

# Get ready for Generation J



A media festival for black teenagers promotes journalism as a career. **Ntombi Mhangwani** reports.

Adding colour to journalism programmes at previously white universities and technikons is no easy task. Everyone talks transformation and the need to see the number of black South African students increasing. But the big question is, who is turning the talk into action?

Rhodes University's Department of Journalism and Media Studies made a modest contribution to the challenge by running a Steve Biko Media Week competition in April.

The purpose of the competition is to promote media careers to young black South Africans. It targeted black pupils who are interested in studying journalism to visit Rhodes' journalism school, and to experience the practical and theoretical training of a journalist at university level.

In correcting the imbalances of the past — in particular to ensure that there are greater numbers of black South Africans involved in media, tertiary institutions need to work with the media to make such efforts more effective.

Until the country's media adequately reflects the black majority, media freedom will not be widely cherished as it should be.

The Steve Biko Media Week

Competition secured advertising and/or news space promoting journalism as a career from: *Yfm, Daily Dispatch, Sunday Times, Mail & Guardian, Sowetan, Evening Post, Natal Echo, Daily News and City Press*. Sponsorship was also obtained from Johnnic, the French Embassy, Anglogold and Eskom.

More than 300 young people entered the competition — sending in essays on how today's media compared to that in the 1970s during Biko's last years. The entries showed a deep appreciation of media freedom, as well as a critical awareness of the need for further change in South Africa's media.

Thirty winners from around South Africa spent five days at Rhodes, being exposed to print, broadcast, photojournalism, television, lay-out and design and Internet journalism skills.

They also took part in social and sporting activities on campus. Excursions included a tour of Grahamstown, both town and township, and a trip to Kingwilliamstown to visit the Steve Biko grave and meet up with Mrs Ntsikelelo Biko and the couple's son, Nkosinathi Biko.

The week at Rhodes entailed intensive skills training. The schol-

ars were given stories to research and news to collect. At the end of the week these formed part of two newspapers, which the participants themselves titled and planned.

Producing radio stories and features was also part of the brief. The Internet skills training programme introduced the learners to the wonders of the Internet.

The scholars also attended journalism and media studies lectures and were given opportunities to interact with students studying journalism fulltime.

The initiative was held in honour of black consciousness leader Steve Biko who died in detention in 1977, and it also marked the department's 30th anniversary in 2000. Biko did much to get black journalists into the media, as well as also helping white journalists to shed their blinkers.

Visiting Biko's grave, the scholars heard from a family friend that the spirit of the man came back periodically, and that he had now returned in the form of them — the Biko scholars.

■ Ntombi Mhangwani is Marketing, Events and Communications officer at Rhodes Department of Journalism and Media Studies

## COMMENTS FROM THE WINNERS

- "Journalism is a fantastic profession. It demands one to be dedicated and to always strive for excellence." — Asanda Magaqa
- "Journalism is the only thing that can unite the rainbow nation." — Nelson Joni
- "It is a good career because it makes you in direct contact with people." — Ntombihlanga Mpati
- "I love it because it is the only job where you can have fun while working" — Yasheera Rampersadh
- "Let journalism carry on feeding the citizens with food for the brain." — Vusumzi Ngcongco
- "The media has changed and we have changed, but our thoughts and actions will never be oppressed again as long as we have words to fight back with." — Mikale Barry
- "Being a journalist does not only mean being true to the public, it's also about writing what's inside you and being satisfied in the end." — Sikelewa Geya

# Train-sformation

There's movement in media training, reports **Guy Berger**

Taking up the Human Rights Commission challenge, the education and training sub-committee of the SA National Editors Forum (Sanef) conducted an inquiry into transformation in the training sector during April.

The purpose was to establish the sector's racial profile as a basis on which to develop a programme of action, especially in dialogue with those editors and the Forum of Black Journalists who had made strong calls for faster changes during the HRC hearings.

A questionnaire was distributed, and nine responses from some 13 tertiary institutions teaching journalism were received. NGO's and commercial colleges were not surveyed. The results showed:

- Journalism training staff: 23% are African, 59% are white;
- Guest lecturers: 20% are African, 48% are white;
- Students: 50% are African, 28% white; 15% coloured; 9% Indian.
- Most institutions cover race issues in existing courses, none have specialist courses on the topic.
- Most institutions have practical programmes that expose students across racial communities.
- All institutions teach black press history.
- Very few do research specifically into media transformation.
- All have 'equity' policies in staff selection.
- Most have support services for scholars from disadvantaged

schools.

- Almost all offer optional African languages; none have 'English for journalists' courses.
- Most offer post-graduate or short courses for mid-career journalists, with high black enrollment.
- Tertiary trainers want closer ties with, and more support from, industry.

The survey also showed huge differences between journalism training institutions. One reported 80% African staff, while another reported 100% white. At a different institution, 85% of students were white; at two more all the students were African. "We have had only one white student in ten years," said one media trainer.

The responses said that African student enrolments had been rising since 1995, although finance to pay fees was a problem for many people, and African women were under-represented. Most training institutions said that there were no differences in the 'throughput' rates of different race students, even though many black students were studying in a second language.

## In their general comments, trainers said:

- "Transformation is not just what is to be done at white institutions or male staff. It is necessary for all, if we are to produce journalists sensitive to the multicultural nature of society."
- "Transformation must be fully supported by industry if it is to

enjoy credibility and respect. Forums should be set up to deal specifically with transformation."

- More bursaries are needed for black students."
- "Don't confuse demographics and psychographics. Eliminating racism deals with the latter, and is not the same as change in the former. We need both."
- "Industry should be educated on the need to support training, and to help upgrade trainers. The skills-levy law could encourage this."
- "Industry should second black journalists to visit and teach at training institutions".

To assess these findings, invitations were sent to seven editors to meet with the Sanef committee for discussions. Nothing materialised, although the Forum of Black Journalists did send representatives to one committee meeting. Pressing ahead nonetheless, the committee has embarked on the following activities:

- developing a project whereby training institutions can network with industry via a trainers' roadshow that offers short courses.
- compiling a bibliography of training resources on the history of black journalism in South Africa, and possibly a series of compiled readings or even a book.
- spearheading workshops to "train transformation facilitators" — these aim to provide a range of ideas, resources and skills to Sanef members, so that progress can be made on the organisation's public commitment to hold workshops in newsrooms around the country.
- convening a workshop of trainers to share experiences on how race issues are covered in the curriculum.