all their phone lines destroyed. The Lesotho Chapter of MISA, MILES, which escaped the ravages of the mob, is providing some relief by making its equipment available to needy publications. The Director of MILES, Bethuel Thai, reports that at least four newspapers, MoAfrika, Public Eye, the Mirror and Mopheme, continue to use the MILES offices for access to computers, telephones, fax and e-mail.

The lack of advertising and losses stemming from unpaid advertising bills continue to affect all the independent papers. Keketso Lawrance, the managing editor of Mopheme, told MISA that businesses which had advertised in his paper but which had subsequently been destroyed were unable to settle their bills, while several destroyed businesses had also booked space but obviously could not proceed with their commitments. This scenario was echoed by other newspapers. Two senior journalists from the Mirror interviewed by MISA reported that their newspaper had lost at least R15 000 due to advertising losses alone. The losses are compounded by a standing government directive to its ministries and parastatals not to advertise in certain papers considered to be critical of the ruling party.

While having to contend with this harsh economic environment, the current political situation in Lesotho is also proving very harsh for free media activity. Both government and independent journalists are faced

with the prospects of attacks or intimidation when seen at the wrong place or reporting on certain matters.

And Government journalists are still reeling from the 7 October instruction by the Minister of Telecommunications Nyane Mphafi that all state-employed journalists who "were seen at the opposition demonstrations" should write letters of resignation or face summary dismissal. The editor of the government-owned weekly Lentsoe La Basotho, Khahliso Lesenyane, informed MISA that while nothing further had transpired following the minister's threat, it had effectively scared off state-employed journalists from covering opposition rallies and events. A senior journalist from the state-owned Lesotho News Agency (LENA), speaking on condition of anonymity, told MISA that journalists at LENA had been informed that they could not report on anything relating to the political situation except for official statements from government.

Independent journalists and publications, on the other hand face a wide range of obstacles. Ramainoane reports that in recent months there has been an alarming increase in violence and intolerance from political parties in Lesotho, and particularly from the ruling Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) party. "Generally there is a lot of self-censorship and restraint because of fear. Many rallies, either by the ruling party or the opposition, are not being covered because of the fear of not being seen in a particular place," reports Ramainoane. He told MISA further that one of his reporters had been beaten up at an LCD rally between the 10th and 17th of August this year, while this same reporter had also been beaten up at a police roadblock simply because he was a reporter for MoAfrika.

Other journalists interviewed by MISA said that reporting on military and security matters was very difficult because they had to go through numerous security checks before reaching an official spokesperson. Women journalists also felt particularly threatened in investigating matters involving the South African and Botswanan invasion forces because of numerous allegations of rape involving these troops. In addition, Lesenyane of the government weekly told MISA that any reports on the allegations of atrocities committed by the invading forces had to be passed by the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Information first.

A flicker of hope for greater media freedom and equitable reporting on political matters in Lesotho lies perhaps in the newly introduced Interim Political Authority Bill. The Bill, which was introduced for discussion in the Lesotho Parliament on 30 October, stemmed from mediated talks between the government and opposition parties. It makes provision for an Interim Political Authority with executive powers and which will exist alongside the current government until fresh elections are held in 18

► continued on page 47

The current political situation in Lesotho and the sudden predicament of a "pre-election" period begs for urgent intervention and support for the independent media in Lesotho.

Reeling

from the crisis

Sniffing out racism



BY GAVIN STEWART

INVESTIGATIONS into the media have a depressing history in South Africa. While the topic of perceived racism in the media undoubtedly deserves constant scrutiny and ongoing debate, I am extremely wary of any attempt to measure it “objectively” and to “eliminate” it.

A major difficulty facing the Human Rights Commission is that the terms “racism” and “racist” in the political discourse of the new South Africa occupy the same role as the terms “communism” and “communist” in apartheid South Africa. The words are used like blunt clubs to beat opponents into silence and to numb all rational debate on a subject.

The HRC media release of 14 January 1999 is headlined “Human Rights Commission announces investigation into media racism”. The document dated 19 January, available at sahr@org.com, is headlined “Procedure for the investigation into racism in the media”.

The difference between these two headings is the same as between “sports club racism” and “racism at sports club”, the one implies the approval of the club, the other does not. The HRC is planning to “investigate the incidence of racism in the media” by “what is produced and disseminated”. Then it will make findings and recommendations contributing “to the elimination of racism in the media”.

The HRC is using the UN definition of racism (General Assembly resolution 2106 A (XX) of 21 December 1965 and the “Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice” adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO on 27 November 1978). The problem is that the HRC must convert these definitions into an operational definition amenable to measurement.

To do this the HRC will invite submissions and undertake its own research. Those who saw any part of the media hearings before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission will recall that many of the speeches were passionate and some moving, but their truth was never tested. Only questions from the panel were allowed, and those accused of various transgressions were given no opportunity to respond. The trappings of fair trial without the appropriate procedures are extremely misleading.

The only way to discover what is “produced and disseminated” in the media is to conduct an analysis of media content. This is fraught with all the problems of theory, assumption and sampling which beset such research. This is fair enough for research presented to academic con-

ferences and workshops for debate, but it is a very insecure base for policy-making and some form of control of the media — which the word “eliminate” must entail.

Content analysis requires samples, categories and occurrences. If the findings are to have any validity at all, the same samples and categories and occurrences would have to be applied to all the media examined. Comparative studies will be required to detect trends.

Since it is impossible to analyse the entire content of “the media” any content analysis requires a sample. This involves choosing the type of media to be analysed — daily newspapers, weekly newspapers, consumer magazines, trade magazines, specialist magazines, radio, television, etc. — and choosing a sample of the medium selected by year and within the year: six issues a year, 12, 24, 52 ...

Assuming the researchers wanted to compare 20 daily newspapers and 10 weekly newspapers for the five years 1994 to 1999, at 12 issues a year (an adequate sample, but too small for any statistical conclusions) this would involve an examination of 30 x 12 x 5 newspapers, or 1800 newspapers. Assuming the average newspaper contains 100 separate reports, the study would have to examine 180 000 items.

Other ways of examining content — such as the methods of critical studies, semiotic and structural analysis — encounter similar problems. The insights they provide are often dazzling, but they are very largely in the eye of the believer.

There is virtually no prospect of arriving at a generally acceptable measure of the “impact” or “effects” of media content. Debate on the subject probably goes back before the 15th century when block-printed horror comics were widely available in Europe. The view prevailing at any time since then has vacillated from very powerful media effects to minimal effects.

A local example is the media coverage of the liberation movements from 1960 to 1990. For these 30 years it was illegal to publish anything favourable to the African National Congress, the Pan Africanist Congress or any other banned organisation. Newsrooms and libraries kept boxes of green, pink and white cards, indicating “banned” people, “listed communists”, and members of banned organisations. Reporters and sub-editors routinely consulted the cards to ensure they were not in breach of the Suppression of Communism Act, later designated the Internal Security Act.

At the same time, the SABC and later SATV were routinely used to vilify these organisations and their leaders. Programmes like Current Affairs and News Background and the Sunday night lectures on television were specifically designed for this purpose.

Yet, after 30 years, the ANC emerged unscathed as the most popular political organisation by far among the South African public. Nelson Mandela, after 27 years of absolute pub-

HRC investigation into media racism

THE investigation promises to provide an objective and honest assessment of the incidence and effects of racism in the media. It will also help South Africans with the process of engaging openly in a dialogue about the lingering effects of racism in our society.

“According to the draft terms of reference, the investigation will examine the manifestations of racism in the products of the media, including newspaper articles and television and radio broadcasts. While the investigation will not focus on examining racism in the structure and workplace of the media, the investigation will explore those issues if they are cited as causes of racism in the product of the media. The terms of reference allow for the examination of all products of the media, regardless of the size of the media producer.”

The HRC will:

- call for written submissions, commission independent research
- convene public hearings to hear reports
- publish a report with findings and recommendations

lic silence on Robben Island, emerged as indisputably the most popular political leader.

What can we say about the impact and effects of the media? We use media to confirm our prejudices, whatever they attempt to say. I have attempted to run a non-racial newspaper in East London for five years, I have observed no significant effects.

A further difficulty arises in the material media publish. The news media attempt to reflect the world in which we live and, particularly, our own country. The reporting of daily events involves the coverage of incidents which might be termed racist. The letters pages of newspapers routinely carry letters from black and white readers which appear blatantly racist. Is this to be treated as “racism in the media”? It is racism in the media, but it is not racism by the media, and it is presumably not what the commission intends to investigate. But how will we distinguish it from the rest?

If a newspaper reports “racist” speech, even “hate speech”, is that racism in the media? Or is it an honest attempt to tell readers about their country? How can we know?

What is reported and pictured is more closely a reflection of the readers, or the target market as seen by the publishers, or (in the case of glossy magazines) a reflection of the readers’ dreams of themselves. How do we calibrate our research to account for the “real world”, the accessible world, and the published material?

At one time the Rand Daily Mail considered placing an image of scissors at the end of every report which it felt had been censored, or which it felt it had been obliged to censor. The scheme was abandoned, in part because there was no way of knowing, in a time of ubiquitous censorship, what had been censored and what not.

How do we avoid racism in the media in a time of ubiquitous racism?

Gavin Stewart has been editor of the Daily Dispatch for the last five years. He was head of the Rhodes Journalism and Media Studies department for 13 years and a journalist since 1960.

Mda and the FBJ

building power

BY FERIAL HAJFAJEE

LIZEKA MDA negotiates The Star newsroom with the ease of one who has arrived. There is about this dreadlocked writer a sense of ownership and chutzpah as she looks for a ream of paper, demands a key to the office where it's kept, photocopies and weaves her way to her new office with her name plaque on the door.

Mda is an executive editor at The Star in Gauteng and the chairperson of the Forum of Black Journalists. Both jobs are new. Her office at Independent Newspapers' headquarters in the centre of Johannesburg is without the photographs and bits and bobs which lend a lived-in air. Her plans for the FBJ are sketchy and there is much that's in the pipeline.

Sponsored research to audit the position of black journalists in the industry will soon be done. The organisation is tightening up on membership and plotting a role for itself. Branches have just started in the Western Cape and Kwazulu-Natal. "For me, the FBJ is a professional association of sorts. It's for our development as journalists. It's a place where we can let our hair down ... if we had that kind of hair."

For now though, she's involved in a spot of spring-cleaning. "I believe in sorting out your own house and getting it in order." The FBJ was started by journalists in The Star's newsroom several years ago who began the push for change at a group where power had not shifted from the pale males who ruled the roost.

It's a different story today where mahogany row is filled by the likes of the new deputy general manager of Gauteng Newspapers, Nazeem Howa and other YGBs (young, gifted blacks) like Mda and The Star's news editor Mondli Makhanya.

Across the Independent Newspapers stable of 13 newspapers and at Times Media Limited, the numbers of black journalists in decision-making positions have increased. Four of the Independent Newspapers' titles are edited by black editors. Bylines have tipped the scale. Mastheads are filled with managing editors like Mzimkulu Malunga

(Financial Mail), deputy editors like Rehana Rossouw (Mail&Guardian), acting deputy editors like Mathata Tsedu (the Sunday Independent) and deputy news editors like Jacob Dlamini (Business Day).

Indications of change are everywhere and it cannot be long before black journalists are a majority of the professional corps and not a minority. There is no longer a

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PIC BY RUTH MOTALU

For me, the FBJ is a professional association of sorts. It's for our development as journalists. It's a place where we can let our hair down ... if we had that kind of hair.

Black Editors Forum, so should there be a Forum of Black Journalists?

Mda has no existential angst about her organisation. After a trip to the United States at the end of July where she attended the glamorous annual gathering of the (American) National Association of Black Journalists, she's more convinced than ever. "They are so far ahead of us. The very fact that you can talk of 3 000 black journalists gathering annually is amazing. People actually pay a US\$250 registration fee. They want to be there." Mda wants to build an organisation of journalists who wield professional and financial power. Success, for her, equals prosperity. At the NABJ convention, an automatic teller machine was installed for delegates. "On Wednesday afternoon it was filled with US\$1-million. By Saturday morning it was finished," says Mda incredulously.

An idea she hopes to import from the convention is the job fair where most American newspapers and networks come along to recruit. She wants the FBJ to start dealing with the issues that affect journalists. "I watched them deal with everything from the big picture things like 'reporting Africa' to

mid-career burn-out as well as how to write a tight intro." While many would rejoice that somebody is going to teach local journalists to write a tight intro, Mda faces more burning issues.

The monthly FBJ imbizos with prominent people in the news will continue. For now, they are a Gauteng event where the monthly meeting at the SAB Centenary Centre in Newtown is a highlight. Mda is considering persuading speakers — who have included Kwame Toure (the man once known as Stokeley Carmichael), Patricia de Lille and Tito Mboweni — to go on-the-record. "That way the FBJ will be given a profile."

The meeting is also important, she says, because "there is a feeling that black journalists don't have access to decision-makers". News editors continue to send white journalists to do the important stories. "We need new opinions. White SA is always jumping up and down whenever something happens (like the Lesotho intervention/invasion). We need people who are in a position to say 'Hang on!'"

Ferial Haffajee is a journalist at the Mail&Guardian

FORUM OF BLACK JOURNALISTS

Membership of the Forum of Black Journalists is open to black journalists. But what precisely is black? "Whoever feels black," says Mda.

My deputy editor (Rehana Rossouw who identifies herself as black, but is classified coloured) swears that membership is not open to her.

Several requests for an application form from Mda were unsuccessful.

Invitations to our office at the Mail&Guardian go only to journalists with African bylines. I've taken my friend Ann Eveleth (physically white and born in America but more citizen-of-the-world than most people I know) along and seen the Sunday Independent's Maureen Isaacson at imbizos. Says Mda: "They are not supposed to come."

What is a journalist? "The FBJ must be owned by practising journalists. I didn't agree with the organisation's launch because it was dominated by too many old fuddy-duddies (She can't mean Zwelakhe Sisulu, Thami Mazwai and Jon Qwelane who held court?) who aren't journalists. No media owners can become members. Membership of the FBJ is open to black (whatever that means these days) reporters, sub-editors, editors, news editors and photojournalists."

Ferial Haffajee

Two unequal Americas

(and what black journalists did about it)



BY DOROTHY BUTLER GILLIAM

SOME PEOPLE would place the birth of our struggle at around 1968, a few years after I broke into the daily newspaper business. 1968, as a recent publication of the Freedom Forum's Newseum put it, was pivotal year. "In January, the Viet Cong launched the Tet offensive. In April the Rev Martin Luther King Jr was assassinated. In June Democratic presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated. In August Soviet tanks rolled into Prague. In October two US athletes were ousted from the Olympics for giving the Black Power salute on the medals stand. In November Richard M. Nixon was elected president."

But the 4 April assassination of Dr Martin Luther King would doubtless be the event that most black journalists would remember most. The anger in black urban neighbourhoods that had sporadically spawned fires in some cities, seemed to engulf black urban America after the brutal murder of Dr King. The urban insurrections of the 1960s — most called them riots — demonstrated how inadequate the mainstream media in America was in covering black America. White reporters were attacked in poor black neighbourhoods. Some papers recruited janitors and anybody black who worked in their buildings to go into the riot zones.

Then the presidentially-appointed Kerner Commission fingered the press as a main culprit in creating two, unequal Americas — one black and one white — by failing to write and report adequately on black America. The press was told to hire black reporters and editors and improve its coverage.

One response to this major embarrassment for the media came from the Ford Foundation. Recognising that more black Americans needed to be trained immediately, Ford instituted an intensive 11-week training programme at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism during the summers.

The programme worked well — it was a boot camp for journalists and produced many black journalists who are today's veterans — Milton Coleman, deputy managing editor of the Washington Post; Mervyn AubeSpin, associate editor of the Louisville Courier Journal; former television anchor and now businesswoman Maureen Bunyan.

Charlayne Hunter-Gault was among those who taught in that programme along with many others. But after three years the Ford funding ended and Columbia called it quits.

The programme was scheduled to die in the early 1970s. But a small band of black and white journalists — led by Robert Maynard, Earl Caldwell, Walter Stovall and others — knew that the programme should not die. They determined to find the funding and run the programme themselves. As Bob Maynard put it: we were determined to wipe from the lexicon of journalism the phrase "we couldn't find anyone qualified".

By 1976 they had found a new home for the programme — the Summer Programme for Minority Journalists — at the University of California at Berkeley. They received funding from the Gannett Foundation — the forerunner to the Freedom Forum. The SPMJ sought to demystify daily journalism for blacks who had long been barred from America's newsrooms.

I first joined the faculty of the summer programme in 1976 and was asked that same year to become a member of the board of the sponsoring organisation which we called the Institute for Journalism Education. We carefully trained and placed hundreds of minority journalists during the 13 years we ran this successful boot camp for minority journalists. I was fortunate to become IFJ chair in 1985.

We soon found out that minority reporters weren't enough — we needed to train blacks, Asians, Hispanics and Native Americans as copy editors and desk editors too.

So we conceived a new programme — the Editing Programme for Minority Journalists — and started an intensive eight-week editing programme.

We found a home for it at the University of Arizona. We recruited faculty, conceptualised the courses and began turning out a cadre of copy editors and assistant desk editors.

But soon we knew something was sorely missing — people who were in a position to make big decisions about coverage, content and direction. In 1985, under the leadership of the then president Ellis Cose, IJE instituted the Management Training Centre at Northwestern University — one of the first newspaper management training projects in America for newspaper people.

Strategically we knew the time had come not only to respond to the needs we saw in the industry but also to get industry leaders more involved in the process of creating the programme.

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The commission fingered the press as a main culprit in creating two, unequal Americas — one black and one white — by failing to write and report adequately on black America.



"You think you know it all and you do until something slaps you in the face."
 Stamp logo onto screen.
 Female voice: "Doesn't everyone want their first time to be special?"



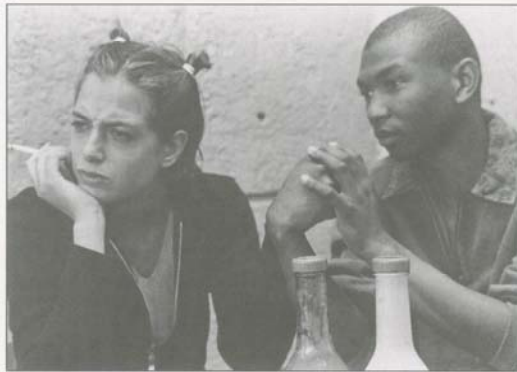
"Remember your first game of kiss and catches?"
 Music: Girl, you'll be a woman soon (Urge Over Kill)



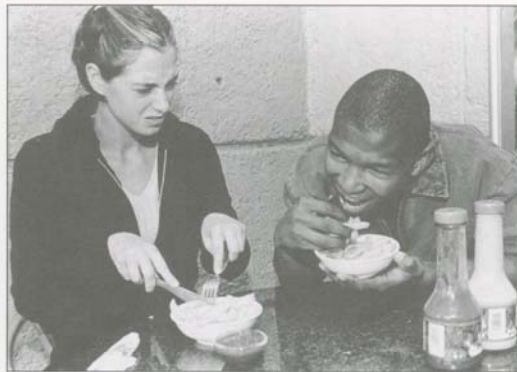
"And yes, the first time I nearly felt like a real woman."



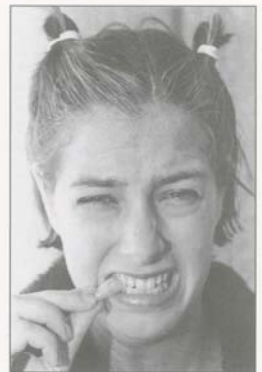
"He picked me up for the first date ... maybe my skirt is too suggestive?"
 Music: You sexy thing (Hot Chocolate)



"Where is the French wine and escargots?"
 Music: You sexy thing continued



"I wanted passion and an insatiable hunger. I got it, but not for me!"
 Music continued



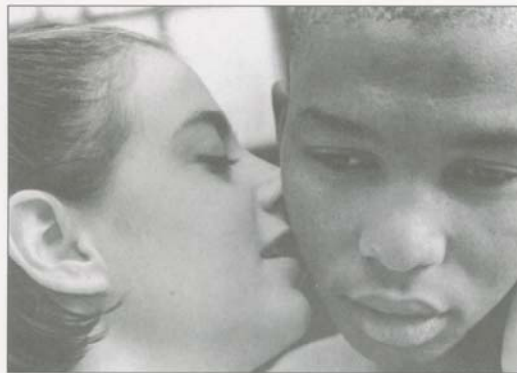
"I should have listened to my father!"
 Music continued

AFTER the first round of registrations for this year's election only five percent of first-time voters had put their names on the voters' roll – just 181 048 of the first generation to have come of age under democracy. According to a Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE) study for the Youth Commission, 21% of the population is aged between 18 and 21 – nearly 3 500 000 people.

Commentators blamed lack of information, IEC disorganisation, the run-around from one registration station to another, the bar-coded ID bungle, and the timing – registration occurred exactly when matriculants and college and university students were writing exams, often away from home where they have to vote when the time comes.

But maybe it was also the election advertising campaign. Stolid politicians represented on posters registering, worried Home Affairs officials on TV appealing for people to collect the millions of ID documents piling up. Maybe the messages were all wrong?

How would the youth speak to the youth? This storyboard for a TV advertisement was written, photographed and designed by Alison Canter, Pia Marangoni, Tarryn Stead, Kristy Macleod and Vanessa Vasques, second year journalism students at Rhodes University.



"But he did smell alluring and tasted even better."
 Music: I'm horny (Musta-C)



"I was trying to act cool and asked: 'Do you sleep on your stomach? No? Well can I? All I really knew was that he had to stick it in and ...'"
 Music: I'm horny continued



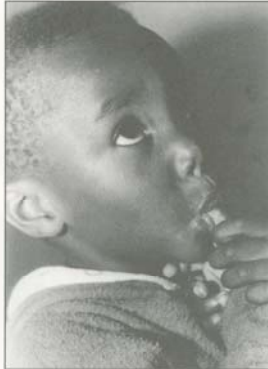
"After all, I told him, it's just like voting: just stick it in."
 Music continued and then fade



Music: backtracking record then stop
 "Vote and make your first time perfect."



"You think you know it all and you do until something slaps you in the face." Stamp logo on to screen.
Male voice: "Doesn't everyone want their first time to be something to tell your mates about?"



"I remember the first time I got a marble stuck up my nose."
Music: *Macho man* (Village People)



"And yes, the first time I felt like a real man ..."
Music: *Macho man* continued



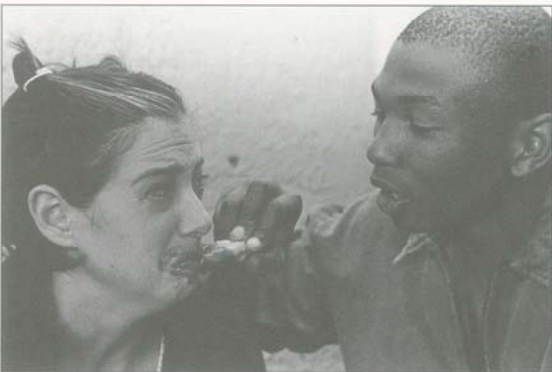
Close-up of his profile the cross being the main focus.
Music continued



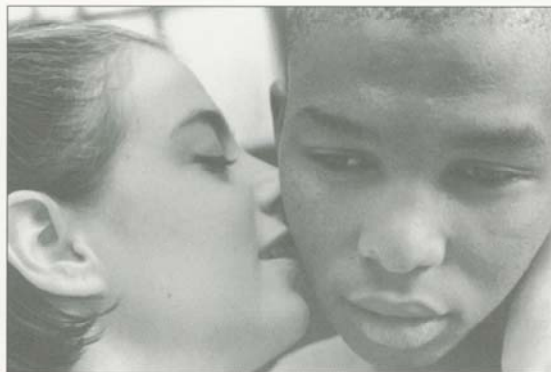
"My first arrival to take her on that date ... hmmm and that short skirt."
Music: *You sexy thing* (Hot Chocolate)



"She was expecting French wine and escargots ..."
Music: *You sexy thing* continued



"My first attempt at romance but she just wouldn't swallow it."
Music continued



"I guess she must have preferred my new aftershave ..."
Music: *I'm horny* (Musta-C)



"I was being cool and suggested that she come back to my place ... all I really knew was that I had to stick it in and ...". Music continued



"She was a little surprised, but after all, it's just like voting, just stick it in." Music continued and fade.

Vote and make your first time perfect



BY MARGARET WALLER

scratch

KEVIN CARTER'S Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph of a Sudanese child (1993) has recently reappeared in magazines and newspapers to advertise M-Net's current affairs programme *Carte Blanche*. MARGARET WALLER scratches below the surface of this controversial campaign.

News photographers make their images to give sense to what it was like "being there". They do so out of a motivation to communicate, to make money and to be known. The news photograph doesn't exist on its own. It requires a caption or text to explain why or how something looks the way it does. Carter's shocking photograph showed us how the civil war and the famine in southern Sudan affects its population. Much of the horror had been distilled down to one moment when a desperately weak child slumps forward onto his/her hands while a vulture waits in the background. Carter's photograph had satisfied for him all three motivations.

For the viewing public, this image has passed from being one of the hundreds of front page horror photographs into our collective psyche. It has joined others we hold sadly dear like Hector Peterson and Vietnam's napalm children.

This already stark image reappeared in 1998 stripped of a caption that would give a context if not meaning for this suffering. Now it is merely a shocking image that advertises M-Net's current affairs programme. The child is framed only by a vivid blue M-Net logo. The advertisers assume that we the viewing public have no questions about this starving child. If this child were white, would the advertiser be so free to use the image to

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT
TO SEE IT ALL.



From horror to humour, from corruption to human kindness. For 10 years our viewers have seen it all. EVERY SUNDAY AT 7PM. ONLY ON M-NET. www.mnet.co.za

& win a dying child

its own advantage? Are we so familiar with starving African children that we don't ask any questions like "Who, why, where, when?"

The dominant text in this advertisement to the right of the photograph reads "You have a right to see it all". In fact, the advertisers are not informing us about our rights. More accurately, M-Net has indirectly told us about their power to pay for any image to advertise itself. The primary motivation is to make money. Any relevance or meaning to Carte Blanche is extremely tenuous as they did not describe this child's situation at that time.

If this appropriation isn't enough to disturb readers, M-Net decided to add a silver scratch over the child. A scratch, in my experience appears as a lottery in supermarkets whereby lucky winners may receive a prize like money or a voucher. In this instance, the prize we win after scratching the surface is a dying child. It is M-Net's logic that we will be so amazed by the cleverness of the advertisement's scratch surprise that we will watch Carte Blanche. The rationale for the scratch (to paraphrase the advertisers) is a play on the idea of a scratch to suggest their investigative journalistic style – scratching the surface to reveal the real story.

When this marketing idea (using Carter's photograph with the audience participation scratch) was presented to the producers of Carte Blanche, they unanimously responded with outrage. According to George Mazarakis, their objections correspond with my sentiments expressed above. Because all the producers said no to this proposal, they thought that the M-Net advertisers would think of other ways to convey their message.

Unbelievably, the advertisers overrode all objections stated by the producers of Carte Blanche because they said "we know the audience".

This comment infers that the advertisers believe that they understand the Carte Blanche audiences better than the Carte Blanche producers.

I don't think that we the public have "a right to see it all". The most recent debate to question the public's rights "to see it all" was the 'Diana' debate. I do think that the producers of Carte Blanche have a right to control their own advertising campaign.

We the viewing public are left with gazing upon the scratched child – some prize.



All the producers were unanimous: this would be riding the coat tails of someone else, it would be exploitative and unethical.

A scratch, in my experience, appears as a lottery in supermarkets whereby lucky winners may receive a prize like money or a voucher. In this instance, the prize we win after scratching the surface is a dying child.

George Mazarakis, executive producer of Carte Blanche, responded to Margaret Waller at a meeting to discuss the issue hosted by the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism.

THE CARTE BLANCHE TEAM was presented with this idea (for an advertising campaign by advertising agency Ogilvy&Mather) at a conference. We debated it and rejected it.

We didn't buy it.

It saddens me to have to defend what is indefensible.

All the producers were unanimous: this would be riding the coat tails of someone else, it would be exploitative and unethical. We said please revisit this idea.

M-Net marketing went ahead regardless. It is a profoundly shocking image, we

were quite speechless and tried to stop it.

The director of (M-Net) marketing was not informed of our objection, it seems one individual was liaising with the advertising agency.

Going public like this has implications. We are a group of freelancers operating independently (of M-Net). I'm the fall guy. Is silence collusive?

We have addressed the individuals who corresponded with us. But we do not have an assurance from marketing that they will be careful about Benetton-type campaigns such as this one.

Linda Ferreira, the account executive from Ogilvy&Mather, had this to say:

WE wanted a campaign representative of the continuum of (Carte Blanche) programming. Something light and frothy for viewers familiar with the stories through to digging beneath the surface to expose the truth.

We spoke to Kevin Carter's father and told him the rationale behind the campaign. He felt the integrity of his son's

work was matched by Carte Blanche's brand of investigative journalism. We were not trying to exploit Kevin Carter.

Of the 1.2 million people who watch Carte Blanche we got maybe two or three letters from people disapproving of the campaign.

Section 205

Cry 'halt!'



BY RYLAND FISHER

Benny Gool's gruesome picture of Staggie's fiery last moments.



PIC BY BENNY GOOL, CAPE TOWN

FOR MANY YEARS Rashaad Staggie was one of the best known people on the Cape Flats. He was known for his philanthropic behaviour and provided an informal welfare service to many people on the Cape Flats. He often paid their rent, provided work for many unemployed (and probably unemployable) youth, and when these youths landed in trouble, he would despatch his lawyers to keep them out of jail. The stories of him driving through the sub-economic townships in his luxury German car, throwing R10 notes out of the window, are legendary and mostly true.

But Staggie was also known for the way he dealt with people who upset him or got in his way: he would not hesitate to have people beaten up or even killed. And he had no qualms about boasting when he did this. He knew he had the support of the people in the areas in which he operated, and he had also managed to buy the allegiance of most of the poorly-paid policemen in these areas.

It was because of this that Staggie showed no reluctance to confront a group of people who were protesting outside his house in London Road, Salt River on the night of Sunday 4

August 1996. He was confident that, given his standing in the community, he would soon be able to get rid of these troublesome people.

He was wrong.

Staggie died much the way he had lived: he was shot several times, pulled out of his car and burnt — in full view of several journalists and a few dozen policemen who had been monitoring the protesters as they had moved across the Cape Flats to Salt River.

For us, the end of Staggie's life was the beginning of several dilemmas that refuse to go away.

The first dilemma was what to publish and how. We deliberated as long as one can deliberate on deadline on a late-breaking story and decided to be bold. We published, on our front page, Benny Gool's gruesome pictures of Staggie's fiery last moments. To this day, we are still debating whether we made the correct decisions that night. Should we have reflected reality in such a graphic way or should we have been more cognisant of our readers' sensitivities?

But the really big dilemmas began a few weeks later when policemen, sent by the Attorney-General of the Cape, delivered subpoenas to our office. In short, they wanted everything we had related to Staggie and Pagad,

After a while, one gets sick and tired of being pestered by incompetent police and criminal justice officials who expect us to do their work, being threatened and being verbally abused, of having to worry about the safety of your reporters, of having to live behind high walls.

the group who had been protesting outside his house on the night he was killed. Photographs, notebooks, transcripts of interviews, videos.

Subpoenas were issued to the editors of Cape Town's three daily newspapers, several photographers and writers, and also journalists at news agencies. The wording on all the subpoenas was the same.

The subpoenas were not classic Section 205 subpoenas inasmuch as they were not about revealing sources, but about handing over material.

But surely the people at the AG's office should have known that we don't use videos? And that it is highly unlikely that the SABC people would have shot stills.

They should also have known that two of the journalists, from Die Burger, had been wounded and taken to hospital long before Staggie was killed.

So it was clear to us that this was not much more than a fishing expedition by the attorney-general's office.

But this was not the issue.

The issue was that we were being expected to solve a crime the police had been unable or unwilling to solve.

The police had failed:

- despite their knowing about and monitoring the protest for several hours;
- despite the presence of dozens of uniformed policemen and a few undercover intelligence agents among the protesters.
- despite this probably being the most public killing ever in Cape Town;
- despite the tremendous public and political pressure on them to solve the case.

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THE Supreme Court of Appeal has recently handed down an important judgement on defamation and the mass media. It has recognised that the "publication in the press of false and defamatory allegations of fact will not be regarded as unlawful if, upon a consideration of all the circumstances of the case, it is found to have been reasonable to publish the particular facts in the particular way at the particular time." (*National Media Ltd v Bogoshi, SCA, Case No. 579, 96, 29 September 1998, unreported*). How this new defence will operate in practice remains to be seen. The court, however, gave some guidelines for future consideration. It stated:

"In considering the reasonableness of the publication account must obviously be taken of the nature, extent and tone of the allegations. We know, for instance, that greater latitude is usually allowed in respect of political discussion ... and that the tone in which a newspaper article is written, or the way in which it is presented, sometimes provides additional, and perhaps, unnecessary, sting. What will also figure prominently, is the nature of the information on which the allegations were based and the reliability of their source, as well as the steps taken to verify the information."

The Supreme Court of Appeal has unequivocally signalled the fact that the reliability of the source of the information could be a relevant factor in determining the reasonableness of the

publication. This will undoubtedly pose difficult questions for the media. There may well be cases where the failure to disclose the source of information will result in the imposition of damages, since the medium concerned will be unable to establish the reasonableness of the publication.

By the very nature of their work, journalists not infrequently become witnesses to crime. The killing of Rashaad Staggie has a compelling counterpart in the conflict in Northern Ireland. At an IRA funeral held on 19 March 1988 two British army corporals were brutally executed in full view of many people including a number of independent television crews and photographers. The events in question gave rise to several criminal trials. At one of these trials, 27 media witnesses were subpoenaed principally to give evidence of the provenance and authenticity of the video and photographic material in question. Before they testified, counsel for the Crown made an application for an order that they should not be identified in Court and, in particular, that when they gave evidence their faces should not be seen by the accused or by the public or the press, but should be seen only by the court and by counsel and solicitors appearing on behalf of the prosecution and the defence. As it happened, however, two BBC journalists on whose behalf the application was made and who had apparently received death threats from the IRA, chose to give their evi-

dence in open court. (See Gilbert Marcus "Secret Witnesses" 1990 Public Law 207).

The dilemmas facing journalists who witness crime in the course of their duties can be cruel. There is not necessarily any one correct answer. Our Constitution at least provides a framework for the development of the law in the direction of greater protection for journalists. I believe, however, that the path forward will not be easy. Censorship under apartheid has left many scars and we have a long way to go before our society becomes one which truly respects freedom of expression and the press.

Gilbert Marcus is an advocate who campaigns on media legislation.



Let us hope that Cyclone Bogoshi's winds of legal change will blow right across the SADC region to unshackle the press as Harold Macmillan's winds of political change heralded the independence which we now enjoy.

Judge John Manyara, chair of the Trust Fund Board of the Media Institute of Southern Africa

THE BOGOSHI RULING

False

but reasonable



ROB MIDGLEY

THE recent Supreme Court of Appeal ruling in favour of press freedom will not give the media carte blanche to publish defamatory material without the risk of prosecution, says Rhodes University's Dean of Law Rob Midgley.

The ruling was made by Judge Joos Hefer in favour of City Press concerning allegations about the conduct of Pretoria attorney Nthedi Bogoshi.

Midgley said the judge had told the media that his ruling did not give them the licence to lower standards.

He said all parties in the Bogoshi case – including the owner, publisher, editor and distributor – had been sued and would all have been strictly liable, meaning they could not say they made a mistake.

However, Midgley said the Bogoshi decision had changed fundamental principles and "knocked out" strict liability with regard to intention.

Intention is one of the defences against defamation which may be used by an ordinary citizen but could previously not be used by the media.

Midgley said prior to the Bogoshi ruling, strict liability with regard to intention had been

exercised by the courts and as a result newspapers could not claim that they did not intend to defame.

The only defences open to the media were those which negated wrongfulness and as a result the media were limited in their ability to defend defamation suits.

Although the Bogoshi ruling means the media can now use intention as a defence against defamation suits, Midgley said the media would not be able to make "any old mistake" and would have to prove they were not negligent and had made a reasonable mistake.

The onus of proof would lie with the media in proving that they had not been negligent in making a mistake.

The Bogoshi ruling has also given the media a defence against the publication of wrongful statements. This is because an untrue statement could be accepted if it is proved to be reasonable.

Midgley said this would relate specifically to the mass media disseminating information about political activity to the public which may be untrue. He said the media would have to prove that they had reasonable grounds to believe the statement was true, had taken reasonable steps to verify the information, believed

the information to be true, and that a response had been sought before publishing unless it was impractical or unnecessary to do so.

The nature of the report, sources, manner, time of publication as well as the extent and tone of the statement would also be taken into account.

Midgley said the judgement in the Bogoshi case recognised the duty of the press in ferretting out corruption and in making sure that the government was functioning properly.

The Bogoshi case overrules previous defamation actions such as that taken by former police operative Lothar Neethling against Vrye Weekblad.

Midgley said if the law had been the same as it was today Vrye Weekblad – which had to shut down because of the action – would have had a defence against Neethling.

Midgley said South African law was moving towards a greater recognition of the role of the press in a democratic society. It was part of the government of the country and vital in helping people to make an informed decision about who they wanted in government.

Patrick Burnett is a reporter for East Cape News. He filed this report for Review.

We refused to co-operate with the police and told the attorney-general that we would fight his subpoenas to the highest possible level. After much pressure, he eventually withdrew the subpoenas.

For us, this issue went to the heart of press freedom and the independence of media.

There were people who argued that, because of our new dispensation, the media cannot expect to operate in the same way they have always operated and cannot expect to have the same kind of aloofness from the rest of society that they had always had. And if you accept that the media are part of society, then surely they must be part of the solution? I agree with all of this.

But these people go further and say: surely if it is in society's interest to solve this case, then the media should co-operate with the police? How can you berate the government for not doing enough about crime, when you refuse to use this opportunity to do something positive about crime?

This is where I cry: "Halt!"

Yes, the media have to engage more with the broader society, but this must not be done at the cost of our independence. It must not whittle away at our hard-earned freedoms. And it must not interfere with our ability to collect information and express opinion without fear of retribution or retaliation.

There is a difference between supporting a campaign against crime and being asked to compromise your integrity by helping the police to catch criminals they should have caught in the first place.

It is a matter of protecting our rights and our principles. But it is also a matter of protecting our people.

The Western Cape, contrary to the belief of many people in Gauteng and elsewhere, is a very volatile place. The culture of gangsterism and drug abuse is nothing new to hundreds of thousands of people on the Cape Flats. It has always been dangerous. Recently it has been combined with a disturbing level of intolerance that would make the relationship between Azapo and the National Party seem like a marriage made in heaven.

It is not only dangerous. It is very dangerous.

And it is against this dangerous background that we practise our journalism in the Western Cape: a background of almost daily shooting incidents and weekly (sometimes twice-weekly) pipe bomb attacks — not only on gangsters and drug dealers, but also on religious leaders, business people and academics who dare to speak their minds.

Every time our journalists are out in the field, reporting on the conflict between gangsters and the people who say they are opposed to gangsters, their lives are in danger. They get threatened verbally, sometimes guns are pointed at them and quite often they are denied access to events that are supposed to be public.

The situation is bad enough without our having to compound it by handing over our pictures to the police. If we do this, the limited access we now enjoy, will probably be reduced to nothing.

This is why, when on 17 August last year, we were once again issued with subpoenas (this time by the magistrate conducting the inquest into Staggie's death), we again refused to co-operate.

The circumstances around the latest subpoenas are strange, coming as they did a few days after a Sanef delegation met with the Ministers of Justice and Safety and Security to talk about ways in which we could amend or repeal outdated media legislation. We agreed to set up a committee of editors and justice officials to deal with Section 205 and other legislation related to

It is against this dangerous background that we practise our journalism in the Western Cape. A background of almost daily shooting incidents and weekly (sometimes twice-weekly) pipe bomb attacks.

the protection of sources. We also agreed that Sanef would work with the Law Commission to review all other legislation that impacts negatively on the freedom of the media.

One of the people at this meeting was Frank Kahn, the Cape Attorney-General, who had issued the original subpoenas against us. This time he cried innocence, saying that the inquest magistrate had decided, independently, to issue the subpoenas. He is theoretically correct. In practice, the magistrate is advised by the state prosecutor who, in this case, is a deputy attorney-general. I am prepared to give Frank the benefit of the doubt in this case.

We were supposed to have appeared in court last month, but asked for a postponement. We also asked the court to withdraw the subpoenas against our reporters and photographers. We argued that co-operating with the police, for instance by handing over pictures, is a policy decision that would be taken by editors.

The court has agreed to this so the editors are again expected to appear in court. We will be asked to hand over whatever material we may have.

We are going to refuse again. Our lawyers have advised us to testify in court about why we refuse to co-operate. I am worried about this, because I think some people might not be able to understand what we are doing. They could misinterpret our testimony as collaboration with the authorities on this case. They might not be able to understand that we are merely testifying about why we do not want to testify.

I suppose it is a risk we have to take. At least this time the risk is restricted to the three editors.

Personally, I was hoping all of this would go away. I think, after a while, one gets sick and tired of being pestered by incompetent police and criminal justice officials who expect us to do their work, being threatened and being verbally abused, of having to worry about the safety of one's reporters, of having to live behind high walls.

Somehow, I think I am going to have to live with this for a while. I don't think gangsters and drug abuse (and the drama around it) will go away for a while. I also don't think that attempts to co-opt and compromise us will go away either. I also don't believe that outdated media legislation is going to go away without a huge fight and quite a bit of pain.

Whether we like it or not, we will have to fight that fight and bear that pain. In the end, it will probably be a small price to pay, especially if it means that we are able to retain the independence and integrity of the media.

Ryland Fisher is the editor of *The Cape Times*.

Record of understanding on Section 205

THE SA National Editors' Forum, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Safety and Security, and the National Director of Public Prosecutions have reached an interim agreement on Section 205, while sections of the Criminal Procedures Act are being "urgently investigated" for amendment so as to allow journalists their constitutional right to freedom of expression.

The Record of Understanding rests on two important principles, both upheld by the Constitution of South Africa: the duty of every citizen (including media workers) to testify about knowledge of a crime, and the right to freedom of expression and the particular right to this freedom of the media.

The understanding the parties have reached about the two, sometimes conflicting, duties is that there is a need to balance law and order and the administration of justice on the one hand, with journalists' rights to protect their sources.

According to the Understanding, Sanef has recognised on behalf of the media industry that the police and justice systems need sections 179 and 205 of the Criminal Procedure Act (Act 51 of 1977) in order to get information to prosecute criminals.

The government representatives have recognised that maintenance of law and order and the administration of justice must be balanced with the right to freedom of expression and the specific freedom of the media.

The parties have agreed to investigate urgently the possibility of amending the Criminal Procedure Act. Meanwhile the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Safety and Security and the National Director have given an undertaking that when a subpoena is issued:

- A journalist can refer the matter to the National Director of Public Prosecutions for consideration;
- The National Director may initiate a process of mediation and negotiation between all the relevant stakeholders in an attempt to resolve the situation in an attempt to avoid legal proceedings over whether the journalist will testify or hand over documents.
- The director must weigh the merits of the subpoena against the need for the journalist to protect his/her sources.

Sanef has agreed to ensure that its members comply with this interim arrangement.

The way we were in the 20th century



LYNETTE STEENVELD

THE FOCUS of the 3rd United Nations World Television Forum held in New York was the "Future of Audio-Visual Memory". The aim of the conference was to look at the social role that film and television play in creating images of who we are, of the issues that are important to us, and the values we have. It posed questions about what images we (at a local, national and international level) want preserved and recorded for future generations, that could provide a kind of audio-visual memory of who and what we were in the 20th century.

Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary-General, opened the conference by urging television producers to produce more international news which show both the inter-connectedness of humanity and its human face. Globalisation,

he argued, should also produce a sense of global citizenship and responsibility. This, he urged, demands new images of heroism that reflect the strivings of those who struggle for these larger issues — and in his view, sportsmen are not good enough for this heroic task. He thus called on broadcasters to look beyond their commercial interests (and the costs of international reporting) and to consider their tremendously important role as com-

municators whose responsibility is not only to a planet of current viewers, but whose broadcasts also provide a diary of the present for future generations.

Italy's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lamberto Dini, emphasised the role that the media play in constructing and affirming our sense of who we

are. Given this, he said the challenge to both politics and the media is "transparency and truth, justice and freedom, memory and identity". He suggested that globalisation "does not mean wiping out or confusing different identities". "The media," he said, "are capable of straddling borderlines, interweaving languages, reformulating symbols, and preserving memories without confusing them." He recognised that "every country, and every community is committed to preserving its autonomy, its capacity to combine values and practices, to participating in the world of technology and the markets while preserving its own identity and cultural memory."

The conference thus raised fundamental issues concerning who produces what for whom. It is noteworthy that most of the participants were from the North, and represented the major network news corporations. The managing director and chief executive of Shalimar Television Network in Pakistan pointed out that there is a power imbalance in the world, and that Third World cultures are under threat from powerful media corporations who operate globally. Contrary to Annan's call for media-sharing and mutual participation, he said that in fact there is a one-way "torrent that sweeps away everything in its way". He argued further that "satellite and the Internet don't necessarily translate into wisdom and knowledge". It's what we do with information, and how we use it — for collective benefit, or commercial gain — that is the greatest challenge facing media producers. This view was endorsed by Bob Collins, Director General of Radio Telefis Eireann from Ireland, who emphasised that television gives a mediated version of the world — a fact we too often forget.

Responding to this, Denise Epote Durand, Director of TV5 Afrique in the Cameroun, said Africa is generally not reflected in world TV, and when it is, then it is by northern TV networks which project their images of poverty,

corruption and drought. If only these images are recorded and preserved for posterity, then this will be the "memory" of Africa in the 20th century that will be taken into the 21st century. There are several problems with this: 1) Africa is a vast continent with many different peoples and different histories, and the complexity of this is not conveyed by current television news reports about Africa; 2) because most of the news crews are non-Africans, they report their version of what is African news; 3) what is thus produced and recorded is not Africa's memories of its multi-faceted self.

The importance of what is recorded, and thus what becomes the collective "memory" or history of a nation is crucially important, not because it refers to the past, but because it impacts on the present.

Robert Rosen, Dean of the School of Theatre, Film and Television at the University of California, Los Angeles, reminded a panel of filmmakers of the Italian historian Bernadetto Croce's insight that "all history is present, all history responds to something now". In view of this the panellists (Australian Gillian Armstrong, Frenchman Olivier Assayas, the Japanese Masato Harada, the American Sidney Lumet, the Iranian Dariush Mehrjui, and the Italian Giuseppe Tornatore) were asked their views on the relationship between past and present in filmmaking.

Although film and television appear to be similar media, what this panel highlighted was the difference between them. A criticism of television news was that because of commercial pressures and the structures of television news production, events are recorded without any context, and thus it has become increasingly difficult to "make sense" of television news. This is why the question was raised by marginalised television producers of the historical value of mainstream news — whose news, whose memories? Filmmakers work differently. Even though they too operate in a commercial industry, it is possible, at least for some filmmakers, to use film as a medium of expression for reflecting on a range of issues which are important to our experience as human beings.

Sidney Lumet, whose films *Network*, and *Running on Empty* were recently broadcast on SABC, said that his films reflect his concern with the problems of power (economic, social, governmental) and how to maintain one's individuality in the face of it. For him, the most interesting films are those that pose questions, not the ones that give answers.

The major problem that the filmmakers encounter, similar to that of the Third World television producers, is the way in which a market-driven industry makes it possible not only for some voices to be heard, and others to be side-lined, but also for some modes of storytelling to be promoted, while others are marginalised. The filmmakers were also concerned about the general lack of access both to films that were marginalised commercially, and to

The importance of what is recorded, what becomes collective memory, is crucially important. Not because it refers to the past, but because it impacts on the present.

What, how and for whom do we save the past?

ANOTHER major issue of the conference was archiving. Here the major questions were:

- what should be selected to be archived?
- on what basis does one make the decision about which programmes and films to keep and preserve?
- who makes these momentous decisions?
- who keeps the archives — national institutions, private ones, the producing companies themselves?
- how should material be archived — on film, on tape (what kind of tape — digital or analogue)?
- what kinds of retrieval systems should be put in place for use by researchers and other future users?

- where do the costs come from?
- how is access to the material ensured?
- what about copyright?

The way in which these questions are answered by the rich nations of the world, is likely to be very different from that of the poor nations.

Roberto Zaccaria, Chairman of the Board of Radiotelevisione Italiana (RAI) noted that there were three challenges for safeguarding our audio-visual heritage: 1) to guarantee the greatest possible access by all citizens to all audio-visual material produced; 2) to create a new model for audio-visual archiving which regulates retrieval of material, while safe-guarding the rights of authors, producers, and distributors;

3) to give special attention to the preservation and restoration of the technical quality of archived material, so that it can last into the next millennium, and beyond. In view of this he proposed the establishment of a common video library jointly set up by all the nations of the world, which would house the most cherished sounds and images that have made up the history of this century.

USEFUL ARCHIVING ORGANISATIONS

- Association of Moving Image Archivists
- Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers — study group devoted to archiving
- European Strategic Program for Research in Information Technology — Euromedia project
- International Federation of Television Archives (FIAT)

► continued on page 46

So who's an African then?

BY ANTHEA GARMAN

EXCEPT for Thabo Mbeki (no doubt he's an African given that impressive speech in Parliament on the day the Constitution was accepted) and Professor Willie Breytenbach (lecturer in political science at Stellenbosch who proclaimed "I am an African and I'm proud of it" to subdued response), there were many puzzled people at the African Renaissance Conference in Johannesburg asking this vexed question.

Somehow all the discussions and workshops and behind scenes hubbubbing to kickstart the Deputy President's new campaign depended on getting to grips with this one issue.

At a press conference afterwards organisers Thami Mazwai, managing director of Mafube Publishing, and Prof Malegapuru Makgoba, said categorically being "African" was not a matter of race.

However, it was a distinctly uncomfortable experience being white at the conference. Or Arab.

Professor Kwesi Kwaa Prah from the Centre for Advanced African Studies at the University of the Western Cape was quite convinced that those in the far north of the continent, because of their political allegiance to the Arab states and their non-membership of the OAU, were simply not Africans.

That comment had a northern delegation on its feet to vociferously protest that those of Arab origin were as African as those further south.

It was a tense moment. Especially at a pan-African conference. Professor Mahmood Mamdani, lecturer in African Studies at UCT, tried to repair the damage. "African" cannot be simply geography and culture, but it is also political.

"There are three creolised cultures in Africa: 1. the African diaspora; 2. the Arabs in North Africa and 3. the 'coloureds' in South Africa of Africa of Asian/European descent.

"Are they wholly African? Do they wholly belong? The answers depend on politics and how people think of themselves. It is best to start with an inclusive answer: they are all Africans."

But in his categories, creolised or otherwise, was no mention of the white progeny of the colonialists and settlers.

Kwaa Prah again: "People not black can be Africans, they can be part of the cultural production hinged and rooted in Africa. To be an African is a process. Not all blacks are Africans, not all Africans are blacks."

Then Thabo Mbeki weighed in using an example from a meeting he had recently had with Afrikaner youth who told him: "Yesterday is a foreign country, tomorrow belongs to us."

Mbeki commented: "South Africa reborn constitutes their own heritage. Our first task is to transform our own society in line with this vision. Our second task is to join hands with like-minded people all over the world to make sure the new century is the African century."

And Nthobeni Moahloli, Engen General Manager of Corporate Affairs, added: "An African is a person whose home is Africa, whose loyalty is to Africa, who is willing to commit his/her energies to Africa."

Having exhausted the shades and shapes of what constitutes an African, the second question to be taken on was: What is a Renaissance? (and closely related: how to pronounce the word?)

Mamdani, ending his presentation to the approximately 500 delegates, was pointed: "I have some questions: 1. When did the Renaissance begin? In 1994? 2. Is it going to be a South African export to Africa? 3. Does it have a single parentage or does it come from many streams? And 4. Will it be pushed forward by debate or sung by a chorus?"

During the two-day conference there was lots of appropriation going on. Egypt, Timbuktu, Great Zimbabwe. Great thoughts from Kwame Nkrumah, Henry Sylvester Williams, Kenyatta, Du Bois, Tom Mboya scattered throughout conversations. A heady feeling that all things important through the centuries on this continent were coming to fruition here and now in the reborn SA.

This can produce a lot of cynicism and a feeling of being forced into a falsified process. Mamdani addressed this issue: "Every renaissance is first and foremost ideological. While you can't dictate intellectual processes and outcomes you can create enabling environments."

Intellectual processes. According to Makgoba the conference was a gathering of intellectuals (and lots of powerful business people) to give the renaissance its best start possible.

And what preoccupied them?

● **The cultural infidelity of the African elite:** Kwesi Kwaa Prah: "The African elite has so heavily bought into the cultural world of the West, the consumptive patterns born in the US and Europe, the inability to create autonomously while learning from elsewhere."

● **Self-definition and naming:** Mahmood Mamdani: "The intelligentsia of Africa walk with one foot in Africa and one elsewhere. When I first came to South Africa in 1991 I was struck by the negative images intellectuals had of themselves and of Africa. 'Intelligentsia' is a Russian word meaning all who deal in the world of ideas. By itself the intelligentsia can't create a renaissance but without the intelligentsia the renaissance can't start."

● **The intelligentsia's self-doubt:** Thami Mazwai said: "We the African intellectuals must define who the Africans are and where they are going in the global community. We are going to be actors as Africans. The white community says 'yes, you can rule but this is how you must rule'. The new order must define the new society it has created."

● **The media generated from outside the continent and its perceptions of Africa:** Edward Boateng, regional director of CNN: "We know ourselves through the BBC and CNN, we don't know ourselves directly." So was the conference just an exercise for the new elite to flex its muscles? Many editors must have thought so. There was a disappointing turnout from mainstream media to cover the event. Engaging in this debate just wasn't enough of an issue for them.

But the Deputy President, despite the simmering situation in Lesotho, spent two days sitting in a hotel conference room listening to the proceedings. When Mazwai proclaimed that the new AR committee headed by himself and Makgoba would be available day and night to assist him with thoughts and ideas he didn't murmur his thanks, but no thanks.

Something is going on here: alliances are being forged by those in power, those with power, and certain intellectuals and media players. Is this not an important enough development to gain the attention of mainstream media?

As for me, one of the few whites in the hall, what do I make of it all?

I don't feel African — the way "African" in African Renaissance is being defined. I'm not part of the new wave of the newly empowered.

I don't have a problem with selective memory that reaches back into the past and finds fragments of history to pull into the present to inspire and guide — especially not in a context as undermined and downgraded as ours.

I do worry, however, about movements guided and controlled by elites with great financial power, political power and communication power. This is a strong deviation from those things that defined the liberation struggle.

Some strong voices from workers, women and youth (and there were a few crying in the wilderness) would have gone a long way to root and reorientate the conference and the rolling force it is hoping to become.

Something is going on here; alliances are being forged by those in power, those with power and certain intellectuals and media players. Is this not an important enough development to gain the attention of mainstream media?

POLL PREPARED? TAKE THE TEST

1 "Covering the election is the concern of political reporters only."
(a) True (go to 10)
(b) False (go to 15)

2 Boffins tell us the media operate on people's knowledge levels, attitudes and behaviour - roughly in that order. So it's a very long shot for coverage to lead to a certain kind of voting behaviour. But that said, the media can set agendas - as to what people think are main issues to argue about and act upon. That includes an agenda about whether the election is actually important enough to go and vote in. Go to 13.

3 The elections are about:
(a) seeing who hangs on aboard the gravy train, aka which new hogs will get their snouts into the trough. (Go to 11)
(b) a genuine chance to renew government for, by and of the people. (Go to 11)

14 Elections have got it all: drama, conflict, contests, people, pictures. Key things to watch for: will Inkatha hold KwaZulu-Natal?; can the ANC keep Gauteng?; who will be the official opposition? Which ANC politicians are staking their claim to future greatness? Will Bantu Holomisa's UDM make any impact? Be warned, though: don't only focus on the serious big news - check out number 9 before you continue.

15 Right, citizen: politics is about the personal and everything else too. Need more convincing? Take a turn to question 20.

16 Transcribe your answers to your diary now, entering them on 1 April. And don't forget to check back when you get the real thing. If you're close, consider a change in career. Goodbye journalism, g'day Gallup. Now, sign off at Number 21.

4 The key election issues are crime and jobs. If the ANC trumpets its recent laws that hit hard at batterers and help rural women inherit property, it could win extra female support. Leap ahead to 6.

13 Only 10% of young people registered to vote last year.
(a) "So what?" (Go to 18)
(b) "That's something of a crisis" (Go to 5)

21 Qs & As TO GET YOU IN GEAR TO COVER THE ELECTION

BY GUY BERGER

5 The election will survive without youth participation. But what about democracy? What stake will younger people hold? This is serious. Go to 12.

12 Wow - a million more women than men registered as voters last year. How is that going to impact on the vote? Point 4 gives the answer.

21 You're roadworthy. Consider yourself a finely-tuned, fully-briefed, fast-shooting democratic functionary. Get out there and get stuck into the biggest story of 1999. Enjoy.

17 You guessed it: it's all these roles. And some people think journalism is easy! Go to question 7.

6 A journalist covering the election should mainly:
(a) play a watchdog role and aim to expose political intolerance, vote-rigging, blandishments and politico blather.
(b) be an educator, explaining the hows, whys and wherefores of voting.
(c) concentrate on fair play for all political parties, so the voters can make informed choices at the ballot box.
(d) provide a platform for grassroots concerns so the politicians have to respond to the people's agenda. Visit Number 17 for the correct answer.

11 the elections are a bit of both. Don't be one-sidedly cynical, nor naively idealistic. Scepticism - yes; hope - yes. That's a healthy journalistic pose. But also remember the main thing: that the elections are about lots more than who sits in the next parliament or provincial legislature. The poll will set the political agenda for a long time to come. It can fan expectations and fix lines of division. It can also feed a culture of political tolerance and foster accountability. Watch the process, not just the event. Jump across to question 19.

20 I agree with (a) or (b):
a. "The election story is entirely predictable. Boring, boring, boring." Go to 9.
b. "I can hear and smell the sizzle in the story." Go to 14.

19 "The media have immense power to influence the election".
(a) True (go to 8)
(b) False (go to 2)

18 You're right. And who can blame them when most politics and media neglect youth news and views? Still, this thing does need watching. Go to 12.

7 What percentage of the vote will the following parties get?:
DP
NNP
ANC
IFP
Write your answer above and mosey off to 16.

10 Take those blinkers off! Go to 15

9 The main reporting challenge is to find fresh angles in the mundane. Why not get the parties' points of view on Viagra? Get a group of kids to interview Sibusiso Bengu. Canvass around for poll-ish jokes (or create some yourself). Now, off to 3.

8 Don't exaggerate too much. The pro-DP orientation of most newspapers last time round sure didn't translate into votes. Go to 2.

Redesign



READERS

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MAKING BUSINESS A BRIGHTER PACKAGE

Looking back on the BusinessDay Redesign

Kerry Swift (left), describes how editor Jim Jones (right) got a new-look newspaper.



WRITERS

The changes involved altering journalists' perceptions of what readers want from a daily newspaper.

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BUSINESSDAY

A BDFM Publication

Morning Final

Tuesday, November 2 1998

with the FINANCIAL TIMES worldwide

Vintage wine in an African cup

Redesigning a major daily is not just about drawing up templates and rushing ahead to implement a new look. It is about careful research to gauge what readers want, and a team effort on the paper to develop a total package that the staff can implement given the constraints under which they work.

KERRY SWIFT writes about the Fox Publishing redesign of *BusinessDay* ...

Whoever said the English are punctual got it wrong. David Bell is late for our meeting. The dawn patrol train journey into London's Liverpool Street from Essex, the breathless charge through the Underground commuter crush to London Bridge and the cold walk in the rain to Southwark (only hard currency travellers use taxis) to meet the chairman of the *Financial Times* is all in vain. David Bell has just returned from a sortie across the 'pond' on Concorde and will be delayed. Such is life in the fast lane.

The foyer of the *Financial Times* building on Southwark Bridge Road is about as stiff as the paper's receptionists and it palls after reading the FT cover to cover (no mean feat in wet socks). So, using a copy of the FT from the foyer as an umbrella, I stroll out of the building and begin exploring Southwark and Bankside in the rain, the dome of St Paul's just visible through the grey mist rolling up from the Thames. As usual, London is a damp and dismal dowager, but as every visitor knows, beneath those ample skirts lie many secret treasures.

Down Clink Street, parallel to the Thames, is the old red-light district of London. Prostitution having been banned in the more salubrious suburbs of London, it simply crossed the river and waited for the City 'Johns' to follow, which, of course, they did in droves. In days past, the Clink Street whores — the "Winchester geese" — were licensed by the Church of England bishops, presumably on the basis of moral containment, though it was rumoured that certain members of the Episcopal authority were not averse to checking the merchandise on odd occasions.



Hot off the press ... Matthys Moss, visual editor; Valdi Strauss, production editor; Cheryllyn Ireton, managing editor with editor Jim Jones.



Vintage Wine

So what am I doing wandering about in the rain in London's former red-light district? My visit to the UK was part of the Fox redesign of *BusinessDay*, South Africa's leading business daily. I was in London to discuss a few ideas with the team that redesigned the *Financial Times* and to meet their boss and trans-Atlantic commuter, David Bell, at that time the Pearson executive responsible for the FT.

Pearson, the London-based publisher of the FT among other titles around the globe, part owns *BusinessDay* through BDFM, an unlisted company in Johannesburg. The other shareholder in BDFM is Times Media Limited in South Africa. Visiting the FT was part courtesy visit to inform the English shareholder of the general intentions behind the *BusinessDay* redesign, but also an attempt to explore possible visual synergies with the graphic team that had recently given the FT its own facelift.

Taking design templates to the FT is a bit like taking coals to Newcastle but when the moment finally arrived to meet with David Bell and to unveil the early prototypes of the *BusinessDay* redesign, the sun had come out and the FT boss was well over his jet lag, focused and receptive.

Amazing. It was all over in a matter of minutes. I showed Bell the design prototypes and was ushered out of his office in the space of an hour with the promise that whatever the FT could do to assist *BusinessDay* — even to the extent of hosting graphic artists from the paper in London — was simply a matter of request.

Branislav Radovic, the FT's visual editor, and his team were equally helpful during later meetings and, on the face of it, generally enthusiastic about the new look of their sister paper in Johannesburg.

The redesign of *BusinessDay* could hardly be described as radical. At core it was reader driven. In exhaustive focus group surveys before the redesign began, readers made it clear they were against radical visual change — to paraphrase GK Chesterton, change, certainly, but always with an eye to continuity!

BusinessDay readers were against change for change's sake, visual gimmicks or trendy layout. What they wanted was a

general tidying up of the newspaper to aid readability and legibility and to provide rapid access to information. To be more specific, they wanted basically the same information but packaged for quick and easy reading. They also felt that business does not need to be dull, thus the packaging should be a good deal brighter.

On the basis that most business people have around 20 minutes in a working day to scan their daily newspaper and digest the information they need, editorial content must be well organised and signposted. If readers are made to work, the design will fail.

Thus the *BusinessDay* redesign retains many of the features of the old newspaper (such as the same editorial grid on news pages — seven columns — and the same classic headline type, Times).

What has changed is that the entire paper has been opened up with tidier, modular layout using cleaner and more leaded text type (Cheltenham) and the use of more white space to give the paper a less grey and cramped appearance.

As the design beds down, far more emphasis will be placed on graphic representation so that readers can absorb information

at a glance. The awful truth is dawning on newspapers that people are reading less and scanning more. To be effective, newspaper design has to accommodate this new reality.

The most obvious change is to page one where a flexible skyline system is introduced to provide cross-references to major features within the paper each day. Also changed is the masthead which combines 'Business' and 'Day' into one word in small caps made up of Franklin Gothic Heavy and Perpetua Bold (the typeface used in the nameplate of the *Financial Times*). These typefaces work exceptionally well together (once the x-heights are correctly aligned) and are used in a combination of red and black — vintage wine in an African cup! The original colour choice of burgundy was beyond the printers' capability.

One of the controversial aspects of the redesign is the use of *Financial Times*

branding as part of the new *BusinessDay* masthead. In the reader focus groups we discovered that most readers had no knowledge of *BusinessDay's* relationship with the FT. Including the FT branding in the new masthead is a way of filling that perceptual vacuum. I felt that by linking *BusinessDay* visually in this way to one of the world's greatest newspapers, the local title could only enhance its credibility in an increasingly global information market. It remains a controversial design feature, with some of the paper's staff feeling it detracts from the sovereignty of the local title. However, I remain convinced it adds value and at the time of writing there was discussion that this approach might become a standard visual feature for titles linked to the FT through joint ownerships elsewhere around the world.

Adding value

Behind the redesign of *BusinessDay* lay a matrix of concerns about the paper. None of these related directly to content, which reader surveys had shown to be largely what readers expected from a business daily. Indeed, as far as content was concerned, readers appeared to want more of the same. But executives on the newspaper — in particular the editor, Jim Jones; his deputy, Bernard Simon, a former FT correspondent from Canada; and managing editor, Cheryl Lynn Iretton — were hoping the redesign would have the knock-on effect of getting everyone to add value to the paper, driving content to greater heights. In this sense the redesign was the visible part of a much broader process.

BusinessDay had remained largely unchanged since its launch in May 1985. The original formula worked so well that there was little motivation to make any changes. The paper carved its niche as the daily newspaper of record and is widely respected for its editorial neutrality, in-depth reportage and informed analysis of local and international business and related issues.

The redesign has thus to be seen against the backdrop of a winning newspaper with a steadily rising circulation in a market that is not being kind to newspapers. But for all this,

BusinessDay readers were against change for change's sake, visual gimmicks or trendy layout. What they wanted was a general tidying up of the paper to aid readability and legibility and to provide rapid access to information.



nobody was disputing that *BusinessDay* could do with a facelift, least of all the managing director of BDFM, Allan Greenbo, a seasoned and extremely capable journalist himself and one of the moving spirits behind the decision to 'remake' the paper. He was acutely aware that *BusinessDay* had remained static in visual terms and that the paper was largely untouched by the graphic revolution that had exploded all around it over the past decade.

Visual myopia

In some ways this visual myopia may have been a blessing. It meant that the paper had not become a dedicated follower of graphic fashion, like so many titles in America where newspapers have all but been stripped of their news content at the altar of design. In the case of *BusinessDay*, this meant that the tail (design) had never wagged the dog (news content).

Change, when it came, would by definition be cautious, consensual and conservative, which are precisely the values which underscore this particular redesign. While the redesign may have introduced a sense of visual modernity and an emerging graphic coherence to the paper, it has tried to remain familiar because in the newspaper context, familiarity does not breed contempt at all, it provides a comfort zone for readers overwhelmed by informational overload and the visual jambalaya of the modern consumer marketplace. In this cauldron of competing information, steady and reliable points of reference become vital. To be successful, a newspaper has to become the reading public's compass, its best and most reliable daily source of reference: a friend, companion and partner in the Devil's brew world we live in.

The implementation of the design templates, once agreed to by the editor and the BDFM board of directors, fell to *BusinessDay*'s production editor, Valdi Strauss and a talented new staffer, Matthys Moss, the paper's visual editor, who, to my knowledge, is the first such appointee in South African journalism. It is a tribute to *BusinessDay* that it should lead the way in this type of appointment. Hopefully other South African editors will be as visionary and appoint their own visual

editors to develop and safeguard the visual standards of their newspapers.

Moss came to *BusinessDay* from Cape Town where he had stewarded the redesign of the *Cape Times*. He had also worked with the American-based newspaper designer, Rolf Rehe when he came to South Africa to redesign *Die Burger* in 1990.

Moss's job on *BusinessDay* will be to take visual control of the paper, ensure that the redesign beds down over time and then to inject the graphic excellence that the newspaper will need to become a world-class title. This will not happen overnight. Incremental graphic advances, however, will steadily be made throughout the newspaper as time goes by. Illustrations and information graphics will become regular features while editorially readers of *BusinessDay* are likely to be introduced to more of the content of the *Financial Times*, particularly on analysis pages.

Adding personalised columns will encourage and attract talented writers to strut their stuff in *BusinessDay*.

Hopefully, one of the major knock-on effects of the redesign will be better print quality,

which has now become vital because of the cautious introduction of more refined graphics and, of course, colour into the newspaper. I say 'cautious' both because of print constraints (oh to have presses in South Africa that could emulate the colour quality taken for granted in European and American newspaper markets) and reader perceptions of colour usage.

From all of the above it is clear that the redesign of *BusinessDay* is really only the next step in the evolution of South Africa's leading business paper. The paper has shed its old skin and will continue to evolve and remake itself, always getting closer to its readers and their needs. The new design package has been created to provide the platform for that evolution both visually and editorially.

Kerry Swift is executive director of Fox Strategic Limited in Johannesburg and is the founding editor of the Rhodes Journalism Review. Working with him on the BusinessDay redesign were Preven Moodley and Wayne Rietfeld in the Fox Publishing studio. These pages were designed by Fox Studio's Leon Lazarus.

To be successful, a newspaper has to become the reading public's compass, its best and most reliable daily source of reference; a friend, companion and partner in the Devil's brew world we live in.



ABOVE: The design templates for *AfterHours*, the Friday leisure section, and the leader page.

BELOW: Examples of flexibility in the skyline system. BOTTOM LEFT: A synthesis of north and south, the FT and the old *BusinessDay* emerge in a bright new package.



THE TRC AND THE MEDIA

the next agenda



BY HUGH LEWIN

The photos you can't see, yet

THE TRC HOLDS copyright on hundreds of photographs taken by international photographer George Hallett during the life of the commission.

The images tell a story about life behind the walls of TRC offices. There are photographs of staff at work. There are scenes of bizarre encounters, such as a meeting between perpetrator Eugene de Kock and an affectionate TRC tea lady, and another of De Kock with an uncomfortable Jann Turner, daughter of murdered activist Rick Turner. There are photographs of the TRC's documentation centre where part of the country's history is being held. There are even photographs taken at Pretoria Central Prison of the files of apartheid spies.

The TRC has allowed some of these photographs to be published overseas and they have also been used in its official newsletter Truth Talk.

Yet when *Siyaya!* – Idasa's publication – approached the TRC requesting permission to publish a few of these photographs and so assist in bringing the work of the TRC to the broader South African public, the request was denied.

A letter from the TRC's media department, referring to the decision taken on the matter by chief executive officer Biki Minyuku, said "We do not see our way clear to authorising the use of these photographs at present. We have been engaged in discussions of copyright issues and the commission has not been able to formulate policy on this."

After repeated requests Minyuku granted permission for *Siyaya!* to use one photograph. But when they selected a photograph of the documentation centre he declined permission. The second choice, a photograph of two TRC interpreters in their glass booth, was allowed. This appears in Volume 3 of *Siyaya!*

But questions remain: when will ordinary South Africans, whose taxes funded the TRC, be able to see these photographs? Why was this valuable resource commissioned if the photographs were never intended to be widely published in South Africa?

HAVING HAD an amazing two-year experience as a member of the TRC's Human Rights Violations Committee in Gauteng, I would like to say something about the significance of the TRC hearings and, especially, about the way they have been covered by the South African media.

It has been the best and longest-running story of the decade. It has produced some of the most dramatic human interest stories imaginable (for example, would any news editor ever have accepted an account from any reporter of how a group of policemen discover how long it takes to burn a body on a fire, particularly the buttocks, while their colleagues stand by, braaiing their own steaks and downing their inevitable cans of Castle? We now know, chillingly, that that was for real – and I think it'll remain one of the most devastating images to come out of the TRC process).

The TRC coverage has been important for what has been reported – and for what has not been reported; and covering the TRC has produced some of the most consistent and sustained reporting we've ever seen, in all of the media, most particularly on TV.

It's been a good time for the SA media. For me: I've felt schizophrenic for these last two years, being on the one hand a member of the Human Rights Violations panel, organising and participating in some 15 public hearings and at the same time trying to ignore the fact that I'm a journalist. I've had to respond to the revelations and testimony as a compassionate and listening panelist, allowing the witnesses scope and space to tell their stories on an international platform which they have never had before (and will never again), then offer solace and consolation for their pain, sympathy for their suffering – never being the insensitive digger, the pushy reporter.

It's often been awkward, like finding ourselves having to choose which witnesses would best reflect the turbulent history of a community through several difficult and different years. Would it, for instance, be better to take witness A, who talks of four deaths at a night vigil, as opposed to the mother who talks only of one death at a funeral? How do you quantify personal loss? How do you measure the intense intimacy of torture and pain? It's like the braaiing of buttocks, and suddenly realising how horrendous it all is. And then finding that it's not you and your reactions which matter: it's the community's. It's their story, and they want it told, and you are just the medium, the messenger, so make absolutely sure you have it right. Clear and simple.

That, I think, is what the TRC hearings have done for SA and the media. It's changed the nature of story-telling. By giving this open, front-of-the-lights platform to the people (not the leaders, not the preachers, not the politicians), the real people with their own stories, in their own time and place and language – by giving them that opportunity, we have changed the nature of story-telling, and how we report it.

When you listen, for instance, as happened at the Alexandra township hearings, to a mother telling how she returned home one day and saw her child shot, then saw the people who shot him batter his head against a rock to make sure he was dead, then you can have no pre-determined for-

mula for reporting, no easy intro, no trite pyramids. Now you have to listen and record in a way that wipes you out as "the messenger".

You cannot dare to interpret, you cannot presume to explain. You can only record, very precisely, what you have heard and how you have heard it. It makes nonsense of our rules and guidelines and so-called objectivity. It's not about sound-bites or the selection of "main points". It is a process that takes a long time to tell and is very humbling.

But it's also a very important process and will take a long time to absorb, analyse and learn how to report it – and, only then, see how it can become part of a healing process. There can be no "micro-wave reconciliation" – and certainly no easy summaries of the impact this has had on all our lives.

What it has also done, in a way that has been totally unexpected, is to put human rights on the agenda in a way that's not been imaginable before. Nobody – whoever and wherever they are – can again ignore the importance of human rights as a legitimate, urgent, necessary component of social behaviour, and therefore as a legitimate and necessary focus of any newsroom diary. This is a part of the future agenda that we as journalists must all accept, then start digging, and reporting.

That's the other major feature of the TRC for the media. Whatever has not been revealed in the past nearly three years (and that's saying some!), there has nevertheless been a huge volume of material that has emerged from the hearings process, and another huge mountain of material that has been deposited with the commission and that, now the report has been handed over, becomes available for researchers.

By giving this open, front-of-the-lights platform to the people (not the leaders, not the preachers, not the politicians), the real people with their own stories, in their own time and place and language – by giving them that opportunity, we have changed the nature of story-telling.

At the front of the queue, I submit, must be journalists. To mention just two examples. Report every Sunday night (and I think Max du Preez's team produced some 84 programmes, which they're now reducing to six tapes), was a selection of, at most, some 10% of the testimonies heard at each public hearing; and those testimonies were, again, a selection of some 10% of the testimonies made by communities. There remains the bulk of the testimonies made to the Human Rights Violations Committee – the final figure is 20 300: each has its own story, and each needs telling; plus there are the thousands of stories of those who didn't testify, and why didn't they? And then the 7 500/8 000 amnesty cases, with applications from the perpetrators – there's already a big disparity between the "victim" testimonies and those of the perpetrators. What of the other perpetrators? Many others.

That's our challenge as journalists: to begin delving through these stories and unravelling, firstly, the mass of information the TRC has collected and not yet analysed; and secondly, the mass of tantalising leads which now need to be chased.

It'll take years, of course, and a great deal of commitment from journalists (and from their bosses, to drag them into realising the importance of investigative journalism), but it must be done. It'll be both a challenge and exciting.

Hugh Lewin is director of the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism

1 spy

BY ROGER FRIEDMAN

IN A LETTER last year to Judge Hassen Mall, head of the commission's amnesty committee, Deputy President Thabo Mbeki argued that the network of apartheid informers, spies and collaborators formed part of the machinery responsible for gross violations of human rights. It was vital that the machinery be disclosed and dismantled.

Reluctance to disclose the network could indicate that it had not been dismantled. It would also suggest that the network could continue to be used for purposes inimical to reconciliation and democracy.

In its first submission to the commission in August 1996, the ANC urged the TRC to investigate which agents were deployed in the organisation and among its allies, whether any such agents had contributed to the gross violation of human rights, and whether any agents unknowingly brought back into the country by the ANC "were reintegrated into the networks of the state".

The issue does not relate so much to retribution as to the problem of questionable loyalties, and South Africa is not the first newly democratic country to have to decide how to deal with former anti-democracy collaborators. Countries in both South America and Eastern Europe have faced similar predicaments in recent times.

"One of the first issues that confronted the officials of the new Czech and Slovak Federated Republic was what to do with the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic's old officials. The new administration felt that the nation needed fresh energy and ideas, and worried that old communists would sabotage reform," United States author Tina Rosenberg wrote in *The Haunted Land: Facing Europe's Ghosts after Communism*.



"The federal assembly passed a law that came to be known as lustrace, from the Latin term for ritual purification. Lustrace banned the people who had run the old regime from important governmental posts. It was easy enough to identify the party officials but secret police collaborators were another matter.

Fortunately the secret police, or StB, had left behind its hard disk and central registry.

"The need for lustrace was obvious. The StB had been everywhere, and it had not disappeared overnight ... lustrace was also needed as a solution to the problem of blackmail. It was widely agreed that many people in the registry were not committed communist agents but unfortunate victims of blackmail. But if they had been blackmailed once, they could be blackmailed again, and the StB could continue to control their behaviour in government posts by threatening to reveal their collaborators."

However, the picture of Czech and Slovak lustrace that Rosenberg paints is not a pretty one. The ritual purification was driven by detailed lists of collaborators compiled by the StB. The information on the database was not investigated, and people were purged from positions purely on the basis of the lists. And then the lists were leaked.

In June 1992 a group of students working in the StB smuggled out computer disks containing the registry lists. The lists were then published in three successive issues of a satirical right-wing newspaper. About 160 000 names were published.

"Thousands on the list found themselves condemned without trial, their relationships with colleagues, friends and family unalterably changed ...

"For those listed as agents, their only recourse is the court. Although slow in coming, the verdicts were a blow to lustrace. By April 1993 the courts had rendered judgements in 70 cases, finding all 70 StB-positives innocent of collaboration."

According to Rosenberg, the German version of lustrace worked better. There, the files were in the custody of an independent authority that shielded them from political abuse. A German employer wishing to screen an employee would be given a substantial portion of the employee's Stasi file so as to be able to evaluate whether the employee had sold out friends or had been a hapless blackmail victim. The employee would not be fired solely on the basis that his or her name appeared on a list.

South Africa established the TRC in preference to a lustrace clone, which does not imply that the government will not purge people regarded as untrustworthy from its ranks at some stage.

Among the tons of paper in the TRC documentation centre in Adderley Street are the names of alleged apartheid collaborators — in the media, in business, in the security forces, in government, in education, in the medical and associated professions — some of whose activities have not been investigated. What will be done with these names?

This is an excerpt from "Necessary Secrets?" a report on the TRC's archives reprinted with permission from Siyaya, an Idasa publication.

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Siyaya!, a quarterly political magazine, is a showcase of excellence in South African journalism. Featuring the country's top writers and photographers, its aim is to stimulate debate on the tough questions confronting the country in the run-up to the 1999 elections and beyond. Themes covered include racism, crime and social delivery.



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A statistical analysis of these magazines strongly supports the belief that they have restricted their coverage of the dangers of smoking out of fear of losing advertising revenue.

Where there's smoke

(there's advertising revenue)



BY MANETTE MARAIS

ARE THE MEDIA "helping" the tobacco industry in its efforts to keep the public in the dark about the real health risks of smoking by not divulging too much about the health dangers of smoking out of fear of losing advertising revenue?

Advertising plays an important role in influencing the ways in which health information reaches populations in developing countries.

According to Wallack and Montgomery in "Advertising for All by the year 2000" (in the *Journal of Public Health Policy* no 13) tobacco advertising, in fact, distorts public health messages and is particularly successful in influencing poor and uneducated people to start and continue smoking.

Health professionals and critics of the media have charged that magazines that depend on revenue from cigarette advertisements are less likely than others to publish articles dealing with the hazards of smoking for fear of offending cigarette manufacturers.

This "censorship phenomenon" has already been proven in Europe and the United States.

This paper investigates the relationship between tobacco advertising and the amount (or lack thereof) of articles and references related to the dangers of smoking in six South African magazines, namely *Cosmopolitan*, *Sarie* and *Bona* as compared to *Living & Loving*, *Longevity* and *Your Baby*.

During 1996 these six magazines had a collective circulation of 740 000 and an estimated readership of 4.5-million. The combined readership of *Cosmopolitan*, *Sarie* and *Bona* was nearly 4-million readers, while the other three magazines had an estimated readership of 545 000.

While the first three magazines did accept cigarette advertising, stating that advertisements placed by cigarette companies are a huge source of income, they also claimed that they do not encourage readers to smoke. They would therefore never feature a model smoking in a fashion story or on an editorial page.

Longevity, *Your Baby* and *Living & Loving* indicated that they will not accept advertising for products which pose a potential health risk to their readers. Adel Conradie, marketing coordinator of *Your Baby* said: "Smoking is definitely not advised for our target market. Our magazine rather aims to publish credible information about health and nutrition, giving our readers all the facts and then the option to choose."

In 1996 the South African tobacco industry spent R180-million on cigarette advertising, the equivalent of R35 per second. Almost R75 million, or 41%, was devoted to tobacco advertising

in the printed media, with magazines receiving R35 million.

Overall, R1,96 million was spent on tobacco advertising in *Cosmopolitan*, *Sarie* and *Bona*.

In absolute terms *Sarie*'s income from these advertisements was the highest at just more than R1 million, with *Cosmopolitan* earning second highest with R791 600 and then *Bona* with R649 900. However, for *Bona*, the proportion of advertising expenditure on tobacco was the highest at 6,3%, with *Sarie* at 5% and *Cosmopolitan* 3,5%.

A statistical analysis of these magazines strongly supports the belief that they have restricted their coverage of the dangers of smoking out of fear of losing advertising revenue.

Magazines like *Longevity*, *Your Baby* and *Living & Loving*, who refuse tobacco advertising, were four times more likely to publish articles or references on the health implications of smoking than *Cosmopolitan*, *Sarie* or *Bona*.

The articles in these three magazines were also of a better quality and carried more prominently than in *Cosmopolitan*, *Sarie* or *Bona*.

In December 1996, subsequent to the article on the dangers of smoking, Bona's income from tobacco companies dropped by 80% with only one tobacco advertisement.

With the exception of *Bona*, which carried a short article on the danger of smoking in November 1996, the references to the health hazards of smoking were short, obscure and often in the last sentence or paragraph of fairly long articles. In some instances the health danger of this habit was played down and used out of context. For example, *Sarie* published an article on high blood pressure in its January 17, 1996 edition. Although it is a proven medical fact that smoking can be potentially lethal for people with this condition, smoking is mentioned in the same sentence as "drinking too much cof-

fee". In medical terms these two health hazards are not comparable.

What is even more worrying is the fact that smoking is not mentioned at all in other articles where it is supposed to be on top of the list and where other less important measures to improve one's health are discussed at length and in great detail.

Whether magazines are systematically "punished" by the withdrawal of cigarette advertisements is difficult to prove. But it remains a possibility. For example, in November 1996 *Bona* published an article "Smoking can kill" in the education supplement, sponsored by *Mondi*. In that specific month the magazine derived R92 500 from four tobacco advertisements. In December 1996, subsequent to the article, *Bona*'s income from tobacco companies dropped by 80% to R74 100 with only one tobacco advertisement.

Cosmopolitan was the only magazine to portray smoking as "something everyone does". In the October 1996 edition the cigar is described as "the hottest new accessory in Hollywood" (p21). In April 1996 an article about the contents of a woman's handbag features a photo with different articles men can expect to find in a woman's handbag and includes a packet of *Camel* cigarettes.

Cosmopolitan earned some R790 000 in 1996 with 42 full-page tobacco advertisements, while only about 20cm of editorial space was allocated to health information on tobacco.

In contrast, *Living & Loving*, *Longevity* and *Your Baby* contained interesting, informative and also controversial and very newsworthy articles on tobacco-related illnesses.

For example, in September 1996 *Longevity* published a three page-article entitled "Tobacco wars", a controversial cloak-and-dagger story about the tobacco companies' strategies to keep the scientific findings that smoking causes cancer and heart disease from the public.

This allegation was later proven true with the promulgation of the *Brown & Williamson* documents (an admission from one of the US's biggest tobacco companies that it had deliberately manipulated the nicotine levels of cigarettes) in the first half of 1996. This would have been an article within the scope of *Cosmopolitan*'s range of articles.

Other examples of new and obviously newsworthy information in 1996 regarding the dangers of tobacco include medical findings of a relationship between smoking and leukaemia and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. These were reported only in *Longevity*, *Your Baby* and *Living & Loving*.

► continued on page 31

A total ban on tobacco advertising in South Africa, particularly in magazines, will have far-reaching effects. For some magazines, especially new titles catering for previously disadvantaged readers, a cut in advertising income may be too much of a brunt to bear.

These findings obviously question the integrity of journalism practised by magazines accepting tobacco advertising. Less obvious, however, is the implication of this journalistic taciturnity for public health.

Millions of South Africans are still uninformed and underestimate the health dangers of tobacco. A study, conducted in 1992 by researchers Yach, McIntyre, and Saloojee, ("Smoking in South Africa — health and economic impact"), showed that 17% of smokers thought that active smoking was not bad for their health, while 20% were unsure about the dangers. Twenty-eight percent did not think passive smoking was a health risk.

However, a total ban on tobacco advertising in South Africa, particularly in magazines, will have far-reaching effects. For some magazines, especially new titles catering for previously disadvantaged readers, a cut in advertising income may be too much of a brunt to bear.

Thus, the vehicle that could potentially carry information on the health hazards of smoking to readers could be stopped in its tracks by such stringent legislation. Measures to ensure that tobacco advertisers cannot penalise or punish publications by, for example, taking away their business, could be a better solution.

Such a system could have tobacco companies paying for the publication of the dangers of their products. This idea is not at all far-fetched when the agreement between the United States' attorney and this country's tobacco industry is examined.

In June 1997 the American tobacco industry agreed to pay out \$368.5-billion over the next quarter century in compensation and to drastically alter their marketing programmes.

As part of the agreement the US tobacco industry will fund programmes to help smokers stop and launch a campaign to reduce smoking by youths by 50% within seven years. The industry will pay an \$80-million penalty for each percentage point that the industry falls short of the target (*Time*, 30 June 1997).

This idea could be the starting point for discussion and negotiation between the South African legislature and the tobacco industry.

Manette Marais is a B-Tech student at the Department of Journalism, Technikon Pretoria.

To smoke or not to smoke

IN response to Health Minister Nkosazana Zuma's anti-tobacco bill 10 first-year journalism students at Rhodes University decided to conduct a survey of their peers on smoking. They interviewed 25 students who had begun smoking in 1997 and found that peer pressure, boredom and stress were the most cited reasons for beginning to smoke. Other reasons given were curiosity and because smoking was seen as "fun" and "cool".



said advertising affected choice of brand. When asked to rate five brands (Gaulloises, Benson&Hedges, Camel, Peter Stuyvesant and Gunston) on a "coolness" scale — Gaulloises came out tops. Yet, a majority smoked Camel and Peter Stuyvesant. Many said they smoked whatever was cheapest and available.

One person said he doesn't buy his own because "dad sends them".

Despite Stuyvesant promotion of music concerts

and Gunston's promotion of the surf circuit, most people rated their advertising "uncool".

"The most difficult thing about the survey was finding people on campus who had started

to smoke this year," the class reported.

Because of this they then widened their survey and spoke to a further 67 people to ascertain the average age at which university students begin to smoke. They found that students in the age group 18 to 22 had been smoking for between one and seven years. The average age at which students had started smoking was 15.

The Tobacco Product Control Amendment Bill aim is to reduce smoking among the young by banning all forms of tobacco advertising.



Everyone else was and I wanted to try it out.



"I started smoking because I got too nervous after my initiation experience earlier this year," one smoker said. A few blamed the stress of exams. Drinking and parties were

often the cause for young

people experimenting with tobacco:

"Everyone else was and I wanted to try it out," one said. "I used to smoke at parties when I was drunk and then it became a habit," another said.

None of the respondents cited advertising as a reason. It was only when questioned closely that six said advertising had been a factor in their decision. Seven



I used to smoke at parties when I was drunk and then it became a habit



Is it hot or is it cool?

The Namibian media watchdog or lapdog?



BY GWEN LISTER

IT SEEMS to me that the media can be divided into three categories: lapdogs, attack dogs and watchdogs. We have all three. And when one looks back over 100 years of media in Namibia, we have to admit that the record has not always been a proud one.

Many of the media collaborated with governments in the suppression of information thereby contributing to the suppression of the people themselves. Instead of merely patting ourselves on the back, I think we have to look critically at where we have been and where we are going.

Today we have an environment far more conducive to press freedom than in the past. Yet often journalists themselves fail to exercise this freedom, lapsing into apathy and/or lapdog journalism. Editors, I believe, should shoulder a

lot of the blame — on many occasions they have suppressed the work of journalists.

They should also take a long, hard and critical look at themselves about whether they are creating an environment in which it is possible for journalists to exercise freedom of expression, and they should give support and encouragement to their young colleagues and serve as fearless role models in the profession.

Namibia has experienced a number of incidents where editors spike stories, not because they

are badly written or poorly researched, but because they go counter to the political agenda of the editor him/herself. This is an unacceptable state of affairs.

In most of the countries of Southern Africa, government is the main, although not necessarily the only, target of media when it comes to watchdog, lapdog or attack journalism.

In developing democracies in Southern Africa, government tends to be the focus of the media for a number of reasons. Many of our countries have become used to undemocratic regimes in one way or another. In many parts of Africa, lifelong dictators use and abuse power indiscriminately.

In our region an undemocratic racist regime did the same, and our people had none of the fundamental freedoms that we are all trying so hard to learn and come to terms with today.

Therefore the new, and supposedly democratic regimes (although many of them are not democratic and we need to remind ourselves that historically the former SA regime called itself “democratic”) are being watched closely by citizens.

Is the new democracy here to stay, or is it something that will erode with time? I would suggest that democracy in most of the countries of the region is very fragile and vulnerable. Governments have not necessarily committed themselves to the Windhoek Declaration in practice and intimidation continues unabated.

Which brings me to the watchdog role of journalism in these countries. If I take the example of my own country, Namibia, then a number of factors make this watchdog role indispensable.

Namibia, while not a one party state, is a one party dominant state. The political opposition is

fragmented and weak. Parliament’s traditional watchdog role is therefore eroded where the largest party has a two-thirds majority. The ruling party still operates in an authoritarian, top-down way, and similarly in government this is mirrored in a lack of transparency and accountability which in turn impedes the free flow of information. Civil society is small and still developing, and much of it is in any case tied to the ruling party through political, trade union and other affiliations.

This situation places more of the watchdog functions on the media than would generally be the case in a developed and long-standing democracy. There are other mechanisms and institutions in place to perform watchdog functions, and they include the Auditor General, the Ombudsman, among others, but these offices have their limitations.

It will come as no surprise therefore, that government comes under the closest scrutiny. This is not to say that I advocate the watchdog role of media only with regard to government. Quite the contrary. Watchdog journalism should be a permanent state of affairs, and should include areas such as national security, economics, NGOs and others.

Under the circumstances I would venture, portions of the media fare pretty well as far as standards of watchdog or investigative journalism are concerned. But there should be more of it and what there is, should be even better: We do have many constraints that make themselves felt in the exercise of these duties.

Most of our journalists, and I include myself, have fairly general news functions. Due both to financial constraints as well as training inadequacies, our reporters tend to cover a spectrum

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One of the most common complaints from members of the public who resent media probes into people accused of corruption, for example, is that we have an “anti government agenda”.





PHOTO BY JACQUI PILE

Station Manager Randall Abrahams on youth, kwaito, local content and what South African music needs now.

Youth FM

a state of mind

BY LARRY STRELITZ

YFM has exploded onto the local radio scene. When it was launched in October 1988 the station expected an average daily listenership of 300 000 in the first year. After only two months YFM tripled this figure and now with its almost one million daily listeners, it is the largest regional station in South Africa. Ninety-four percent black-owned — by a consortium of trade union, youth, black business and media professionals — it is arguably the most significant black empowerment venture so far in the commercial media environment. While the station's target audience is youth aged between 16 and 30 the station defines "youth" as a "state of mind" rather than a sociological category.

The music played on YFM — at least 45% of it local in content — is central to the station's identity and underlies the station's claims that "youth from 15 to 50+ all enjoy and party to YFM's music and enjoy similar lifestyles".

All of this makes the station's head, Randall Abrahams, arguably the most successful radio station manager in the country. As someone with an intimate knowledge of the role that music has historically played in defining and shaping youth culture, Abrahams is sensitive to the interplay between music and identity. In practice what this means for YFM is that the on-air presenters and disc jockeys come from the station's target community. "This ensures an identification between the community and the personalities on air and ensures that the general radio language spoken is one that the listeners can understand and identify with," notes Abrahams.

"We are concerned with how we feature in people's lives rather than simply being a radio station," says Abrahams. "Radio is a background medium and if what's on air fits in with their lifestyle and what they're doing, it will be successful."

Much of the local music played on the station is kwaito, which, according to the station, "is essentially a local take on hip-hop — a music revolution that has taken the world by storm from Kingstown to New York, from London to Tokyo". Kwaito is more than just music, it lies at the centre of an emerging new youth culture, influencing dress, speech and attitude.

"It is a party-driven culture," says Abrahams, that reflects the feeling among many Gauteng youth "that there is no time like the present because there might just not be a tomorrow."

What this means is that, unlike adult contemporary radio stations, the music played on YFM has a relatively short lifespan, because the popularity of songs appealing to this "community" is ephemeral.

"Records that appeal to the youth are often not produced to last very long," says Abrahams. "They're produced to sound hip today and tomorrow we're on to something else."

This short musical life-span might, within the context of music-as-commodity, make economic sense, but it does have its downside for an aesthete like Abrahams.

"If we compare the contemporary music scene to that of the 1960s and 1970s what becomes apparent is that very few contemporary records will ever achieve 'classic' status. In 20 years time we'll still be talking about The Beatles but will anyone remember Celine Dion?"

If we marry this pre-occupation with the present to the concern for designer labels and generalised conspicuous consumption what does this tell us about the Gauteng youth?

"The youth that I come into contact with are not as politicised as the kids were in the 1980s. But that's to be expected after the transition that we've had in which people have rights which they have never had before. There are a lot more choices available to black youth today, and cars and dress are important because they are indicative of one's success in this new field of possibilities."

Staying with this theme of increased material consumption reflecting a new-found confidence, Abrahams feels that South African popular culture can provide models of black economic success for the youth.

"We have to build successful stars who kids want to be someday. White kids have always had economic role models and if we don't get black kids into business then we're going to suffer. This is one of the ways to do it."

Abrahams also feels that local music, especially kwaito, can play an important role in creating a shared identity among South African youth.

"There are a lot of white youth who don't feel good about the country at the moment and what kwaito could do is change these youths' minds about who they are and what they want to be."

However, in order to do this, the music has to shift its pre-occupation with the black experience.

"We need to maintain the rhythmic lexicon but talk a musical language that is understood in a context which is wider than that of the black youth to whom it currently appeals."

Abrahams feels that making this crossover will not be difficult.

"Since it is lyrically so sparse, we could simply put a few hip phrases into it which white youth could also identify with. Unfortunately, we also need to overcome the prejudice of certain radio stations who play only what they regard as 'white' music."

Like reggae, which transformed ska's localised Jamaican appeal into a world music, Abrahams believes that changing the lyrical content of kwaito could do the same for this music.

"We need to maintain the rhythmic lexicon but talk a musical language that is understood by international youth. The world is looking for something new in music and kwaito could certainly be that thing."

Despite the success of YFM, Abrahams is critical of decisions taken by the IBA in the granting of licenses to commercial radio stations.

"I think that the IBA has licensed radio stations which play music for which there will never be a substantial audience in this country — such as jazz and classical music. As such, they won't attract advertisers and will thus never be financially viable."

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BY BRENDAN BOYLE

THERE IS the traditional news agency (Reuters, the Associated Press, Agence France Press or AFP, Deutsche Presse Agentur or DPA, Britain's Press Association and our own South African Press Association or Sapa) and then there is the new breed of financial information vendor: Reuters, Dow Jones, Bloomberg, AFX, Bridge and, exclusive to South Africa, I-Net.

Though there are elements of crossover, Reuters is the only one that clearly belongs in each category. Most of the traditional news agencies are beefing up their economic coverage, but I don't think my colleagues at AP or AFP would argue if I were to say that their primary focus remains what we broadly call general news. In the same way, Bloomberg and Bridge will report major political events, but their focus remains on financial news.

Reuters remains strong — arguably dominant — in both areas. But those of us who have been in the company for more than a few years

have lived through a profound shift of focus. The Johannesburg newsroom in 1994 was made up largely of general news writers with political and conflict skills. Now, there is not one exclusive general news reporter in the team. Though some are from a general news background, all have developed significant parallel skills as finance writers.

News selection — copy tasting — is quite different in these two arenas because they

serve different users; or perhaps the same users in different phases of their days.

The financial news agency — the other kind of news agency that Reuters also is — responds to demands that are sometimes quite different.

News agencies like Reuters, AP and Sapa are wholesalers whose product is retailed mainly by newspapers, radio and television. Financial news agencies like Reuters, Bloomberg and I-Net are retailers selling a service directly to users via an electronic network. While the news agency delivers its product fast and without spe-

cific deadlines, the information vendor deals as much as possible in real time.

The deadline is always now.

Perhaps the other key difference is that news agency copy typically reflects history — that which has already happened. The information vendor is interested mainly in reflecting what is likely to happen. Clients of the financial news agency look almost solely for history that will help them to take a position on the next event — often a currency transaction a few seconds into the future — on which a profit can be turned.

To give an idea of the scale of these operations: Reuters employs more than 16 000 people around the world including 2 036 journalists in 174 bureaux in 97 countries. We report 277 markets in real time. Our services are sold in 163 countries. Our after-tax profit was £390-million or \$643-million in the year to 31 December 1997, on revenue of £2.9-billion or \$4.8-billion. Media products — what we sell to newspapers, radio, television and the Internet — accounted for only £202-million or about nine percent of that global revenue.

Even on that revenue, Reuters remains the biggest international news agency in the world, but the real money is in transaction products — trading systems — and, mainly, information products, which earned revenue of £1.8-billion last year.

This is the pie for which Reuters, Bloomberg and Bridge are fighting so hard. The general news agency continues to deliver its service on the electronic equivalent of a printer churning out reams of paper. The financial service typically is either a proprietary terminal on a dealer's desk or a data feed into an open platform run by a company or corporation which allows all or many of its staff to read our information on their network terminals.

This is the world of real time. Though it is nice as a journalist or a publicist to see your efforts reflected in the evening newspaper, it is in the realm of real time that you can really influence the world and benefit your boss, your minister or your product.

The reason Trevor Manuel delivered a 3.5% deficit on Wednesday and didn't give the Housing Minister a blank cheque was that the markets wouldn't allow it.

The reason the rand went into free fall in February 1996 and stabilised down 30% a year later was that the markets believed President Mandela was on the way out and no credible successor had been internationally identified.

The market is fuelled by Reuters and its competitors delivering accurate, concise information to dealers in everything from platinum futures to shares on the Namibian stock exchange at their desks in real time.

Much of the million words a day that moves across our network of land and satellite connections is automatically generated by about 4 000 contributors — many of them computers recording share, bond, currency and derivative transactions as they happen.

The rest is generated in our newsrooms, where increasingly specialised teams of financial specialists are tracking trends in all of these areas, highlighting those which they believe the markets would want to know about and collating analysis of the trends that are identified. As services like the Stock Exchange News Service (SENS), and the Internet take over the chore of moving data from source to user, the financial news agencies are shifting their efforts to extraction and analysis of the information. We are increasingly adding value to the information we move to retain our relevance.

There is an insatiable demand for news, information and analysis affecting markets: the more people we hire, the harder they work and the more stories they file, the more the market demands. Whereas we might spend an hour or 90 minutes on a news story, our coverage of, say Reserve Bank governor Chris Stals' presentation to the finance committee at Parliament is largely gutted within 10 minutes. We will measure our performance against our competitors in micro-seconds, we will demand analysis of market-moving events from economists and traders within moments of their happening and we will, quite often, report the market reaction to an item of news before we have finished writing the story itself.

If a company issues a cautionary announcement saying it is in talks with another major player, we would file a single line on it, follow that up a moment later with a paragraph fleshing out the alert and then begin work on the body of a story that explains what we can find out about the event. If the share price moves on the cautionary announcement, we will have a paragraph out on that before the second or third paragraph of the main story has been written. We probably will have the views of a sector analyst on the wire within five minutes of the first indication that the price is moving.

As with the commentary and analysis of more general news, our reports on financial

This is the world of real time. Though it is nice as a journalist or a publicist to see your efforts reflected in the evening newspaper, it is in the realm of real time that you can really influence the world.

The deadline is always

now

events are based on the views and analysis of people with standing in that arena.

We will want to speak to CEOs — and usually do. We will want to hear from chief economists and usually do.

The financial product combines the news definition that I mentioned earlier with the separate value system of the information industry. When a share price moves, it is behaving contrary to expectation and making news. When two companies merge they are behaving contrary to expectations and making news. When a senior executive resigns he is behaving contrary to expectations and making news.

But while we might decline to report expected activities in the general news arena, financial information is made up to a large part of detailed information that confirms expectations.

The distinction is founded on the different uses that clients have for the information we provide. Traders in any share, bond or commodity make their decisions as much on an expectation confirmed as they do on the basis of an unexpected development.

What they need, though, is to have that information a moment before a competitor trading in the same instrument and that is why this category of agency reporting is so crucially affected by speed — and, of course, accuracy. The motto of this field, which is borrowed, I believe, from the old United Press, remains: "Get it first, but first get it right."

Serving this market requires a sharp focus on the news and information that it will want to see — and on that it will not want to be bothered with. Though a financial information vendor moves huge amounts of information, much of it statistical data, its clients are very sensitive to clutter. They are quick to complain if we fill a screen with news they do not want and even quicker to complain if we fail to report something they do want to read.

While a news agency relies heavily on sources who will take the initiative to come forward, the financial news agency relies heavily on a network of contacts we can reach for a better and timely input.

Both the news agency and the financial news agency specialise in moving news fast. That can mean minutes or occasionally hours on a general news story and seconds or occasionally minutes on a financial story.

News agencies are more focused than most other media, providing a core service with focused analysis and commentary. Input to a news agency file needs to be brief, to the point and from the right source.

News agencies are the frontline of reporting, whether it be on human tragedy or market developments. We have limited numbers of people to deploy and they are used, generally, only for the main stories of the day. This can mean that a news agency quite often will decline to cover an appealing, interesting or worthy story offered by a news source who, just a day before, it was fighting for a front row seat on another story.

Brendan Boyle is bureau chief of Reuters in Johannesburg.

The naked truth about transformation

BY SANDILE MAMELE

WHATEVER programme has been undertaken by the media to restore credibility and dignity to itself, the introduction of the much talked about transformation will always leave something to be desired.

At whatever level we examine the process — new relationships in the newsrooms, top positions for blacks, the human admixture in boardrooms and cocktail parties — transformation is quite simply the replacing of white men by the same species with a different hue.

Without any doubt, transformation as a strategy to introduce renaissance in the media lacks totality, is incomplete and empty of meaningful content.

It is true that a handful of black males have risen in the ranks, creating the false impression of overhauling the media industry, siting top-dog decision-making meetings and having their voices heard in the right circles.

But these men have been chosen precisely to speak in an accent that resonates with Africanness as measured by skin colour, which does not change the subject of the issues.

The unusual success of transformation is that it constitutes, from the very first day that it was pursued, the minimum demand of radically changing the print and broadcasting industry.

To tell the truth, the proof of its achievement lies in a whole economic superstructure not being changed from the bottom up.

The extraordinary importance of this strategy is that it is willed, dictated by the few powerful individuals who own the monopolies that determine the content of the news given to the nation.

But the danger of this phenomenon is equally lost to seasoned white male journalists in the form of perhaps not realising that the system is merely reinventing itself at their expense.

Transformation, which supposedly set out to change the order of the media world, obviously, is a programme of gradual unfolding to avoid disorder in what makes the economic system work.

But it has not arrived with the magical results of assuring white males who have been the storm troopers of a handful of media owners.

The way it has been superficially explained is that it is a political and histori-

cal process that can only be understood by the profile of a handful of black males whose presence in the upper echelons should signal the end of the road of their white male rivals.

Many people have discerned significant movement in the media industry simply because more and more black males (and white females) are supposedly taking up positions, offices, and privileges that have been the prerogative of white males.

But there has been no meeting of philosophical or economic forces, opposed to each by their very nature, which owe their fight to the place of man in society.

Instead, a handful of black males identified for their allegiance to exploitation and oppression have been brought together with their white counterparts to carry out the entrenchment of the system.

Now the black male and his white counterpart are neither rivals nor enemies but close friends and collaborators.

In fact, those who are dissatisfied with the substance and content of transformation and affirmative action, for that matter, are right when they speak about it as a gimmick to hide the gluttony of a few.

For those who own the economy have promoted selected black males (and some white females) into positions of privilege to perpetuate the existence of an economic system that exploits.

The successful media practitioners who have benefited a great deal from so-called transformation owe the fact of their achievement and recognition to upholding white, supremacist, patriarchal, capitalist society.

And yet transformation has not failed to be a point of contention between black and white, for it has successfully distracted focus from the burning issue: an exploitative economic system.

The naked truth about transformation in the media is the lack of a complete calling to question the unchanging economic system.

If we want to describe it precisely, we might find it in the well-worn words: add a few black faces at the top. That is why, when many try hard enough to think, soon it is realised that the more things change, the more they stay the same.

You do not turn any society upside down with a programme that does not overcome obstacles in changing the character of the nation.

Sandile Mamele is features editor at City Press and will join Sunday World shortly.

Those who are dissatisfied with the substance and content of transformation and affirmative action are right when they speak about it as a gimmick to hide the gluttony of a few.

We put together an advisory committee for our management training centre of top industry leaders. These included representatives from the Chicago Tribune, USA Today, Washington Post, New York Times and many smaller newspapers as well.

The result of our joint efforts was a training programme of eight weeks that heavily incorporated principles of business and management. Two weeks of field site experience offered participants the opportunity to test some of the principles.

Leading newspapers sent their most promising people — those minority journalists who were fast-tracked to become metro or managing editors and those who were from the business side of the newspaper as well.

Some of our graduates include top editors and publishers such as John X Miller, now a publisher in the Gannett chain; Philip Dixon of the Philadelphia Inquirer; Wanda Lloyd, formerly a top editor of the USA Today and now managing editor of Gannett's Greenville SC newspaper; Dorothy Blan, now a publisher in New York state, and many more.

We also made a decision — controversial at the time — to include white women and later white men in the project. Our thinking was that whites needed to know how to manage a multi-cultural America and who better to help train them than those who were fighting to have their culture respected by the mainstream?

The editing training programme and the management training are still in operation today. IJE was renamed the Maynard Institute for Journalism Education after one of our founders, Robert C Maynard who died a few years ago after a distinguished and brilliant career of leadership and service in diversity, and as the first black owner of a metropolitan daily paper, the Oakland Tribune.

I briefly want to mention the parallel diversity movement in America — the activist, membership organisations.

The National Association of Black Journalists was begun in 1975 to further and promote all of the principles of the free press in a democracy, with the added mandate of pushing to increase the hiring and promotion of blacks; to promote more balanced coverage of African Americans and to give our communities greater access to media. It is now the largest media organisation of people of colour in the world — with 3 000 members that include TV and print working journalists, academics and students.

Following our pattern the other ethnic journalists of colour also organised beginning in the late 1970s and 80s.

Talk about unity.

Dorothy Butler Gilliam is a columnist on The Washington Post.

Legal Journalist of the Year Award

SOUTH African legal history has undergone more changes since the historic elections of 1994 than in the preceding 10 years. We have witnessed a plethora of fundamental legislation that has been passed by Parliament. The legislation that has recently emanated from Parliament has far reaching implications for the ordinary citizen in the street. South African lawyers are now faced with the challenge of interpreting this legislation within the parameters of a South African environment and at the same time taking cognisance of international developments. The implication of this legislation needs to be understood by the ordinary person in the street and lawyers and journalists play an important role in this regard.

During the same period, the judiciary has been visibly changing as it also takes cognisance of the latest developments, in a democratic society both nationally and internationally. We have seen the creation of a Constitutional Court, Labour Court, Labour Appeal Court, Consumer Court and the restructuring of the existing court structures. Every day new cases are heard creating precedents that affect our daily lives. A typical example applicable to the media industry is the recent Bogoshi judgment, which no longer holds the media strictly liable in cases of defamation. The media by way of its journalists have an important role to play in the dissemination of this "legal" information to the ordinary man in the street.

WWB has identified a need to recognise and honour journalists who work in the spe-

cialised area of law. It is the firm's intention to launch the "WWB Legal Journalist of the Year Award" in 1999. The aims and objectives of the award will include the following:

- to identify and honour journalists in the print and broadcasting media who report on legal issues, events, court cases and the like;
- to highlight the importance of accurate reporting in the field of legal journalism;
- to encourage legal journalism;
- to encourage the public's awareness of legal journalism;
- to facilitate and affirm the need for accurate, objective, yet insightful legal reporting.

The award will carry prize money of R17 000, and will be awarded for the best published legal/law related article including reports on criminal cases and/or legal academic issues. Journalists are invited to submit six articles that they have written on an aspect pertinent to the legal field. The panel of judges will comprise academics, journalists, editors and a representative from each journalist association and body. As part of this initiative, WWB intends to encourage the secondment of journalists to its and other law firms, for short periods, to enable them to experience some of the practical elements of the legal process. The award is supported by Rhodes University, prominent newspaper editors and all journalist associations, bodies and unions in the Republic.

For any further information about the award contact Joy-Marie Lawrence of WWB. Telephone (011) 240 5000. Fax (011) 240 5111

WWB

WEBBER WENTZEL BOWENS

The rapid growth of the multi-media industry and increasing convergence of media and communication technologies in the recent past has placed WWB in a unique position to offer comprehensive legal assistance to clients operating in this dynamic field.

The merging of traditional forms of communications, media and entertainment requires legal assistance that is able to deal equally with the regulatory aspects of telecommunications, broadcasting and communication, as well as the intellectual property and copyright aspects relating to media content.

The long established media law team of WWB has been expanded into the media and communications team. The services that the media and communications team provides include all aspects of the law pertaining to newspapers and magazines, wire services, broad-

casting, cellular telephony, television and Internet. The team acts for newspaper groups, publishers and major communications and broadcasting companies on a wide range of legal issues, including defamation matters, the evolving regulatory environment in South Africa; negotiation of inter-connecting agreements, national and cross-border corporate transactions and alliances.

➤ **For further information** contact the head of the media and communications team, Peter Grealy at (011) 240 5000 or by fax (011) 240 5111.

The other members of the team are: Peter Reynolds, Paul Jenkins, Gal Bastri, Lynn Flemming, Paul Sibisi, Joy-Marie Lawrence and Bradley Silver.



BY CLIVE EMDON

What's up in community media

IN 1995, the community media sector launched an initiative to establish a Media Development Agency which as a statutory body with the support of government and the media

industries, would provide funds, training and capacity-building for a wide range of new media.

The proposal was supported by Comtask, the commission of investigation into government communications, and is supported by the new central government information service. But,

without movement on the ground within the sector and from industry, this initiative will remain stillborn.

Radio

THE Department of Communications and the Kgaso Fund (Broadcasting Fund) have undertaken jointly to fund 18 new community radio stations mainly in rural areas.

This is a R3.13-million part of a R10-million four-year programme

by government to stimulate the growth of community radio stations. With co-funding from the Danish agency Danida through the Kgaso Fund, and other international funders, the programme should extend to R20-million.

It comes at a time when the Independent Broadcasting Agency (IBA) has recorded that it has licensed 100 community radio stations to date and is preparing to license another 200. Only about 40% of these serve black communities. The emphasis of the new funding of stations will be on rural communities that have to date not had access to their own media.

The indications from government are for a progressive inclusive programme of development in the radio sector with a range of partners that will include participation by local communities, the IBA, the Universal Service Agency, private companies, public utilities, local authorities and donor foundations.

The Kgaso Fund has helped kick-start 16 community radio stations.

The main players in the joint-funding of the first phase of its plan are the Department of Communications, and the Kgaso Fund, formed by the national Community Radio Forum (NCRF) and the Independent Media Diversity Trust (IMDT).

Print media

After four years of drought, a Print Development Agency is in the process of being launched by the print industry and the community media sector.

The initiative could provide the start-up funds for new community newspapers and magazines as well as small commercial print media. Among the priorities seen by these parties are the need for collective repro and print facilities, distribution and ad sales.

This support from the industry signals the start of the transformation of a section of the industry. It suggests key players are envisioning the future of print media by taking account of the low literacy rate as well as large numbers of groups who want to start new newspapers and magazines. Not only do they conceive of the potential of vast new markets, but also democratisation through print media.

The community media sector and small black publishers have faced a huge attrition rate over the past few years, with more than 50% of the 20 to 30 community newspapers and magazines going out of business and a similar similar rate of closure of titles in the commercial sector.

This has been largely because of business factors:

- cash flow problems as a result of the set

terms of printing and publishing which dictate money up-front for printing and a three-months wait for advertising revenue;

● lack of easy finance for small black businesses and a drying up of funding for community publishers — historically dependent on foreign funding agencies.

● high costs of repro and printing;

● take-overs by large publishing groups who take minority shares in small publishing ventures when they are cash-strapped and start a short-term partnership which doesn't work out.

Twining, partnerships, on-site training and capacity building, and innovative ideas taken on by the industry could provide the grist for the mill of ideal development.

The initiative comes from the print industry's Print Media Association and the Independent Media Diversity Trust (IMDT), a funding agency for the community media sector, as well as a number of other organisations on both sides:

In the print industry: the Newspaper Association (formerly the Newspaper Press Union) the Community Print Association (formerly the Provincial Press Association) and the Specialist Press Association; the Independent Publishers Association of South Africa, the National Community Media Forum, the South African Student Press Association.

Video and television

OPEN Window Network (OWN), which represents 18 community-based video projects nationally, hosted the international community video movement Videaziamut seminar and general assembly attended in Cape Town in September by 300 delegates

The main developments currently include negotiations with the SABC on a Natural Partnership Project with airtime through windows on national television as well as training and capacity building. Members of OWN will be included in SABC internship training programmes.

OWN is running an outreach programme to provinces where community video and TV hardly exists. A workshop has already been held in the Eastern Cape for community based

organisations in Grahamstown in September in collaboration with the Rhodes Journalism and Media Studies Department. The project is being funded by the Department of Arts and Culture, Science and Technology.

Main funding for running costs of OWN comes from Evangelical Mission Work (Germany).

New policy and advocacy work includes active participation by OWN in the Broadcasting Act process from the Green Paper onwards. A major focus will be on the IBA research on the feasibility of community television.

To date the commercial sector has not provided any funding or training for community television development save for a grant of R10 000 by M-Net in 1997 towards the OWN national AGM.

Student media

THE SA Students Press Union (SASPU), which represents about 60 publications and 12 radio stations nationally, and which is run entirely by students, plans to offer training for student newspapers through Independent Newspapers and Times Media Limited.

This programme will be held in different regions at the main newspaper offices of the two companies. A media research project, run in conjunction with Independent Newspapers, will help identify the areas of need and priorities in training and capacity building.

Currently SASPU is working with the

Department of Health in its Aids Awareness Programme and is involved in the Jubilee 2000 Campaign to cancel out the historic debt of apartheid. SASPU is also planning a campaign with the Print Media Association (the print industry) to promote the reading of newspapers nationally.

Major challenges that face SASPU include the raising of funds for national projects and for financing networking through the head office as well as for the annual week-long Media Mind-Blast training workshop. Despite SASPU being the source of many hundreds of journalists in the media industry, there are as yet no major national funders supporting the organisation.

SASPU spearheaded the process that led to the formation of the National Community Media Forum (NCMF) which in turn provides an umbrella organisation for the sector — print, radio, television and video and student media.

SASPU participated in national workshops designed to interrogate the Broadcasting Bill and made submissions to the Portfolio Committee on Communications in Parliament on the Bill.

SASPU is the student organisation that has participated in the transformation of media from the time of its establishment in 1977 till the present day. This includes the publishing of important alternative press newspapers such as the State of the Nation

and SASPU National as well as its participation in the public process in the formation of the new SABC Board. Its role in freeing the airwaves has been recognised in a citation by Unesco.

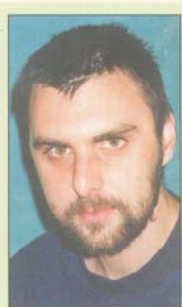
In the past year SASPU championed the licensing of the successful youth radio station YFM and is involved in discussions that could lead to the station becoming national.

SASPU's partnership with the media industry should ensure real long-term development of the sector, but such a partnership is still to be defined and developed.

Unless the print industry supports SASPU on an on-going basis, how can the student movement develop with consistent staffing and medium to long-term planning?

Enraged by the Sunday Times' coverage of the Anglican Church's Lambeth Conference, Brett Lock dug deep into the newspaper's electronic archives to uncover the tabloid-like anti-gay agenda of the popular weekend paper.

The Sunday Times goes gay



BY BRETT LOCK

TIMES MEDIA Limited's Sunday Times, arguably the biggest national Sunday paper in the country has been slow to embrace the spirit of South Africa's New Constitution when it comes to the coverage and reporting of gay and lesbian issues. Sticking dogmatically to the term "homosexual" it insults gay readers and perpetuates vicious stereotypes that make it more difficult than it need be for gay people, youth in particular, to construct a positive self-image and end the needless cycle of self-loathing, isolation and suffering they endure.

I do not discount for one moment the possibility that that is precisely what they aim to achieve. The selection of gay-related news, the tone of the coverage and the sources which are emphasised — combined with pop psychology and a reluctance to let go of tired stereotypes and prejudices — produces a brand of gay-bashing, perhaps subtle, that when viewed in the context of a huge co-ordinated media voice against a marginalised community, has a brutal effect.

THE ELLEN DEGENERES AFFAIR

NEVER mind the fact that "declarations of love" and the anticipation of the onscreen kiss have been the pivotal points upon which the plots of almost every major Hollywood production have been hung since we discovered that celluloid could be rolled in front of a light-bulb, the Sunday Times correspondent speculates that:

The gilded world of actresses Ellen DeGeneres and Anne Heche, the most famous lesbians in the US, is losing its glitter. What seemed like a bold declaration of alternative love last year has become a bit of a bore just a few months later.

How odd that in over a century of film and five decades of television, all it takes is 90 days of media attention on a lesbian love affair to bore the Sunday Times, a paper that has managed to follow romances — heterosexual, of course — for years at a time without an editorial yawn. Princess Diana's death did not terminate media interest in her love life. The media generated copy spanning three decades and twice as many husbands about Elizabeth Taylor. The Sunday Times practically serialises the ongoing romances of a variety of Hollywood stars on their back page, but one lesbian couple's romance quickly "loses its glitter".

They continue:

Then DeGeneres turned her homosexuality into a plot device in which her TV character, Ellen Morgan, came out in an episode that attracted 36 million viewers.

Since when has sexuality not been a plot device? The fact that it's [homo]sexuality is no reason for the Sunday Times to hint at some cynical motive unless it practices a clear double standard.

Finally, commenting about the trailer to the movie in which Heche stars opposite Harrison Ford (as his "love interest"), the Sunday Times writer quips:

A voice-over declares: "This summer, find adventure in the most remote place known to man."

That's just a cheap shot!

Of course the sub-text of the report about the paper's boredom with Ellen DeGeneres is that if they can find no evidence of scandals, recriminations or sordid revelations they feel utterly let down by stories about gay people.

THE HOUSEHUSBAND, THE HAIRDRESSER AND THE SUNDAY TIMES BIGOT

IN a fairly innocuous story about a Durban man who stays at home doing the cooking and child-minding while his wife, a hairdresser, goes out to work, the Sunday Times could not help editorialising thus:

Despite his feminine tendencies, Brian is not gay. He is happily married and has a two-year-old daughter named Shannon.

Now that is boring. Tapping into the old stereotype that gay men are feminine (in 1998!!) is well past its sell-by date. Not only that, it is profoundly insulting to women, who, the newspaper clearly believes, cook, clean and child-mind because they have a tendency towards it, not because of they have been forced to by a patriarchal society.

A SENTENCE ABOUT GEORGE MICHAEL

ALMOST mimicking the script of Hugh Grant's fall from grace came the news of pop star George Michael's arrest for "lewd conduct" in a public toilet. Lewd conduct is in this case a euphemism for masturbation. The Sunday Times cannot resist adding the irrelevant tag "homosexual" to the report.

Singer George Michael wants to give a charity concert instead of doing menial community service as punishment for lewd conduct. The 35-year-old homosexual singer was sentenced to 80 hours of community service for committing a sex act in a West Hollywood public toilet in April.

They are clearly smug both about the singer's humiliation, but doubly so because they've managed to use the word homosexual in the same paragraph as "lewd conduct", as if one

man's indiscretion was somehow symptomatic of his sexual orientation. I do not recall any disparaging reference to Hugh Grant's heterosexuality in the reports about his indiscretion. Indeed, I'd bet a few journalists were quite put out that it ended speculation about the actor's homosexuality.

THE PRESIDENT'S MEN

THE headline begins promisingly enough: "Gays show they're the President's men", however, who gets the lead? Certainly not the "homosexuals".

A special committee set up to organise President Nelson Mandela's 80th birthday celebrations has lashed out at the organisers of a massive "queer" party to be held in his honour, claiming it is in "poor taste" [sic].

When do the gay organisers finally get a word in? In the sixth paragraph!

However, the company organising the Cape Town event, Mother City Queer Projects, claims its Madiba birthday bash is meant as a mark of respect for "one of the country's greatest queer heroes".

The final four paragraphs of the story describe the official celebration events focusing particularly on children's events and letters the President received from children, mining, once again, that rich vein of media prejudice in which children and gays are always seen in conflict.

PRE-MADONNA, ONLY LATER

THE Sunday Times had an orgy of character assassination on the occasion of pop star Madonna's 40th birthday, and unsurprisingly homosexuality was shredded in the crossfire of rhetoric and sensationalism.

In the past few years, have you, for example, worn a conical bra, smoked cigars, had a bisexual affair, indulged in sadomasochistic sexual practices involving hot wax or insisted on being photographed naked?

Real people — real women — can regard her antics only with wry amusement.

I have no idea what "real women" are let alone whether they smoke cigars or rev up their sex lives with hot wax, however the Sunday Times seems more certain. And, of course, they would have the reader believe that no "real woman" have bisexual affairs. Real women do not sleep with other women. Of course not.

The writer tries his or her hand a psychoanalysis and points out that in an interview

A handy definition of "heterosexism"

The promotion of heterosexuality as better, right, the only, is known as heterosexism. Simon Harris defines heterosexism as: "A set of beliefs, attitudes and practices which presents and promotes heterosexual relationships and lifestyles as the norm. It therefore sees such relationships and lifestyles as being superior to any others and, in extreme cases, considers such alternatives as unacceptable and unnatural." Harris, Simon (1990). *Lesbian and gay issues in the English classroom: the importance of being honest.* Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

bashing

with US magazine *The Advocate*, Madonna revealed that she was "still trying to gain her father's approval". They could not resist pointing out that *The Advocate* is a "homosexual" magazine, as if that had any bearing on the source of the information at all.

THE SOCCER PLAYER WITH BALLS

"LIFE of torment for misfit footballer" reads the headline. The coverage of the suicide of gay football player Justin Fashanu in the tabloid press was vicious and undoubtedly flavoured with lashings of racism and homophobia. Fashanu once remarked that one of the unexpected benefits of "coming out" was that it added some variety to the insults he suffered. Detractors started calling him "that gay bastard" instead of "that black bastard". The *Sunday Times* report was little better.

It sketched a picture of a thoughtless, selfish person, rather than the confused, frightened and bitter person Fashanu understandably was. Again they tap into well-worn prejudices and the psychobabble notion that gay people come out to punish their loved ones.

The reporter who interviewed him said Justin was "obsessed with money" and cared little for the effect of the disclosure on his brother, or on his adoptive parents.

Admitting you're gay is a "disclosure" which one only does with a selfish disregard for the feelings of those around one. Oh come on!

Nevertheless, this is the view that the *Sunday Times* promotes. It scares me to think what effect this comment might have on gay South African youth, and especially since soccer is so popular this remark would not go unnoticed. The idea that gay people ought to sacrifice their personal truths and emotional health to spare the feelings of others is absurd. It is like asking black South Africans to remain in bondage to spare the feelings of their "masters" and "madams", or heterosexual women to sacrifice any personal aspirations so as to better "honour and obey" their husbands.

It all seemed to go wrong for him after he went to Forest. He fell out with manager Brian Clough and was banished to the A team and that was the end of Justin's career really.

Newspapers should realise that homosexuals are not an abstract class, they are very real everyday individuals with lives, hopes and dreams and — like everyone else — they buy newspapers.

That allegations of harassment over his sexuality on the part of his teammates and the coach may have led to both his "falling out" and "banishment", and his subsequent cynicism in the way he dealt with the subject of his sexuality were obviously not worthy of investigation by the *Sunday Times* journalists.

LAMBETH TO THE SLAUGHTER

THE final straw in which "the paper for the people" unambiguously displayed its commitment to undermining the constitutional strides South Africa has made towards equality for gay people occurred when on 23 August this year they ran a half-page article on the editorial spread by a British correspondent Dr Theodore Dalrymple headlined: "Straight and narrow: Dr Theodore Dalrymple applauds the victory of traditional over 'liberal' Christian values".

The gloating, self-satisfied tone of the report about a conservative "crushing victory" over liberal clergy who had proposed that the Anglican Church end its discrimination against gay people with regard to ordination and marriage is disgusting.

Newspapers should realise that homosexuals are not an abstract class, they are very real everyday individuals with lives, hopes and dreams and — like everyone else — they buy newspapers. To read this smug diatribe about

what amounts to a severe blow against their personal and emotional realisation is deeply offensive. So offensive in fact that a heterosexual *Sunday Times* writer remarked:

The underlying values of the writer, Dr Theodore Dalrymple, have been assimilated by the publication and promoted, by the mere inclusion of the article in the editorial mix. This sends a clear message to the public, and that message is simply that the Sunday Times Insight supplement, and the publication as a whole, is insensitive to the fight for the extension of current gay rights. This implies that the Sunday Times has made an assumption about its readership and the values of its readership. I was deeply insulted as a reader and a writer for the Sunday Times, even though I am not gay. If I was gay there would be a letter bomb in the mail.

CONCLUSION

WHAT'S really sad is that the homophobic content the *Sunday Times* carries is almost exclusively reprinted from the British tabloid, *The Telegraph*. Most of the local coverage of gay issues is quite positive. Admittedly there is very little. It occurs mostly on the arts pages in the form of movie or theatre reviews and occasionally a report on a constitutional issue.

My task of analysing their content was made really easy by the fact that very few gay- or lesbian-related stories are printed in the first place. An online search of the *Sunday Times* archive reveals that only about 35 stories mentioning the words "gay", "lesbian" or "homosexual" have been written this year — and even fewer focusing specifically on a gay issue.

This of course points to an issue which is perhaps more serious than the negative — and often vile — reporting of gay issues or gay related stories. At the very least, no matter what the tone of the *Sunday Times* reports, it gets the topic on the tongues of the readers. It is far worse to be completely invisible.

Ironically, with a ratio of less than one short story a week and the assumption that all its readers are heterosexual, that's precisely what gay people seem in the *Sunday Times*. Invisible.

Brett Lock is a freelance designer working in Johannesburg.

10 STEPS

towards fair & balanced reporting of gay-related stories

1 Drop the term "homosexual". This term is highly offensive, chiefly because of its clinical sound which is a reminder of when homosexuality was still regarded as a pathology. The term "gay" is preferred for both men and women. "Lesbian" when referring particularly to women is also acceptable.

2 Make an effort to get both sides of the story. Often assumptions are made. The Justin Fashanu incident is a good example. Yes, it is fact that he fell out with his coach and reacted very bitterly afterwards ... but why? Find out, and give equal weight in the story to both sides.

3 Avoid simple stereotyping. Avoid tired old clichés like gay men are effeminate or lesbians are butch — it is simply not true.

4 Don't point to a person's sexual orientation unless it is relevant to the story. For example, George Michael was caught committing a lewd act, but then so was Hugh Grant. Don't make an issue of Michael's sexuality when it is irrelevant. The worst example is found in stories of child abuse where the perpetrator's sexuality is only pointed out if they're gay, creating a skewed image in the public's mind about who abuses children.

5 Don't assume that all your readers are heterosexual. When you're offensive to one sector of the community you are offending a section of your readers. Everyone reads newspapers.

6 Don't be sensational just because there's gay content. If a male politician is caught with a prostitute, it makes no difference whether it's a male or female prostitute. It's not fair to fuel the public's homophobia by blowing up the issue when gay people are involved — if you're serious about the transformation of our society.

7 Cover a representative spread of gay-related news. Don't wait for the Hollywood scandal or the Internet child porn scare before writing stories with gay content. There are positive gay-related stories too. Also, don't just ignore gay issues — don't make gay people invisible.

8 Play an educational role. Report on the current legal status of gay rights and on gay issues in general, for example workplace issues and partner benefits. Like other minority rights, these affect everyone, and besides, thousands of your readers are gay.

9 Don't be flippant about issues gay people take very seriously. Gay people take pride marches and the gay "olympics" very seriously. You wouldn't offend people with disabilities by making fun of their sporting events, so don't offend gay people either.

10 Give gay people positive role models. Focus on the heroes as well as the villains. All communities need to know about both — for collective self-image and personal growth.

FURTHER & DEEPER

“I think mainstream media is running straight to hell. The light bulbs are on side news and superficial stories because managers get fired if they don't live up to the quota system,” says Charles Lewis, inventor of International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ).

Lewis, a successful producer at CBS flagship *60 minutes*, left the network when things were going great. *60 minutes* was the cutting edge investigative TV programme setting standards for the industry. But it wasn't enough. Lewis wanted to go further, deeper and beyond everything existing media had to offer.

Starting in his home, Lewis founded the Centre for Public Integrity in 1989. He engaged some of America's finest researchers and journalists. Together they set out on a non-profit crusade to protect the public interest. Raising money for its operations from foundations, members and retainers with news organisations, the CPI soon became a player in the Washington DC power grid.

Hard work and painstakingly thorough investigations of politicians, their decisions and the interests behind them has given CPI the status as the most respected watchdog organisation in the United States.

Contemplating its success, Lewis felt an urgent need to extend the CPI's mission to the rest of the world. Being a longtime member of Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE), a professional organisation with a steadily growing international membership, Lewis knew there had been few previous organised efforts to carry out cross-border investigative projects.

“In an increasingly frontierless, yet complex world, there is a need for in-depth information that transcends national boundaries,” says one of the centre's pamphlets.

That is why ICIJ was created — to meet that need.

For more see <http://www.icij.org/> and <http://www.publicintegrity.org>



BY MICHEL BAJUK

Investigative journalism goes global

CORRUPTION. Crime. Exploitation. International drug cartels. Global crime syndicates laundering extensive capital through intercontinental transactions.

Reporting about global issues is often brief and confusing. Lack of time and money are excuses for neglected investigations and analysis about complicated issues.

The impact of globalisation reaches far beyond the flickering pale green shimmer of the stock market. The obstacles to journalism are internationalised, intensified and concern all of us. Yet leading news organisations continuously slash their foreign coverage. Bureaus are closed, correspondents are called home.

Who cares? Is there anybody out there trying to examine and explain the most important questions of our times?

Yes. A handful.

Some of the best investigative journalists on the planet have gathered at Harvard. Fifty-two reporters and editors from 33 countries constitute the recently established International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ). Their immense task: save the world.

The consortium was initiated by a respected American non-profit organisation serving the public: the Centre for Public Integrity (CPI). The Centre is funded by philanthropic foundations and engages some of the country's finest investigative researchers and journalists. Hard work and painstakingly thorough investigations of politicians, their decisions and the interests behind them has given the CPI the status as the most respected watchdog organisation in the United States.

The Harvard environment is classic. It can be recognized from numerous American movies. The autumn sun shines into the elegant old building through the colourful fireworks of the trees.

There is tension in the air. The journalists are skeptical when they begin the discussions behind closed doors. How are they supposed to deal with the task?

These reporters have written and produced hundreds of special reports, books and documentaries. Their reporting has overthrown corrupt governments, imprisoned savage druglords and made horrible mass murderers answer for their crimes. Many reporters have paid a high price. Some have survived assaults, kidnappings and

bombs, and others have suffered false accusations, prison sentences and death threats. Several now live in exile.

“We want to make the world a better place by exposing evil forces working against the interests of humanity,” says Joe Thloloe, one of seven African ICIJ members. Like many of the other reporters he has his doubts about the project. But the three days of deliberations give him hope.

Seeing the great potential, he names several previously neglected African issues with a global impact that he would like to see investigated and prioritised on the consortium's agenda. “The conflict in Congo looks really ugly,” he says, pointing out the most urgent concern he shares with his fellow African members. The increase in organised crime, the high level of corruption and ongoing savage exploitation are other issues the African members would like to investigate.

“We all want to make a difference. The project brings journalists around the world to make common efforts. This is specifically interesting for Africa. We have big problems of major international concern,” says Kabral Blay-Amihere, publisher and editor of *The Independent* in Ghana.

The ICIJ operations will be co-ordinated from the parent organisation in Washington DC. The members will be contracted in ad-hoc teams. High-tech tools and techniques such as sophisticated satellite imagery and savvy experts in computer assisted reporting are at the consortium's disposal. The members' findings will be communicated and shared through encrypted e-mail messages. Their progress will be published on the secure members-only website.

“In Africa we are still meeting our sources in dark alleys. Our telephone lines are often tapped, and the thought of communicating openly about anything sensitive is unthinkable,” says Gwen Lister, editor of *The Namibian*.

How are the journalists supposed to make priorities of the troubles of the world? What is most significant for humanity — to scrutinise the financial crises of Russia and Asia or to examine the smuggling and trade of humans in South East Asia? Is it more vital to track religious and political fanatics or to map dumping of poisonous waste?

The reporters avoid answering the questions for now. Their decisions must be wise. They need to think, but not for too long. Time is ticking.

The credentials are outstanding; the mission is gigantic. Can they handle it? They are serious about it, and at least they are willing to try. We could certainly use a few more of their kind.

Michel Bajuk is executive director of the Swedish investigative reporters association

Leading news organisations continuously slash their foreign coverage. Bureaus are closed, correspondents are called home. Who cares? Is there anybody out there trying to examine and explain the most important questions of our times? Yes. A handful.

THE AFRICAN CPI MEMBERS

● **CATHERINE GICHERU**, Kenya, is chief of the Mombasa bureau of *The Nation* group of newspapers. Stories about the government of President Arap Moi; the involvement of senior government officials in the embezzlement of funds from the national pension fund and the involvement of government officials in the assassination of a local politician.

● **NEWTON KANHEMA**, South Africa/Zimbabwe, is the senior political writer for *The Sunday Independent* in Johannesburg. Exposed the \$1.5 billion arms deal between South Africa and Saudi Arabia that the government-owned arms manufacturer had tried to

keep secret. He also revealed that the ANC had accepted political donations from Malaysian businessmen, intended to help pay off the party's debts, but which were diverted to private funds.

● **GWEN LISTER**, Namibia, is founding editor of *The Namibian*, an independent newspaper started in 1985 during apartheid colonialism in Namibia, a time when the paper's offices were bombed and its journalists harassed and jailed. Among the numerous awards she has been honored with is the 1992 Committee to Protect Journalists International Press Freedom Award.

● **CHARLES ONYANGO-OBBO**, Uganda, is editor of Uganda's leading independent newspa-

per, *The Monitor*, for which he writes a weekly current affairs column, “Ear to the Ground”. He also writes weekly columns for the East African. In 1997 he published a collection of political and social essays in his book “Uganda's Poorly Kept Secrets”. Among all the prizes he has been awarded, he was named Uganda's journalist of the Year in 1992 and 1995.

● **JOE THLOLOE**, South Africa, formerly served as the SABC's editor-in-chief of television news. He was the second president of the Union of Black Journalists and was its leader when the South African government shut it down in 1977 while Thloloe was in jail. Detained several times without trial for his journalistic activities.

● **KABRAL BLAY-AMIHERE**, Ghana, is publisher and editor of *The Independent* newspaper, which has investigated the ministers of state as well as the cocoa industry. He serves as president of the West African Journalists Association and is also a member of the executive committee of the International Federation of Journalists.

● **ELISABETH OHENE**, England/Ghana, is deputy director of the BBC's daily African Service English-language programmes, including “Focus on Africa”. After a series of editorials questioning the military's overthrow of the constitutionally elected government, she was forced to leave Ghana in 1982.

The Ruth First Courageous Journalism Award

THE Ruth First award honours journalism that is bold, independent, investigative, politically courageous, personally engaged and which raises as many social questions as it answers.

Instead of flash-in-the-pan bravery — which we have seen around us very recently with journalists from all over visiting Rwanda, the Congo, Kenya and putting themselves in the front line of wars, conflict and terrorism — the judges were looking for the kind of journalism that is sustained and which has true social relevance for a vast majority of the citizens of this country.

This was found in the work of the three journalists short-listed for the award: Mungo Soggot of the Mail&Guardian; Christina Stucky, editor of Reconstruct and William Mervin Gumede, of the Sunday Independent.

To select these three finalists the judges looked closely at how the applicants got their information and how they developed it.

Runner-up Mungo Soggot of the Mail&Guardian was commended for developing sources over the years who trusted him and who, when the time was ripe, leaked to him the story about the Central Energy Fund and the men involved, Liberian Immanuel Shaw and head of the fund Don Mkhwanazi.

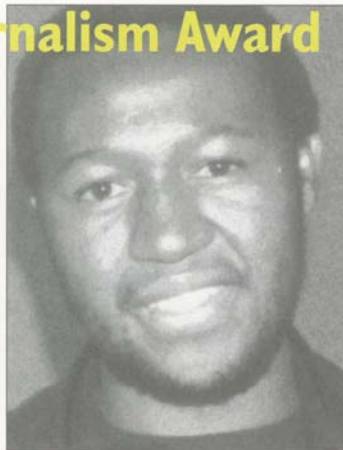
He developed this story very well and clung to it tenaciously. He didn't drop the story after the first sensation hit the pages of the Mail&Guardian.

His skill as a journalist also lay in disentangling the maze of confusing aspects surrounding the Central Energy Fund and in not fearing to challenge the accountability of public figures, despite strong opposition to the stories.

Second runner-up Christina Stucky scored high on "sticking it out" in areas of journalism which traditionally get little support — developmental and women's issues. "Her work is important and well done. She focuses on all spheres of South African life and not just on the power people in our society," the judges said.

Stucky constantly had to challenge walls of resistance in the form of gender-unfriendly and urban mindsets within the media itself, first of all to go and gather the material, and then to present it in such a way as to make it meaningful, relevant and interesting to both readers and editors.

Stucky exemplifies journalism that is personally engaged and which raises as many social questions as it answers. In its own way this kind of journalism is bold and independent as she often



William Mervin Gumede, winner of the Courageous Journalism Award for 1998.

travelled into areas usually avoided by journalists to get her stories.

There was no doubt in the judges' minds that William Mervin Gumede, who investigated tension within the South African National Civic Organisation, disagreements within the ANC tripartite alliance and confusion and acrimony around the position of provincial premiers, demonstrated himself to be the winner of this award.

The judges commended him for "his tenacity in doggedly pursuing unpopular angles to sensitive and important stories, that not only involved internal party politics, but also looked into how these developments affect the broader community."

Gumede scored high on the ability to "ferret around, do a lot of digging and go the extra mile". The judges agreed: "It took a lot of guts to keep going with these particular stories".

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The MISA Press Freedom Award

THE 1998 Media Institute of Southern Africa's (MISA) Press Freedom award has been awarded to the African Eye News Service in recognition of the agency's courage, professionalism, consistency and defence of media freedoms against all odds. The award, which carries a cash prize of US\$1 000, is presented annually to honour excellence in journalism and work which has made a significant contribution to media freedom in the region. It is the first time in the history of the MISA Press Freedom Award that the award has been given to a courageous and outstanding media institution rather than an individual.

Based in the province of Mpumalanga, AEENS has established itself as one of the sub-region's truly investigative news services. In its three years of existence, under the editorship of Justin Arenstein, African Eye has either halted or uncovered a series of corrupt practices in the public sector — some of which have led to public commissions of inquiry, or resignations of the affected officials. Its bold and extremely courageous reporting has earned it several enemies in both the public and private sectors of the South African community. The agency has attracted numerous multi-million rand defamation suits, and to date it has won every case.

Its journalists, especially Arenstein, have also been the targets of physical and verbal harassment, including death threats and threats of assault, while also being personally maligned. Despite this harassment and hostility, the AEENS team has carried on its mission with excellence, exhibiting mature and professional journalism with depth and carefully verified detail.



The African Eye News Service team. PIC BY STEVE HILTON-BARBER

The AEENS team of journalists has painfully realised that good journalism cannot be achieved without parallel advocacy action to enhance access to public information. They successfully lobbied for public access to all committee sessions of provincial legislatures, as well as for access to the budgetary formulation process in the Mpumalanga legislature. In addition, they successfully lobbied for members of the public to be allowed to table written questions at portfolio committee sessions. In very practical ways, therefore, AEENS has been an effective advocacy arm campaigning on issues of freedom of expression, media freedom and public access to information — the ideals which are at the centre of MISA's work.

The Nat Nakasa Award

"NAT Nakasa would have been comfortable in journalism today," said Joe Thloloe of the Drum writer.

"While we were scruffy and smelt of booze and tobacco, Nat was dapper and tidy."

Nakasa came to Johannesburg to join Drum and among his suitcases — to the other reporters' surprise — was a tennis racquet. "In some ways he was extremely uncomfortable at Drum, but he loved words and founded a literary magazine called The Classic which was named after a shebeen."

In 1964 Nakasa won a Nieman Fellowship but was refused a passport by the South African government. To take up the fellowship at Harvard university he had to take an exit permit and never return.

After one year at Harvard he settled in New York, but in 1965 "he jumped from a tall building," Thloloe said. "I will never forgive the apartheid regime for destroying such beautiful brains. He was a victim of censorship and insanity."

Thloloe said the South African Nieman fellows found Nakasa's remains in an unmarked grave in New York City. They decided, with the Print Media Association and the SA National Editors' Forum, to create a "living monument" to Nakasa. Hence the award which recognises brave journalism.

In giving the inaugural award to Jon Qwelane on Media Freedom Day last year Thloloe said: "For Jon there are no sacred cows. He has infuriated this country's president and hundreds of people who write to magazines and newspapers. He's infuriated editors and the people who listen to him on the radio. And this is because of his courage, integrity and love of truth."

Accepting the award Qwelane said: "For more than a decade now on this day journalists have gathered to look at the intricate problems facing our craft. Today there is one pressing issue we should all look at. We know we are not entirely honest in our endeavours. Standards have gone down and only we can correct that. We need a seminar on honesty in the media."

SANLAM is the proud sponsor of the following awards aimed at rewarding excellence in journalism:

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BY PATRICK BURNETT

Passion & perseverance

AS A young boy growing up in the townships of Pretoria, Thomas Kwenaite craved knowledge because a teacher had told him it was the route to power. Practising as a journalist years later, and after he had confronted one of the country's most powerful institutions, Kwenaite realised that the power which knowledge creates also leads to corruption.

Kwenaite's investigations uncovered corruption in the administration of South African soccer, leading to the government-appointed Pickard Commission of Inquiry and the resignation of soccer supremo Solomon "Stix" Morewa.

The 1997 winner of the Ruth First Award for Courageous Journalism says he now realises the importance of truth over power.

"You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free," Kwenaite said at a seminar on investigative journalism presented by Technikon Pretoria's Department of Journalism.

Some of South Africa's top investigative journalists spoke at the seminar, revealing the background to the stories which have made headlines, and giving their views on what constitutes investigative journalism.

We are living in a brutal society where our politics stink ... we are no longer living in a land of boerewors and koeksisters. People are dying every day and embezzlement is a fact of life. *Thomas Kwenaite*



"We are living in a brutal society where our politics stink," says Kwenaite, "we are no longer living in a land of boerewors and koeksisters. People are dying every day and embezzlement is a fact of life."

Kwenaite was threatened with baseball bats, sued for R45-million and offered R50 000 to stop his investigations into soccer corruption, but refused to be deterred.

"Steve Biko said 'I write what I like' and I don't want to be instructed as long as what I write is truthful and factual."

The speakers at the seminar stressed the need for detailed reporting on South

African issues, and highlighted problems facing investigative journalists in the country.

Jacques Pauw, whose investigation into Vlakplaas hit squads began in 1984 and culminated with the showing of the documentary Prime Evil in 22 countries worldwide, says journalism in South Africa is at a "terrible stage".

Citing low standards and quality, he says there is not enough investigative journalism in South Africa and that the onus lies on individual journalists to produce stories.

"Editors would be prepared to spend more time on investigative journalism if their journalists produced stories," he said.

Pauw says it is the duty of the individual journalist to specialise and know their subject — "from there it will flow".

The financial implications of investigative journalism were highlighted by a team from the Mail&Guardian. "The cost of investigative journalism," said news editor Rehana Rossouw, referring to Mail&Guardian reporter Mungo Soggot's investigation into, and exposure of, the Central Energy Fund controversy involving Emanuel Shaw and Don Mkhwanazi, "is exorbitant".

Legal costs are "staggering" and there are no immediate benefits other than the reputation of the newspaper, she said, adding that the exposure of Shaw did not sell more copies of the newspaper.

"It's about risk and it is an expensive risk. Reporters have to take the risk on behalf of the newspaper and many newspapers are not prepared to take that risk."

Roussouw acknowledged that weekly newspapers have the time to do in-depth coverage, but she said this was not an excuse for the daily newspapers.

Referring to Shaw as a "financial war criminal", Soggot said the newspaper "went for him every week".

"The point is that he was still earning our money and therefore it was still newsworthy that he was still in power."

Shaw turned to the courts to halt publication and although an interdict against the Mail&Guardian was dismissed, Shaw later sued the newspaper.

Soggot said the courts "don't respect that you depend on people giving you information on a confidential basis".

Noseweek editor Martin Welz also spoke of the legal problems facing journalists, saying South African journalists were considered guilty until proven innocent before the courts. The law in South Africa does not understand the press and is highly suspicious of the press challenging authority, he said.

Clive Emdon from the Freedom of Expression Institute (FXI) said investigative journalism plays a key watchdog role in "matching the pillages of the politicians".

In order to do this journalists need the qualities of passion, perseverance, courage, commitment, dedication and tenacity.

Emdon says there is a "fertile field" for investigative journalism in South Africa, with investigative journalism having a key role to play in contributing to an accountable society.

"We live in an incredible story day by day with huge amounts of information which we have not come near to tapping."

The seminar also featured journalists working in community media who had broken national stories through their investigations.

Irma Green, news editor of the Lowvelder and the reporter who exposed corruption in the top echelons of Sanlam management, said investigative journalism places enormous responsibility on the journalist.

Green said investigative journalism is about digging for facts and getting all sides, not only both sides.

She said those who spoke in a derogatory manner about community newspapers should bear in mind that they were capable of "making big waves".

Linda de Nysschen, the Lowvelder reporter who exposed corruption in the Mpumalanga Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, emphasised the importance of the community press in acting as watchdogs over local government.

"The community press often does not get the recognition which it deserves," she said.

De Nysschen said community newspapers were often involved in doing ground-breaking news and exposing corruption, and people often did not realise this input into national stories.

"We have to be the eyes and the ears of society in ensuring a transparent, effective and non-corrupt government."



It's about risk and it is an expensive risk. Reporters have to take the risk on behalf of the newspaper and many newspapers are not prepared to take that risk. *Mungo Soggot*

We have to be the eyes and the ears of society in ensuring a transparent, effective and non-corrupt government.



Linda de Nysschen

Are investigative reporters an endangered species?

YOU'RE AN investigative reporter and you've just had a tip that a powerful person or corporation is up to no good. It is a complicated story — but with a strong potential impact. It involves injustices, rip-offs and betrayals of public trusts. It also exposes some well-known people whom you are likely to enrage, and who have a reputation for suing first and asking questions later.

How do you get your media outlet to go for it? Do you tell your editor or executive producer that all the details are not nailed down yet, and that this inquiry might take a few weeks or even a few months with no guarantees that you will find a smoking gun? With all the recent media scandals, will the story be considered too risky?

But the deeper, if unexpressed, question is: Can you really be spared on what sounds like an open-ended assignment with no certainty of success? It sounds dicey — and also expensive. Weeks? Months? A possible team effort? Does it make sense to go out on a limb — especially now, particularly on such volatile territory with targets that will deflect, deny, and then denigrate?

Finally you are asked — “just have to ask, you understand” — “Is this some personal crusade, do you care too much, are you too close to the story?” After your reassuring response, there is a long pause — and a promise to get back to you: “Well, I think we'll have to think carefully about this one”.

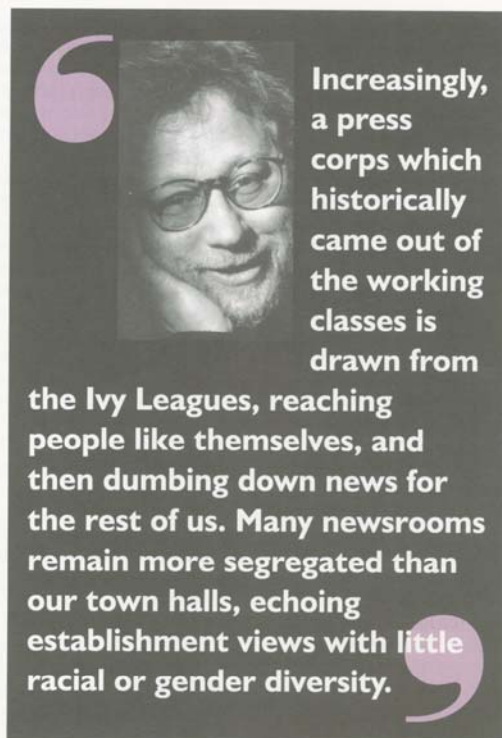
As an investigative reporter, I have frequently been party to conversations like these. Everyone taking part is sincere and professional — trying to weigh the pluses and minuses. But institutional restraints and outside pressures clearly shape today's climate of newsgathering by the dictates of the bottom line.

That is one of the little-reported lessons of the latest crop of media scandals: the CNN retraction of, and apology for, an investigation into alleged use of nerve gas on US troops in Laos; and The Cincinnati Enquirer's recent apology (and \$10-million settlement) for a flawed series on Chiquita Brands International. These setbacks for the news business mean, among other things, that it will become harder to undertake hard-hitting reporting.

Undeniably, a chill has been spreading in the newsrooms of America as new anxieties percolate down from their boardrooms. In 1995, ABC cancelled a tobacco probe for fear of holding up a merger; in 1996, 60 Minutes fudged a similar story for “legal reasons” at a network then owned by a tobacco magnate. But crude, direct economic pressure to limit investigations is rare.

Other factors are at play. Sometimes, ethical boundaries are stretched in getting the story. Attention then gets focused on the techniques more than the content. That's what happened in the ABC/Food Lion case: A lawsuit against the network was limited to the deceptive ways reporters carried out their undercover probe. In Cincinnati, the newspaper repudiated — and fired — its own reporter after discovering that part of his story was ostensibly based on purloined voice-mail messages. We still don't know what was or wasn't true about what was reported.

All news organisations are wrestling with standards for checking sources and confirming evidence. Those



Increasingly, a press corps which historically came out of the working classes is drawn from the Ivy Leagues, reaching people like themselves, and then dumbing down news for the rest of us. Many newsrooms remain more segregated than our town halls, echoing establishment views with little racial or gender diversity.

BY DANNY SCHECHTER

standards may get compromised when there is a rush to get a story out to meet corporate or competitive pressures.

As a result, investigative reporting that goes up against powerful institutions is becoming an endangered species. In a hyper-competitive climate that often encourages one media outlet to pick apart the stories of another, news has become a battleground. Where journalists once competed to advance the disclosures of colleagues, as during the Watergate era, today they smear each other with highly politicised debates over ethics and accuracy — which, in turn, often overshadow the stories themselves.

It's not all bad. Media workers can become an uncountable elite, covering stories that only they think are interesting, stories that don't touch most people's lives. Increasingly, a press corps which historically came out of the working classes is drawn from the Ivy Leagues, reaching people like themselves, and then dumbing down news for the rest of us. Many newsrooms remain more segregated than our town halls, echoing establishment views with little racial or gender diversity.

But the old debate over “media bias” misses a new reality: reporters don't set the news agenda or allocate

the amount of time or space their stories receive. Corporate news organisations do that in dogged pursuit of market share or to keep up with the pack, often by saturating a few sensational domestic stories, ignoring more complex stories and news that is more costly to cover. Inside media cartels, news divisions are now small components of much larger enterprises, fighting for resources and airtime.

And as journalism mashes around the edges, consumers turn against it. In its 20 July issue, a Newsweek poll shows that the public has become more sceptical than ever about media credibility. So as newsgathering becomes more ratings-conscious, more “instant”, more technically savvy — with fancier graphics, satellites, helicopters, etc. — it also becomes less trustworthy.

On television, programme formats limit the amount of time allocated to in-depth investigations, which are increasingly focused on storytelling rather than whistle-blowing. That was part of the problem with the CNN “Operation Tailwind” exposé: the producers had sought an hour to tell the story — but CNN said no, and compressed a complex tale into an 18-minute heavily hyped scoop to launch Newstand, their synergistic newsmag series co-produced with Time. The logic of that programme was not primarily to inform but to make a splash and build an audience.

These problems are troubling many in the business. And you can be sure that as the hole for substantive news continues to shrink, more media people will begin to speak up, despite their well-funded sinecures, challenging their colleagues and themselves to resist trends that seem to be moving us all into what some scholars already call a “post-journalism era”.

Meanwhile, back in the newsroom: “good news”. You have just been told you can do your investigative story, but unfortunately you will have to work alone because the rest of the team is on overload. Also, you will have to try to get it done in two weeks. Cut down the number of cities you want to visit. Trim your budget. And err on the side of caution. Get all your sources on the record even though some say they are afraid to go public.

Keep in touch with our lawyers, you're told. Be sure to include enough balance so there can be no perception of unfairness. You heard what Ted Turner said the other day was wrong with that CNN story — there was not enough “evidence to convict”. Oh sure, you know that journalists don't work by courtroom rules, but you know what they mean.

“And when you are finished we'll see what you have and, then, if and when to run it. You see,” you are told. “You convinced us. You won.”

Danny Schechter, the executive producer of the independent TV company, Globalvision Inc., is the author of *The More You Watch, The Less You Know*.

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THE NAMIBIAN MEDIA: WATCHDOG OR LAPDOG?
 ► continued from page 32



of beats as well as having to take their own photographs. In time, hopefully, resources and training will allow more journalists to specialise and concentrate on developing areas of expertise in which we are seriously lacking, such as investigative economic reporting.

But the question is also how journalists can do a better job of reporting on institutions of political and economic power, such as governments and big corporations, without contributing to the cynicism about those entities that threaten to erode public participation.

At what point does energetic news gathering become a feeding frenzy and at what point, at the other side of the spectrum, does an unwillingness to pursue the stories of possible corruption in high places aggressively become an abdication of journalistic responsibility?

Most governments would like to receive favourable press, and tolerance of criticism varies from government to government and country to country depending on the levels of democratic sophistication.

If I compare working as a journalist under the former repressive South African regime to working under an independent, elected and democratic government today, I would say that it's a lot safer but it's no easier than it was in the past. No longer are we subject to arbitrary arrests, death threats and other forms of official harassment, but secrecy in government still prevails, and one is quickly labelled "unpatriotic" or "reactionary" if one pursues stories which may bring government or members of the ruling party into disrepute.

One of the most common complaints from members of the public who resent media probes into people accused of corruption, for example, is that we have an "anti government agenda".

Generally there is nothing sinister behind our so-called agendas. What the media choose to

report on or choose to ignore, is often a result of the public's own agenda setting. Investigative journalism usually relies on tip-offs or informants and information we are able to unearth on the subject in question.

According to Rogers and Derring many now see the mass media systems as the mechanism linking the public with policy makers. In countries such as the US it is said that the media have usurped the linking function of political parties, creating what can be thought of as a "media democracy".

The media certainly do (and should do) some agenda setting themselves. If we take the example of Namibia's participation in the war in the DRC, we clearly agitated on this question until the public began to ask questions as well. Agenda setting is therefore showing the public that an issue is important, and this is an important component of educating the public in a democracy so that they are equipped to make choices.

We made some progress. The government finally admitted to the fact, although it earlier denied that it was embroiled in the DRC on the side of Kabila. This, however, was only the tip of the iceberg. Solid investigative or watchdog journalism would ensure we take this agenda further, to the point where we are able to tell the public what they should know about this adventure. Among others, how many troops we have committed to the DRC, what kind of activities they're engaged in there, what the cost is to the Namibian taxpayer, and the period of time we can expect they will continue to serve there. Government cannot expect to hide behind national security issues as the excuse for not being prepared to release further information.

We have our media lapdogs, and they are generally well-known. Those so-called journalists who make it their business to defend the inter-

ests of the ruling party or government, and who play the role of unofficial PR officers. Many of these journalists are caught in the New World Information Order time warp, where it was seen as a duty of journalists to develop their tasks in line with national policies.

We have our watchdogs too, and as I said earlier, they do well under the circumstances, but could do even better.

And the attack dogs. Well, we would probably prefer it if they could be kept to a minimum, but sometimes it's necessary to revert to this kind of journalism to get the answers. And as a fellow journalist said recently: "If we stop making people uncomfortable, I think we may stop practising good journalism".

I believe that there is, and indeed has to be, a natural adversarial relationship between government and media. I end with a quote from a conference I recently attended at Harvard University: "Information, after all, is a commodity and it is power. And it is the government's intention to use it, to withhold it, to abuse it. It is our job to ferret it out. In the process, we are often sloppy and irresponsible. So the government needs to educate us. And we need the government to inform us. Out of that comes a very tense, and never ending contest.

"Overdone, in any one direction — if we get too close and are the mere handmaidens of government, we fail in our function. If we stay so aloof and hostile that we remain uninformed and dumb, I don't think in the long run we can write intelligently about what is going on."

Gwen Lister is editor of the Namibian. This address was given to the Namibia Press Centenary Conference in October 1998.

"A free press is the most dangerous foe of tyranny."

WINSTON CHURCHILL

I

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The club of crooked nations

Corruption is endemic to Africa — and the media are not exempt



BY PHINDILE NGUBANE & MARLAN PADAYACHEE



The 'brown envelope syndrome' is prevalent in many countries ... cases have come to light in Nigeria, Kenya and Tanzania ranging from politicians openly handing out money and gifts, to journalists being on their permanent payrolls.

THE GLOBAL DISEASE of corruption continues to plague Africa. The new South Africa, despite its chequered history of apartheid and the liberation struggle, has joined the club of crooked nations.

It was not surprising then that South Africa's culture of corruption came under the microscope at the all-Africa conference on corruption and the media.

The conference, attended by investigative and political journalists representing media unions from 17 African countries, was organised by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) in Brussels, Belgium, recently.

South Africa, which in its transition from apartheid to democracy since 1994 has attracted a lot of flak, and rightly so, for the goings-on in the corridors of power and the numerous incidents of corruption, bribery and nepotism in high political places, was certainly not let off the hook.

Representatives of the World Bank, Transparency International and other African interest groups made interventions and shared their thoughts on this global disease that has

stigmatised most of decolonised Africa.

Participants at the conference agreed that under the apartheid regime, bribes and corruption were a way of life, but the state machinery was all powerful in defending its brand of corruption through various apartheid-linked slush funds running into hundreds of millions of rands. Such was the culture of apartheid administration that no one really questioned nefarious deals under the cloak of the world's most notorious political system since Nazism.

However, when the ANC turned the political tide of racism and discrimination into a new wave of democracy, it did not take South Africans long to rejoin the corruption line, and concern is growing that the country could soon be taking its place in the commonwealth of corrupt nations.

While it was admitted that South Africa was still far better off than most of the countries on the African continent, and that the country has put in place early mechanisms like the Public Protector to try to curb corruption, it still faces the danger of unsuccessfully fighting off this disease, as corrupters in most democracies tend to be found on the top of the social hierarchy

and have powers to manipulate the flow of information on the activities of their office.

Commented Transparency International's Dieter Frish: "Corruption, defined as 'the abuse of power for personal ends', has always existed. During recent decades, however, it has grown both in terms of geographic extents and intensity. Since the mid-1970s, corruption has infiltrated virtually every country in this world."

Frish, retired director-general for development at the European Commission, which funded this IFJ project, has devoted years fighting corruption at Transparency International, a world-wide NGO which lobbies strenuously against graft.

"It was hoped that the easing of political and economic restrictions that characterised the 1990s after the end of the Cold War would have gone some way in reducing this phenomenon.

"Through increased openness resulting from political pluralism and the freedom of the press, the process of democratisation should, under normal circumstances, mobilise efforts to overcome corruption."

However, emergent democracies are still fragile and appear to find the task of tackling established self-interest a formidable one.

The importance of providing training in investigative journalism was highlighted. Armed with this kind of training, journalists could be ready to tackle the dynamics that came with exposing corrupt activities, especially when dealing with government office-bearers and corporate officials.

It is equally crucial to realise that corruption not only exists within government and the private sector, but within the media as well. Various examples were given by journalists from southern, east and west Africa of instances where journalists were known to accept bribes from political parties or business people.

Shamlal Puri, managing editor of the London-based Newslink Africa, said there still remained rampant self-censorship in African newsrooms; while this might have been "understandable" during the era when countries had only state-owned media, the emergence of the independent press was expected to have seen an end to this.

Journalists exercise self-censorship in two ways: one out of fear of antagonising the government of the day; and the other to turn a blind eye to misdeeds of public functionaries in exchange for cash. Poor salaries and lack of good working conditions of most journalists in Africa have resulted in some journalists resorting to these means to maintain a decent standard of living.

"On some African newspapers, it is not uncommon for journalists to receive bribes from influential people either to publicise more positively or turn a blind eye to stories that could damage these influential people.

A journalist from Cameroon explained how the "brown envelope system" works: "Brown envelopes are regular in press circles in Cameroon where this kind of bribe received by a journalist is known as 'gombo', meaning that which makes a story palatable. We have received complaints concerning our members who approach personalities on whom they have what they consider an 'embarrassing story', who then ask for 'gombo' to kill the story."

There are other stories like the eight state radio and TV journalists who received 12 million francs in brown envelopes for various dubious assignments involving the Cameroon Football Federation.

"The 'brown envelope syndrome' is prevalent in many countries," Puri said, adding that cases have come to light in Nigeria, Kenya and Tanzania, ranging from politicians openly handing out money and gifts, to journalists being on their permanent payrolls.

"It is this corruption which destroys the image of our profession. These examples show how bad things are in Africa. And how important it is for us to clean our own house before we start fighting corruption in the mainstream community.

"As for the journalist who is corrupted by the corrupters with monetary handouts, ways have to be found for providing job satisfaction and just rewards and a sustainable salary," he said.

And then there is, of course, subtle but very effective censorship from the very same governments meant to be upholding the democratic order.

For example, in Kenya and Ghana where there is a vibrant, independent press, the government has used a mixture of overt repression, coercion and inducements to stamp out criticism.

In Ghana, there are currently more than 100 libel cases, either in court, or waiting to come to court.

"Some of these may be genuine but most are merely an exercise to use the law to silence newspapers."

While in South Africa media freedom is now respected by the new government, many countries on the continent do not enjoy that basic human right.

But the fact that the South African media enjoy this freedom does not mean that journalists should drop their watchdog status and relax. They must guard against a situation where sophisticated state machineries are used to silence the emerging and critical investigative journalism aimed at exposing the corrupters who continue wrongfully to steal from the country they have been given responsibility to serve.

Marlan Padayachee is a senior political journalist at The Post. Phindile Ngubane is a political reporter on the Mercury. They represented Mwasa at the IFJ conference.

what might be called the "classics". Here a debate arose about the relationship between film and television. On the one hand television could be seen as a "preserver" or promoter of film, in the sense that it can broadcast films that are no longer current. But on the other hand, Sidney Lumet argued firstly, that film has its own unique aesthetic qualities (as does television), and these are often lost in the broadcasting of film; and secondly that an essential part of this aesthetic is the public viewing experience of film in a cinema.

Danny Schechter, currently Vice President and Executive Producer of Globalvision, and formerly a media activist who championed the coverage of African news in the US by producing the weekly programme, *Africa Now*, chaired a session which focused on the "Consumption and abuse of reality in the multi-media environment". He suggested that more media or more information doesn't necessarily mean more understanding and knowledge — it can also promote amnesia. He decried the absence of context in news reporting which enables people to make sense of the sound bites and 10-second images they are exposed to. He was also critical of forums such as this one in which "media moguls are feted, but never challenged and questioned".

There seemed to be consensus that advertising pressure has led increasingly to simplistic news coverage that is being framed more as "entertainment", than "news" — the now accepted genre of "infotainment". It was suggested that this change has given the Internet the edge in providing the context that television news does not, and also in being able to reach fragmented audiences that it is uneconomic for broadcast news to cater for. This raised questions about the relationship between, or convergence of television and the Internet, and whether this could be seen as a "technical or

content race". One assessment of this relationship is that there would be a convergence of content, but a divergence of platforms of delivery.

While the conference raised several important issues, and had many participants who were well-informed on the technical issues relating to the storage and archiving of audio-visual material, it was in many ways a lop-sided convention. While the global economy was recognised, little acknowledgement was given to what might be called the "disastrous" way in which it functions for poor countries in the South. Thus the "justice" in international communications called for by the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs is far from a reality. The privileging of commercial interests over social concerns was highlighted for me by a comment by the President of Pay TV/Cable/Network, Warner Brothers, Edward Bleier, who said without a hint of irony, "what others call memories, I call assets". While it is imperative to look at the economics of producing, preserving and archiving audio-visual material, it is dishonest to pretend that these activities happen in a free world, and that a free market will provide the answers to what are essentially social issues. The agitation by predominantly Third World countries for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) was precisely because of the terms on which they were being inserted into the so-called free-market of international communications. Challenging the mainstream perceptions about the NWICO, media theorist Robert A White asserts that "it should be emphasised that the NWICO movement is not simply a Third World phenomenon but is world wide ... (it) is a movement that has deep roots in an historic socio-political and cultural process. Perhaps its most significant impact is the changed cultural perception of the nature of human communication and the role media are to play in society" (1993:25). This

wider socio-political context within which international communication should be seen was noticeably absent from the conference.

As so often happens at conferences of this kind, there is a broad unspoken ideological position which dominates, and which presents itself as a norm, or the only sensible way to think about the issues. With media there seems to be a notion of the inevitability of a particular form of globalisation, and digitalisation, and a general kind of technological and market determinism. Perhaps we should ask of this "all-powerful, but always invisible entity", as Steven Friedman did in a local newspaper article: "Will The Market please step forward" (Sunday Independent, Reconstruct, 25 July 1988:6). Ironically The Market did send its emissaries: the heads of various multi-national media outfits. But as Danny Schechter noted, they are rarely challenged and held to account. The unspoken discourse is of pragmatism. Thus while production experts, marketers, and hardware manufacturers are called upon to offer their experience to their peers of what it's like in the real world (where political and economic power hold sway), most times, media theorists, media sociologists, or media political economists who can both locate particular historical practices, and discuss them in a far wider social context, are not present. Such an engagement or dialogue would be particularly beneficial to policy makers and students of the media who are concerned with the potential role the media could play in building a more democratic world order.

Lynette Steenveld is the Chair of Media Transformation at Rhodes University's Department of Journalism and Media Studies.

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YFM: A STATE OF MIND

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"I think that the IBA has licensed radio stations which play music for which there will never be a substantial audience in this country — such as jazz and classical music. As such, they won't attract advertisers and will thus never be financially viable. They should have first licensed the successful format stations and then later, once these had proved viable, the niche stations. The failure of these niche stations may have a spillover effect on to the more successful stations in that advertisers won't differentiate and they'll simply say that 'radio is no good'. They will then put their advertising into other media."

The problem is further compounded, according to Abrahams, by the local content quotas imposed on radio stations by the IBA.

"YFM is in the fortunate position of being able to achieve a 40% local content. This is because the dominant local music that is exploding at the moment provides the staple of our play lists. However, if you take the other local major radio stations, they are all based on adult contemporary music and there just aren't enough local artists in this category for them to make the IBA quota. The only way around this problem is for these stations to get into partnership with record producers and retail outlets so that more local South African adult contemporary artists are recorded and promoted."

This leads Abrahams to discuss another issue of concern to him — the general lack, in South Africa, of co-operation between the record producers, radio stations and retail outlets. This is especially critical when it comes to the promotion of local music.

"You have to have record companies spending money to drive the process to bring out good product regularly, you have to have radio stations that support the music and you've got to have retail support so that when a kid hears the record on the radio he can go into a store and get it.

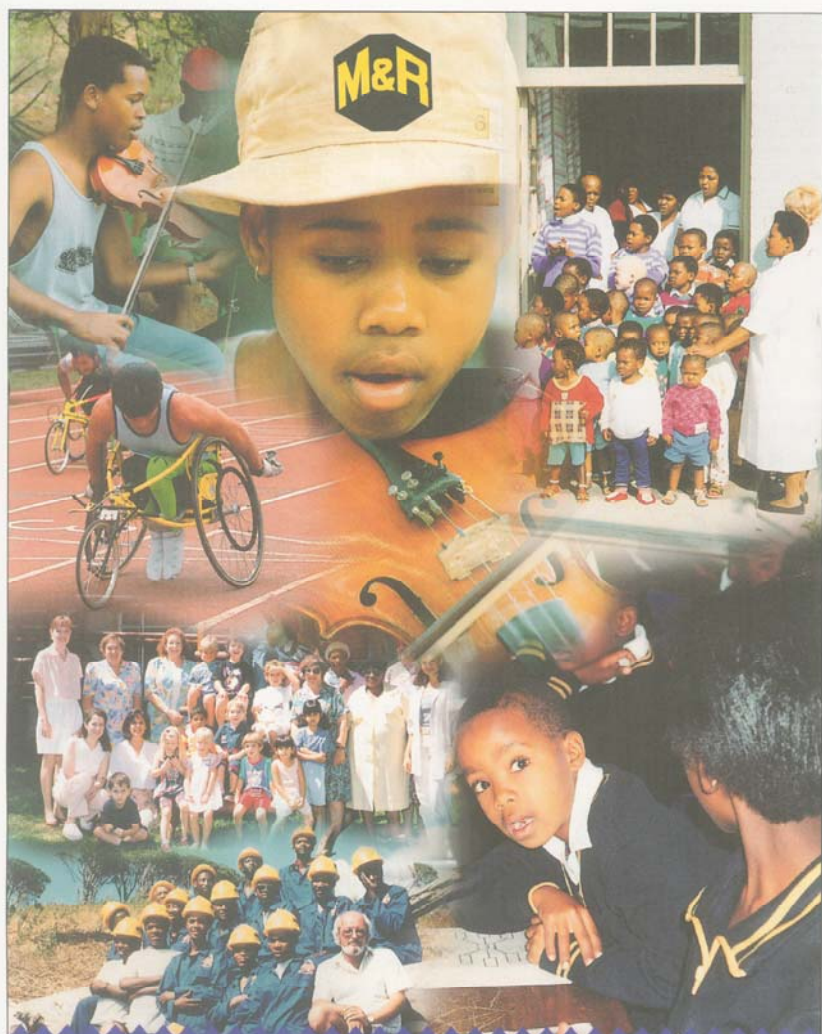
In SA you're lost before you begin. Sometimes radio picks up on good records but to get retail to stock them and to push them it only happens in the case of the big stars. Because the stores are doing OK they don't feel they have to try any harder."

Abrahams is also critical of the lack of professionalism of popular music production in South Africa, especially the lack of what are known in the music industry of artist and repertoire (A&R) people.

"The A&R people are concerned with the relationship between artists, songwriters, producers, image-makers, video producers. For example, you may have a great band but they have a terrible singer or bass player. It's up to the A&R person to recognise this and see what can be done. Alternatively, you may have a great band, but they can't write great songs. It's then up to the A&R person to find a songwriter. If one is only dealing with a singer, you need to decide what musicians you'll use to back him/her. The A&R person needs to have a good knowledge of the market and where their particular acts fit into this market. This strategic thinking and knowledge of relationships in popular music is crucial to the success of artists. Unfortunately artists seldom have all of this knowledge — that's why the role of the A&R person is so crucial.

"Jerry Wexler, for example, recognised that Aretha Franklin had been incorrectly promoted by Columbia Records. They didn't recognise her potential as a soul singer. Wexler surrounded her with great soul musicians, got in good soul music writers and in the process turned Franklin into the major female soul singer in America and transformed the face of American popular music. If we don't develop this area of expertise South African music will never move forward."

Larry Strelitz is a songwriter and singer who teaches media studies in the Rhodes Department of Journalism and Media Studies.



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LESOTHO JOURNALISTS NEED URGENT SUPPORT

► continued from page 6

months time. The authority will be tasked, among others, with "creating and promoting conditions conducive to the holding of free and fair elections; eliminating any impediments to legitimate political activity; [and] ensuring equal treatment of all political parties and candidates by all governmental institutions and in particular by all government-owned media, prior to and during the elections".

Government media representatives interviewed by MISA welcomed the introduction of the Bill, saying it would free them of the ruling-party stranglehold on their media allowing them to give greater coverage to all the political players in the country. They were also confident that they would live up to the expectation of providing fair and equitable coverage on political matters in the run up to the election.

The independent journalists interviewed by MISA, however, were not so confident about this. "Similar laws as those contained in the current Bill requiring fair and equitable treatment of political parties was contained in the previous Electoral Act, yet this was not carried out. Opposition parties and candidates were given minimal space in the government media," said Ramainoane.

The current political situation in Lesotho and the sudden predicament of a "pre-election" period begs for urgent intervention and support for the independent media in Lesotho. The government continues to enjoy a monopoly over the airwaves and despite several radio licences having been issued by the Ministry of Information in 1998, none of these stations is on air. If the harsh economic environment facing independent publications in Lesotho persists, and in the absence of any outside support, some of these publications may face closure, thus striking a blow to the information needs of the Lesotho people, while also reducing the chances of more vigorous reporting on political matters and parties in the run-up to the elections.

Write right!

FREELANCE journalism is one of the most difficult fields to break into, especially in South Africa. Having freelanced for a variety of magazines and newspapers in South Africa and overseas, Bianca Thomas saw a need for a comprehensive writer's guide in South Africa.

"In my experience, there is one crucial factor that separates overseas writers from South African writers: the lack of a comprehensive source of information on publications that accept freelance contributions. In the US, freelancers make use of *The Writer's Market*, *The Gila Queen's Guide to Writing Markets* and *Freelance Success*. In the UK, similar publications are available, but South African writers have no such resource, which is why I am putting one together."

So Thomas has started *WRITE!* magazine. Currently only available through subscription, it will include market information (South African, US, Canadian, Australian and UK), editor interviews, author interviews, writers' showcases, writers' classifieds, writers' resources, editors' resources and articles on writing.

The magazine is aimed at writers, editors, publishers and anyone else interested in earning extra income through freelance work. It will focus on helping writers publish all types of writing from fiction to non-fiction in magazines, newspapers and journals around the world.

The magazine will also offer writers the opportunity to advertise their services. The first edition includes interviews with *Out*

There magazine editor Monica Graaff and US mystery writer Barbara Paul as well as articles such as "Writing the perfect query letter" and "Law for writers: what you need to know". New South African freelance writer Annemarie Luck's column, *Seeking Sanity*, will also appear in the writer's showcase section.

The writer's showcase section will feature one new writer every month. The idea is to give the new writer a chance to get his or her work noticed by editors around the country and abroad. Short stories, novel excerpts, poems or non-fiction articles can be submitted for publication. A short biography of the writer together with contact information and a small photograph will be published alongside the work.

Not only will this resource be of service to writers and photographers, but also to editors in that it will (hopefully) result in better query letters, manuscripts written to the editor's personal specifications and a forum for editors to advise writers on what they really want and need. The first issue will be sent to 30 South African editors and 50 other editors.

WRITE! will be published monthly with updates being sent out throughout the year. A private web site will also be available to subscribers only. The web site will also house a discussion room for South African writers and an e-mail critique group. Subscribers without Internet access can send their work for critique via ordinary mail.

A subscription costs R96 a year for the print edition and R72 a year for the email edition. Both contain the same information.

● Contact Bianca Thomas *WRITE!* Magazine, P.O. Box 1600, Port Elizabeth, 6001.
e-mail bmt@icon.co.za
Fax: (041) 5042574.

Thumbsuck

THE BOESAK BANK

Nice little Freudian slip in some recent copy from Cape Town on the fraud trial of Allan Boesak. Boesak may not have noticed any improper transfer of funds to his Foundation for Peace and Justice because it happened at a time, his lawyer persuaded witness Mary Burton to concede, when he was travelling extensively on behalf of the United Democratic Fund.

WOOF-BANG

Famous words attributed to Malawian president Bakili Muluzi: "The media has a role as a watchdog, but when the dog displays rabies it needs to be vaccinated." Whew, Thumbsuck thought that being rabid was a recipe for destruction.

THE CUSHY CAREER

Man seeks job as journalist on Sunday Times. Gets told to try his hand at freelancing and prove himself. After six weeks of supplying good stories, the following conversation takes place:

"OK, I've shown I deliver. How about that job?"

"Sorry, no vacancies right now. Hang in a bit longer with the freelancing — after all you're pulling R8000 a month."

"No, I'm tired of reporting. Now I want a job, an office, a car and a column in the paper."

THE JOURNO'S BURDEN

"Are we merely porters who carry press releases from the government and put them in the paper? Or are we re-porters who explain the significance of the news to our readers?" Paul Hemp (*Ten Practical Tips for Business and Economic Reporting in Developing Economies*).

FLEECE ON HIS OWN RECOGNISANCES

Few people can miss Sunday Times news editor Peter Malherbe. Not least the scroungers in Grahamstown. On a recruiting trip to Rhodes recently, he was hailed as an old friend in the street by a hustler seeking spare change. The bemused Malherbe had forgotten the ways of Grahamstown and was about to refuse. But the man reminded PM where he had lived during his student days in Grahamstown nearly 15 years earlier ... and that he'd always scored from the young Malherbe in those far off times. The snookered Malherbe reached into his pocket ...

AFRICAN SUPER HIGHWAY

Ghana's village phone shops are doing runaway business offering e-mail addresses to cus-

tomers. The result is a rocketing trade in messaging, and the invention of a new verb. "Now my son, you must dot-com me when you get to Accra," is common speak in the rural areas. Such success on the info highway must drive Jay Naidoo ... dotty.

HARD PRESS

Against the backdrop of the struggle to scrap Section 205, journalists might consider cases where we would be hard pressed to remain silent about our sources. Consider what happened to Frene Ginwala as editor of Tanzania's post-independence paper the *Standard* in 1970. She published a story about a top Zanzibari government member having abducted a woman for a forced marriage, only to discover later the information was false and had been planted to discredit the paper.

Three Zimbabweans in a similar situation last year decided to hell with the principle and coughed up the name of the source who fed them false information.

IDI AND THE ZIMBABWEAN EGO

Zimbabwean press-hater Robert Mugabe would no doubt enjoy the kind of coverage given to that well-known African patriot Idi Amin (now resident in Saudi Arabia). When Idi grabbed power in 1971, his picture featured in the country's key daily, the *Argus*, 101 times in just five months. A year later, it was up to 157 times in the same period. By 1976, it was 215 times — an average of twice in each edition. Among Amin's bullying tactics was his attack on a (black) journalist at a press conference: "That question must have been asked by a white African and surely not by a Ugandan." Mugabe may be following his mentor's footsteps but as a produce of Jesuit education, it's unlikely he'd seek sanctuary with the Saudis.

UNCOOL

"At least 20% of South Africans travel on British passports and an estimated 10% on other foreign passports." This item comes from a rag called *South Africa News*, circulated in London, and available at the offices of our very own High Commission there. Maybe racism-hunter Barney Pitsoyiwe should take his media probe up north, where evidently it is still cool to conflate South Africa with a white minority.

DAILY DISPATCH - ONE OF THE BIGGEST

The latest issue of the ALL MEDIA AND PRODUCTS SURVEY shows (once again) that the Daily Dispatch ranks right alongside South Africa's best read newspapers. Only newspapers published in the top three cities (Johannesburg, Cape Town & Durban) can claim to have higher daily readership figures. These are our latest figures followed by the newspapers we beat ...

Daily Dispatch	EAST LONDON	199,000 readers
The Mercury	DURBAN	196,000 readers
E.P. Herald	P.E.	145,000 readers
Pretoria News	PRETORIA	119,000 readers
Natal Witness	PIETERMARITZBURG	115,000 readers
Die Volksblad	BLOEMFONTEIN	110,000 readers
Evening Post	P.E.	96,000 readers
Diamond Fields Advertiser	KIMBERLEY	47,000 readers

If you are battling the tough climate, why not call on one of your biggest allies to promote your business to nearly 200 000 readers?

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