

RHODES JOURNALISM  
**Review**



**RACISM IN THE MEDIA**

# RHODES JOURNALISM Review

Acting editor: Guy Berger  
Editorial advisor: Lynette Steenveld  
Editor (on leave): Anthea Garman  
Founding editor: Kerry Swift

Design/Layout: Zenaide Jones (courtesy The Star)  
Andrew Prinsloo (courtesy Financial Mail)

Co-published with the Media Peace Centre,  
with financial support from the British  
Government Human Rights Project Fund and  
the Social Development Department, DFID.  
www.mediacepecentre.org  
e-mail: mpc@iafrica.com, PO Box 27344,  
Claremont, 7735, Cape Town, South Africa

DEPARTMENTAL PUBLISHING GROUP:  
Dr Tawana Kupe, Rod Amner, Guy Berger

Administration:  
Chloe O'Keeffe, Sonwabo Niwa

Advertising:  
Ntombi Mhangwani

Cover artwork: Bulelani Fatman (caption p.27)  
Other artwork: Courtesy of print-makers in the  
exhibition, Egazini — the battle of Grahamstown.  
Thanks to Dominic Thorburn and Giselle Baillie.

Artwork photography: Catherine Knox

All correspondence to:  
The Editor, Rhodes Journalism Review  
Department of Journalism and Media Studies  
Rhodes University, Box 94  
Grahamstown 6140, South Africa  
• Tel: 046 603 8336/7 • Fax: 046 622 8447

Editorial email: A.Garman@ru.ac.za  
Advertising email: N.Mhangwani@ru.ac.za

Subscriptions: R50 for two editions a year (R25  
for students)

Copyright: the Department of Journalism and  
Media Studies, Rhodes University.  
http://journalism.ru.ac.za

## EDITORIAL:

This Review is a resource to tackle racism in the media. It carries a variety of views — some angry, others hurt. There is an array of analyses about media freedom, and there are ample arguments about the media's mistakes. Different writers use diverse definitions of racism, and some of them demonstrate diametrically opposing opinions about whether racial categories provide a meaningful way to work out what's happening. Next time you revert to what trainer Eric Meijer calls our "racial default settings", pause and reflect on the articles in this collection. Remember, too, the big picture. Journalists like you may sometimes feel that they share nothing more than the career title. At such times, it seems the gulf between our differing racial lives must logically lead to segregated, even polarised, journalism. But if this country's media is to help this nation converse with itself, then journalists have no choice but to work with one other in the interests of the profession and the public. This edition of the RJR is designed to stimulate dialogue in that direction. It hopes to encourage co-operation towards cleansing the media of our remaining colour bars. — Guy Berger

# Inside

Edition 19 — August 2000

Jointly published with Media Peace Centre

## HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION INQUIRY

- 3 **Did the HRC do the rights thing?** — Dr Barney Pitanya says the Inquiry started the task of educating journalists about the complexities of racism.
- 5 **Where the HRC went wrong.** — Sean Jacobs sums up the problems and suggests a new process.
- 7 **Gender: the next step.** — The face of race has a gendered complexion, writes Phumla Mthala.

## RACE AND RACISM: WHAT ARE THEY?

- 9 **An anthropology of race.** — Rosabelle Laville says it is less a question of nature or nurture, than the things people do with the race debate.
- 11 **Defining the undefinable.** — Lynette Steenveld discusses racism as a power practice based on the false notion that there are races with essential characteristics.

## NEWSROOM EXPERIENCES

- 12 **SABC seeks its own Simunye.** — The public broadcaster highlights its progress and problems in staff profile, race relations and programme budgets.
- 13 **Pushing the paradigm.** — Ex-Cape Times editor Ryland Fisher critiques transformation in the industry — and at his former paper; the paper's current editor John Scott responds.
- 15 **Beating the Black Drum.** — Abbey Makoe gets mad at the media for perpetuating racism. Liz Khumalo, editor of *Drum*, says he's mistaken some things.
- 17 **White man whingeing.** — What's a melanin-deprived male journo to do, asks Yves Vanderhaeghen.

## COLOUR OF THE NEWS

- 19 **Race, class and other prejudices.** — Racism is real, but class prejudice is the culprit that claims black media victims, argues Eve Bertelsen.
- 20 **Media & markets.** — Zandi Nkutha says skin-colour determines story selection at the *Sunday Times*. The paper's editor, Mike Robertson, counters that the market decides.
- 21 **Stereotypes steer the news.** — The ANC asserts that stories are jaundiced right from the start.
- 22 **White heroes & bêtes noires.** — Ibbo Mandaza dissects the colonial-style coverage of the Zimbabwean land invasion.
- 25 **Cricketer's infamous coolie creeper.** — Journalists legitimated the use of this racist label, argues Lynette Steenveld.

## RIGHTS AND RACISM, HURTS AND HEALING

- 26-27 **Discussion: when rights collide, which should trump?** — Lynette Steenveld makes the case for equality; Barney Pitanya proposes that freedom of expression can't be put on a pedestal above other rights. Mandla Seloane says equality and dignity are likely to take first place in contemporary South Africa.
- 29 **Freedom vs racism.** — Legal remedies to address racism are limited, but media diversity is part of the answer, posits the Freedom of Expression Institute.
- 30 **Words that wound.** — Chris Whitfield combats coded language in the *Cape Argus* newsroom.
- 31 **Over the rainbow.** — Black Consciousness has a lot to offer in countering media racism, writes Guy Berger.
- 33 **Is the web a white place?** — Tanya Accone highlights access as the key to mixing colours across the digital divide.

## POLITICAL ECONOMY

- 35 **Not yet uhuru.** — Gibson Boloka analyses the limits of changing ownership without also transforming the colour of capital.
- 36 **Journalism — or commerce?** — Prejudice and the pursuit of profit are compromising the media's credibility. Muzi Kuzwayo makes the case.
- 37 **Zimbabwe's experience.** — Harare publisher Elias Rusike reckons that the racial ranting by his country's government-controlled media has served to boost the non-racial private press.
- 38 **Of audiences & adspend.** — Mokone Molete says it's all change for readership, but no change for advertisers.

## RACE IN THE USA

- 41 **The language of race in the US media.** — Get right to the racial point ... if there actually is one, urges Keith Woods of The Poynter Institute.
- 42 **Name of the game.** — In the cultural fruit salad of the USA, racial identity is a metamorphosing ingredient, writes Stephen Magagnini.

## FOCUSING FORWARDS

- 43 **Breaking out of the box.** — Lynette Steenveld sounds a call to get back to the basic role of journalism in a democracy.
- 44 **Diversity = Accuracy.** American journalists are concerned to get comprehensive community coverage, according to a report on the country's "Time-Out for Diversity" project.
- 45 **Racism ... or inept reporting?** — Never attribute to malice what is best explained by incompetence, counsels Kanthan Pillay.
- 46-47 **Tools to transform.** — The HRC inquiry prompted the *Sunday Times* to draw up a Race Charter and checklist, Phylcia Oppelt reports.
- 49 **Building bridges.** — Port Elizabeth's *Evening Post* gets cross-community conversations going. Lakela Kaunda explains how.
- 51 **Get ready for Generation J.** — A media festival for black teenagers promotes journalism as a career, recounts Ntombi Mhangwani. And, Sanef surveys its trainers.
- 52 **Thumbsuck.** — A race against time to get the journalism right; plus, a chance to compare the HRC and TRC investigations into media.



## EGAZINI

Race and racism have a history. By representing where we come from, histories serve to explain the present and orient us to the future. For this reason, the graphics in this *Rhodes Journalism Review* are chosen from the exhibition "Egazini — the Battle of Grahamstown". The artwork commemorates one of the greatest early clashes between white and black in South Africa.

On 22 April 1819, a Xhosa force under Makana, reputedly 10 000 strong, swept down the slopes of Grahamstown to attack the British garrison town. The attack was repulsed by the white soldiers with support from coloured sharpshooters. Today, the battlefield is still known as "Egazini" — the place of blood.

In a poetic interpretation written by Thomas Pringle, an isiXhosa commander explains the motives for attacking the town: "You sent a commando — you took our last cow — you left only a few calves which died for want, along with our children. Without milk — our corn destroyed — we saw our wives and children perish — we saw that we must ourselves perish; we followed therefore, the tracks of our cattle into the colony ...."

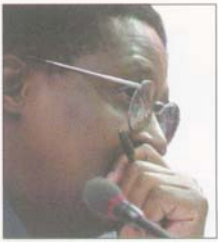
Seven years earlier, Colonel John Graham had driven the amaXhosa from the area, using a crippling scorched-earth policy. Their return under Makana's leadership demonstrated both their desperation and their belief that justice needed to be done. After the defeat, Makana (also known as Nxele) surrendered to the British and was jailed on Robben Island. He died by drowning soon after, when he tried to escape.

The artwork produced for the Egazini exhibition is a fusion of imagination, artistic skill and oral and written histories. It also reflects Grahamstown residents' contemporary visual interpretations about the significance of the battle.

Organised by the Fine Line Press and Print Research Unit at Rhodes University's Fine Arts Department and the Underpressure Agency, the project drew in artists from Nombulelo High School and the Masikhule Women's Group, plus Dr Julie Wells from the Rhodes History Department.

The exhibition brochure declares: "Now is the time to rescue imagination and memory as part of the larger process of nation-building."

For more information or for copies of prints, email [fineline@ru.ac.za](mailto:fineline@ru.ac.za) or [underpressure@intekom.co.za](mailto:underpressure@intekom.co.za)



by Dr N Barney Pitso,  
HRC chairperson

# Did the HRC do the Rights thing?

It has been widely acknowledged that the South African Human Rights Commission's Inquiry into Racism in the Media was a watershed initiative in the annals of the nascent democratic South Africa.

Much has been made of the fact that the Terms of Reference (see Box below) were limited in scope.

They were limited in part because the Commission reasoned that an Inquiry of this nature should not be open-ended, but had to be completed within a given space of time. Second, the Inquiry was limited to the products of the media because we believed that what makes an impact on the public consciousness is not what goes on behind the scenes — but what they actually read about themselves and what it conveys about the society they live in.

There was concern that the Commission would act like the censorship police of old and invade newsrooms or would go about doing a headcount of who constituted the newsroom. We wanted to discount that notion.

What the Terms of Reference wished to convey is the fact that according to the South African Constitution, not all reference to race and not all discrimination is necessarily unfair and therefore a violation of the rights in the Bill of Rights. If, however, discrimination is established, the Constitution allows for a shift in onus of proof to the one accused of discrimination to prove that the discrimination was fair within the meaning of the Constitution.

The other line of attack against the Inquiry was the fact that no working definition of racism was offered. That was deliberate. In a sense the Commission did not want to begin with definitions, but sought to examine the narratives of race that were communicated to the South African media reading, listening and viewing public.

We wanted the examination of the impact to be considered on its own, and then the meanings given to the feelings aroused thereby to be defined and named. In other words, our approach was not to begin with definitions, but with narratives. To have done otherwise would have been to stifle debate about the nature, meaning and manifestations of racism.

The Public Hearings opened on Wednesday 1 March and, following opening remarks by the Chairperson, were postponed till the following Monday in order to allow editors to prepare their testimony. There was a regular attendance of no less than 100 people for each of the eight days of Hearings. There was full cooperation by the media.

There were some moving testimonies and soul-searching examinations of the newspaper industry in a new South Africa. There were also lively exchanges between the members of the panel and

witnesses. Reportage of the Hearings in print, radio and TV was comprehensive and fair.

In conclusion, the Commission has been consistent in asserting that the Inquiry was not a trial. There were no accused, but participants in a legal process of discovery and seeking a way forward. Second, the Inquiry was about racism and not so much about freedom of expression. Much of the commentary and controversy leading to the Public Hearings had conveniently avoided this matter.

The Commission sought to engage the media into sensitivity and awareness of the implications and assumptions behind the exercise of their craft. In other words, the Commission emphasised its own commitment to the protection and promotion of all the rights in the Bill of Rights, including the freedom of expression and the freedom of the press.

It was also asserted that we lived in a rights-based society, but also one where the rule of law was upheld. For that reason, the moral authority of the media could not be enhanced when they selectively sought to undermine the due and proper application of the law when it suited their interests. If they did that, then they would diminish their moral authority in society.

During the hearings, a more sober reflection on the work of the HRC researchers was undertaken. Though critical in parts, the assessment by academics pointed out that some useful pointers could be derived from the research. There may be some methodological flaws, but these had to be judged in terms of the brief given to the researchers and the Terms of Reference.

It was agreed that more work needed to be done and that some useful lessons were learnt. Definitions of racism were also the subject of some debate. It was agreed that poor journalism abounds in South Africa. Care had to be taken, it was suggested, that poor or sloppy journalism should not be confused with racism.

What was apparent in much of this discursive argument, is that white South Africans were inclined to deny or avoid any substantive discussion of racism. Fear and suspicion fueled a great deal of the furore about the investigation. Some of that had a lot to do with whether the investigation would not lead to restrictive legislation. There was no rational justification for that, but it was there nonetheless.

It was clear also that much work needs to be done to help journalists understand the multiple characteristics of racism, its new forms and mutations as well as its manifestations. There is general agreement that such a task is urgent for the good of South Africa. Has the Inquiry achieved its purpose? Time will tell. The task of ridding our society of all forms of racism has to be an ongoing duty.

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

- a) to investigate the handling of race and possible incidence of racism in the media and whether such as may be manifested in these products of the media constitutes a violation of fundamental rights as set out in the Constitution;
- b) to establish the underlying causes and to examine the impact on society of racism in the media if such racism is found to be manifested in the products of the media; and
- c) to make findings and recommendations as appropriate

# Where the HRC went wrong



**Sean Jacobs** sums up the problems and suggests a new process

The Racism in the Media Inquiry arrived at the wrong time. The mainstream media felt under siege. This was largely a perception born from its experience with any form of state, particularly that under apartheid, and given its liberal democratic origins and ethos. Consequently, many journalists perceived the inquiry as part of a grand government conspiracy to attack them. The HRC were the foot-soldiers of the state in this perceived crusade.

President Mandela had questioned the media's bona fides to properly relay the complex nature of the South African political, social and economic transformation in late 1994. At the ANC National Conference in December 1997, he had referred to the media as part of a broader 'counter-revolutionary' conspiracy against transformation in South Africa. Not surprisingly, the press conjured up visions of a government and ruling party-led crusade against them.

This fear was further exacerbated when Mandela's successor, Thabo Mbeki, reminded the media (particularly the printed press) at every opportunity of their racial character (read: an overwhelmingly white press writing from the experience of the country's white minority about the country's political, economic and social transition).

As a result, the HRC could hardly rely on any co-operation from the media. It is true that Claudia Braude (who acted as primary researcher for the HRC Report) had not consulted with the media groups or interviewed journalists and produced a report with rather flimsy analytical bases. But it is also true that the media — already when the first advertisements for the inquiry and the hearings had appeared in the media — had dismissed the process as a witch-hunt from the start.

In addition, a poorly formulated complaint by a group more interested in their advancement as a racial class (as against that of black people in general) had formed the basis of this 'assault' on 'press freedoms'. Then the ANC's lopsided submission (key message: a white editor must have written a black reporter's criticism of President Mbeki!) only worsened an already damaged climate between the media and the HRC.

What was lost as the HRC became the subject of the investigation, was the real subject: racism. Yet racism is inextricably part of the media make-

up in South Africa in how it perpetuates separate audiences, constructs markets for advertisers, portrays complex processes of political transition and organises its newsrooms.

**Much of the subsequent debate and critiques of the process focused on the HRC's process. Three things stand out from that overplayed debate:**

● One, the efficiency of the HRC's complaint and public deliberation process is under question. In this case an individual complaint (the Black Lawyers Association and that of the Black Accountants Association against the *Sunday Times* and the *Mail & Guardian*) became conflated with a broader social inquiry (racism in the media). In future when the HRC chooses to conduct a macro-level social inquiry, it needs to be careful to ensure that such an inquiry is not confused or conflated with an individual, micro-level complaint.

● Two, given the sensitivity of the subject, the HRC could have adopted a less confrontational approach. The actual process as well as the public debate that preceded the hearings was dominated by the HRC's decision to exercise its legal powers to use subpoenas in a context where the 'rules of the game' are liberal democratic (where the media is interpreted as hands-off and one of the pillars of a democratic system). The furore that ensued compromised and severely damaged the prospects for a substantive inquiry into racism in the media.

● Three, the commission's research opened itself to ridicule. Beyond the sloppy research, it lacked definitions ('What is racism?'). Such a definition should have been dealt with as a preliminary matter. A good comparative example is the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Although it was controversial, the TRC managed to smooth its process considerably by (relatively) clearly defining gross violations of human rights ahead of time. The debate around what constitutes racism should have been the specialist area of the HRC and should have been settled before the public hearings.

The discussion about racism was perhaps too removed from the real experience of racism (mired in Eurocentric and American definitions while South Africa has a rich and well-documented literature and definitions of the particular manifestation of racism here). As a result, this 'debate' took on a political function itself, assisting in the vilification of the process — an unfortunate, but inevitable consequence.

Racism in the media is a complex issue. To completely unpack it requires a careful, systematic inquiry and a longitudinal approach. Racism is not easily exposed, except where espoused by a tiny minority who have made it a religion and a way of life. A large number of people who practice racism do not own up or are not aware of it (because it has become naturalised and therefore 'normalised').

Any serious interrogation of racism in the media must, among other things, look at the work practices and journalistic routines of the media, the gate-keeping functions and practices of editors and reporters in selecting news items and news sources and, indeed, the agenda-setting roles and strategies of the media and news sources. There is a lot we can discover behind those media gates.

At a political level, there are two useful lessons that can be drawn from the HRC inquiry. First, that a wide-ranging public debate should have preceded the inquiry; and second, that we require a fresh approach and new perspectives into this problem if we are to have a worthwhile exchange about racism, race and power, and media.

Looking ahead, we need a more empirical approach to researching the political and historical role of the media in order to contribute meaningfully to the debate about racism as well as the relationship between race and power in the media. Hopefully, the findings of such research will not be selfishly questioned and obscured through filibuster and rhetoric by those who need to take them to heart.

■ Sean Jacobs works for Idasa where he researches the relationship between media, power and democracy



**MBULELO NYUMKA**  
b.1976

**Akudlozi lingay' ekhaya — No spirit fails to go home**

The warrior has been told not to fear anything because his ancestors are protecting him. In front of the man a rifle is depicted with water running out of it down into the ground. It is believed that the medicine man Makana deceived the chief and his troops when he prophesied that the bullets of the British would be turned into water.

# Gender: the next step



The face of race has a gendered complexion, writes **Phumla Mthala**.

The recent report into racism in the media conducted for the South African Human Rights Commission was the first step towards understanding how race, racism and racial stereotypes are represented in the South African media. There were some suggestions, however, that the study was limited by focusing on solely on race, and that class and gender were also important aspects to look at. These questions necessitate an examination of the relationship between race, gender, and class.

We need to understand how the practices of race, gender and class are created, expressed, challenged, reinforced and circulated in our society. One way to do this is to examine the role of black women in South Africa's history.

The Apartheid government enforced a racially divided society. Race was central in this system, but its impact went beyond the boundaries of race — into gender and class. For example, it served capitalist ends to have a racist system as it reproduced conditions for cheap labour via influx control and the pass laws. These pillars of apartheid prevented black people from permanent residence in urban areas. They impacted most heavily on rural black women, who carried the burden of producing the cheap labour power for white mines and farms, and in time they also served to ensure that women



**Nomavenda Mathiane and Lakela Kaunda** ... testified at the HRC hearings to ensure that racism was not seen as something that affects men and women equally.

remained largely unskilled.

Those women who did move to the towns found themselves at the bottom of the urban social hierarchy, having fewer rights not only because they were black — but also because they were poor. In some instances, the type of work they found served to further alienate them and undermine their rights as human beings. Employment as domestic workers or jobs as prostitutes to mineworkers, are just two examples. This is not to suggest that these were the only jobs black women performed, nor that black male mineworkers for instance were enjoying greater rights.

So, it wasn't only apartheid that robbed black women of their rights — but also capitalism and patriarchy. While these three forms of inequality closely interlock with one another, they are conceptually independent. For example, while the position in which black women find themselves in the strata of power relations can be partly explained by patriarchy and class discrimination, racism was and still is a dimension in their socio-economic positioning. This merits research into race and racism. But there is also a dire need for research into the gender dimension — i.e. those experiences that black women have in South Africa which have no equivalents in the lives of white women or indeed black men.

Accordingly while the recent research into racism in the media was valuable, there is also a need for research to be done into representation of black women in the media. Because of the historical position of black women at bottom of the social strata, the media in South Africa struggles to portray them any differently. This poor media status of black women is further reinforced by the gendered character of news.

The relationship of news to political and economic interests of men has long

been noted. Communication scholars have argued that, in this masculine narrative (news), women frequently carry — rather than create — meaning in the stories in which they appear. Although they are often participants in the event that is being reported on, their opportunity to interpret events is very limited. For example, if there is a report on violence or a disaster, the women tend to only appear as victims — while the persons who will be accessed to interpret the event are in most cases male. For far too long we have witnessed wailing black women in tragedy/disaster items.

Women frequently appear in media as 'ordinary' people who do not represent any social or political group. Rather they represent a type and are seldom 'experts' in a particular area. The 'soft' and 'hard' news distinction also further genders news, with women more frequently being represented in 'soft' news items and men dominating 'hard' news items.

There is near invisibility of black women in the news, and where they do appear, it is still mostly in the following stories: underdevelopment, oppressive traditions, high illiteracy, rural and urban poverty, religious fanaticism, overpopulation, disasters (burning of shacks) and violence against women. In these items, they mainly appear as victims and people who have absolutely no control over their destinies.

It is indisputable that black women are largely uneducated, are victims of violence and live in abject poverty. However, it is short-sighted to see the media's role as merely to reflect society. Media influences society and society in turn influences the media. The structures and social practices of racism are starting to be challenged by the media, but journalists have the added challenge and responsibility to represent black women in all their diversity.

■ Phumla Mthala is a senior researcher at the Media Monitoring Project.

## **ROSIE NGXINGO** b.1933

**Kuhlwile phambile, kusil' emuvu**  
— It is night ahead, it is day behind

When the Xhosa warriors were going into battle, the women and children were waiting for the warriors to win so that they could move into the town. However, things went wrong and the thousands of women and children had to run very fast away from Grahamstown. In this picture I have shown how the women, children and the few cows they had brought with them had to run away very scared because they did not know what was happening. Since the time of this battle, women and children have had to always run away from the British in the Eastern Cape and I think we have lost a lot of understanding about what all the wars were about. In my own life I have had to also run away from many things because of apartheid and so I think I can understand how the women must have felt. For me the battle was very sad because from then on, women and children were lost and never had a proper place to make a home.



# An Anthropology of Race



**Rosabelle Laville,**  
Lecturer in  
anthropology,  
Rhodes  
University,  
Grahamstown

It's less a question of nature or nurture than about the things that people do with the debate, writes Rosabelle Laville

What is race? Many social anthropologists would argue that it is a figment of the human imagination, a category dreamt up by pseudo-scientists to explain human variation in both cultural and biological terms. In the space of three hundred years, 'race' assumed realistic proportions in South Africa, and its adjunct, racism, became a part of daily human experience. Anthropological analyses of human society and culture, however, reveal what many social scientists and humanists already know — that 'race' is essentially a social construct. As a construct, it has specific objectives and, depending on one's interests or experiences, it may be perceived as real.

"Scientific" analyses of race are most commonly associated with the work of 18th century European and American scientists and taxonomists. These studies emphasized the supremacy of nature over nurture. In 1758, Carl Linnaeus classified human beings (i.e. *Homo Sapiens*) along with six other types of humanoids. These individuals were 'small, large, infertile, conical-headed, flat-headed or beardless' — categories which would be meaningless to us today. Linnaeus' findings were subsequently improved upon and developed by other scientists, who claimed that they could differentiate between human beings based on perceived physical and cultural features.

By the 1950s, IQ tests were definite indicators of racial difference. Proponents claimed that the tests could measure human intelligence and, by drawing on cultural variables in European society to ascertain the intellectual capacity of indigenous people and non-European migrants, they confirmed racial prejudices and ideas about human difference.

Ideas about intelligence were taken further by Arthur Jensen. Writing in 1969, Jensen, a psychologist, maintained that 80% of human intelligence is determined by genes and 20% by our environment. He argued that the human brain (like the human body) is not exempt from evolution and, as a result, there must be a similar genetic distribution of mental differences among the 'races'.

In contrast to 'intellectual justifications of scientific racism' in Europe and America, Emile Boonzaier has written that "in South Africa, the racist paradigm emerged without direct recourse" to scientific racism, and that "similarly, the demise of scientific racism had little impact on popular assumptions about



**AKHONA MLISANA**

b. 1985

**Ixama litolwengaba-Twa — the Hartebeest has been shot by the Bushman**

The proverb means that once an action has been taken, the one who is shot at is at the mercy of the one who did the shooting. I believe that at the time of the British coming to the Eastern Cape, they saw the amaXhosa people more like animals than as humans. They would shoot at them in the same way that you shoot an animal. I show an isiXhosa warrior going into battle while the British man on the other side would look at the warrior and thinks that he is an animal. Many Xhosa warriors were killed at this battle and I think that for many years afterwards the British continued to see the amaXhosa like animals.

racial difference and superiority". Still, articles in academic journals such as the *Bantu Studies Journal* (ca 1930s), indicate that social scientists in Southern Africa have attempted to identify biological differences in human groups and, have generally explained these in racist terms.

Current paleoanthropological researchers

suggest that human beings do vary biologically from one geographical region to another, but they also state that there are no definite racial boundaries between human groups. In addition, it is argued that biological variation is no basis for assuming that one human group is superior or inferior to another, it simply indicates the great diversity of the species.

Recent genetic research in human populations worldwide supports the biological diversity argument. It has been shown for example, that genetic variation in the Congo basin shows the greatest variety compared to genetic variation between the inhabitants of this region and populations elsewhere. Such research suggests that, actually, there is more (biologically) that unites us across 'race' groups than within them. More important, anthropologists have recently critically analyzed what we do with such 'scientific' knowledge. Several critical studies have been done on the questionable data produced by 19th and 20th century scientific racists, which colonists used in order to justify the perpetuation of violence against indigenous peoples.

This research recounts how colonial actions manifested in the form of crude racism. Indigenous people were exterminated on a massive scale to prevent the contamination of 'pure' race groups. Others were forced to abandon their livelihood in the European quest for social and economic evolution. The studies show that indigenous people did not simply submit to European violence and stereotypes, they responded by creating their own dialogues and their own ideas of difference.

At the beginning of the 21st century, anthropologists (among others) note that racism has retained its more subtle and insidious characteristics. This is apparent on a global scale. The persistence of racism in the workplace, the media and other contexts forms a part of our real experience, and is a result of many generations of accumulated prejudice, separation and misunderstanding on the part of all human beings.

Today, most anthropologists would probably agree that important ways to deal with racism include clearing up misconceptions about human biology, instituting critical analyses of our social views and the implementation of policies to bring about social justice.

In an era where science is rapidly consolidating its hold over humanity, it may be difficult to dispute the power of nature over nurture. However, anthropologists would argue that it is not so much whether nature or nurture has a greater role to play in the shaping of human beings — but rather what we choose to do with such knowledge.

# Defining the undefinable



Racism is a power practice that is based on the false notion that there are races with essential characteristics, argues **Lynette Steenveld**.

The HRC Inquiry highlighted the many different ways in which racism is spoken about. Some sets of meanings fall into what we might call a 'conceptual realm'. However, concepts are also employed in the cut and thrust of social (political) life, where they are worked/moulded in the service of different users. This arena of the usage of words, we might call the political realm. The different usages or meanings of racism, reflect its life in this realm.

While many people would accept the argument that there is no genetic basis for categorising people into 'races', some would argue that there is a 'cultural' basis for such distinctions. But even this argument is contested, as the 'cultural aspects' change over time, so that it would be impossible to find 'cultural essences' which could form the basis for categorising humanity into finite 'races'. As Kwame Anthony Appiah notes in his book, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*, "Talk of 'race' is particularly distressing for those of us who take culture seriously. For where race works... it works as a sort of metaphor for culture; and it does so only at the price of biologising what is culture..."

Having established that there is no such thing as 'race', Appiah uses the concept racialism to refer to the attribution of distinctions between people on the basis of a presumed 'race'. Thus racialism (ascribing difference to the false category, 'race') is the broad term referring to an 'essentialist' basis for differentiation.

It is, he suggests, racialism that provides the basis for the concept racism, from which flows certain kinds of political practice.

In South Africa, HRC panelist Margaret Legum has described racism thus: "Racism in the modern world is the result of the theory or idea that white people are superior to black people." She suggests that "we have all been taught racism: that means black people as

well as white...Racism means that all people's relationships, even with themselves, are influenced by colour."

She continues, "Racism is the outworking in a culture of an ideology or a theory that one 'race' of people is superior/inferior to another. Racism is at work when not only those who belong to the so-thought superior group, but also those in the so-thought inferior group, believe the ideology of superiority at some level of their consciousness. They do so because all of the manifestations of their common culture reflect that ideology, so they take it in without having to think about it."

Fellow HRC panelist, Joe Thloloe, uses the following definition in workshops on racism: "behaviour towards another based on one's belief and assumptions about 'race' AND the belief that one or more 'races' are superior to others".

What Legum's and Thloloe's 'definitions' share is the idea of supremacy/inferiority. But while Thloloe points to the fluid character of beliefs and assumptions about 'race', Legum is less explicit about this.

However, Legum clearly locates racism in the political sphere, to describe an ideology or system of beliefs and practices, that is premised on the false notion of 'race' as a conceptual means of differentiating between people.

Legum's 'definition' of racism usefully links the idea of white supremacy/black inferiority to a system of cultural practices (evidenced in the spheres of economics, literature, painting, religion, politics, etc.) that is centuries old, and thus deeply embedded in the common culture shared by both those thought to be superior and inferior.

Implicit in this 'definition' is the view that black people, thought by many for centuries to be inferior, cannot practise racism towards white people — because they are (seen in broad historical terms) unable to enforce the cultural belief that black people are superior, and white people, inferior. Thus for Legum, racism is simply the ideology of white power ('herenvolkism'). In terms of media analysis, this would refer to any representations which contributed to notions of whiteness as superior and blackness as inferior or less powerful.

This view is echoed in the SABC's presentation to the HRC prepared by Prof. Dumisani Hlope and Christine Qunta (who in her capacity as a member of the Black Lawyer's Association requested the HRC to investigate racism in the *Mail & Guardian*). They write: "Racism is constituted therefore when racial prejudices are matched with the power to act on such prejudices". However, they are silent on the notion of 'race' which forms the conceptual basis for their definition.

Legum uses the term 'race dis-

crimination' to refer to acts — by both black people and white people — which draw distinctions between the two groups, whether positively or negatively. But as noted above, she would not see such action by black people as 'racist' (i.e. based on her notion of the ideology of racism), because there is no associated historical power. Thus for example, affirmative or corrective action could be seen in these terms as being discriminatory, but not racist.

Challenging Legum's views expressed in the media, Howard Barrell pointed out in his HRC submission for the *Mail & Guardian*, that this still presupposes an understanding of 'race' as some essential category, and thus in Appiah's conceptual framework, would be regarded as an example of racialism, the beginning of the slippery slope towards racism. This would be a valid critique if Legum does not distance herself from the false concept 'race'.

Apartheid was premised on the false idea that humanity could be divided into distinct 'races'. As a result, South Africans' social experiences have been shaped by this wrong view. While affirmative or corrective action, for example, may be necessary to redress the past social inequities, it is ironic that these measures have to work with the same false concepts, thereby potentially perpetuating them at a conceptual level.

In order to make sense of the debates about the 'definitions' of racism, we need to ask why the 'definitions' matter. In Appiah's view, given that there are no 'races', "there is nothing in the world that can do all we ask race to do for us...The evil that is done is done by the concept, and by easy — yet impossible — assumptions as to its application".

What this leaves us with are questions about how we can construct an anti-racist politics. How can the media contribute towards this? How can we get to a society where 'race' is a redundant concept?

**Race** = the group into which people are classified on the basis of heritable and essential differences

**Racialism** = the (false) belief that there are heritable characteristics possessed by members of our species that enables us to classify people into distinct groups of 'races'. In this view, the traits and characteristics identified constitute a kind of 'racial essence'. [Simply, a classificatory system of essential differences — but no value judgements attached to the classification]

**Race discrimination** = the behaviour or practice of distinguishing between people on the basis of their presumed 'race'

**Race prejudice** = the attitude, belief, mental construct that makes judgements about people on the basis of their presumed 'race'

**Racism** = the system of beliefs and practices that people can be classified into groups on the basis of presumed differences which justifies the unequal allocation of power and privilege.

■ Lynette Steenveld is senior lecturer in the Chair of Media Transformation, Rhodes University Department of Journalism and Media Studies.

## ANGELINE SEPTEMBER b. 1945

**Ukufa kwenhliziyo ngumzwanedwa** — The ailment of the heart is known to one only

The British first started making the Xhosa people run away from their homes in 1812 when they burnt all the lands and foods in the Zuurveld area. My image shows how women had to retreat without anything but their pride because their homes had been burnt and they had no food to eat. This is why I have shown the empty calabashes and the fires.



# SABC seeks its own Simunye



The public broadcaster highlighted its progress and problems in transformation in its submission to the Human Rights Commission Inquiry, as the following excerpts record ...

The transformation of the human resource profile of the SABC was one of the key challenges which faced the Board that was elected in 1993.

Today, in the News Division top management is 100% African, with senior management being 80% African and 20% Indian. In a departure from the overall trend within the SABC, the middle management in the news department is 56% black and 44% white. Of the black percentage, Africans constitute 49%. Whites however still dominate the junior management and specialist personnel within the news department, making up 53% with 41% African staff.

Prof Dumisani Hlope, drafted a questionnaire which was circulated to all SABC employees at the head office and regions. Sixty five of these were returned completed. Of these 65 only three were completed by white employees, two anonymously. Though the sample is small it gives some indication of the extent to which employees have integrated and the interpersonal relationships between black and white employees.

The consultants also conducted interviews — which tended to confirm the views in the survey.

The attitudes of both black and white employees broadly reflect the tensions, misperceptions and insecurities of the larger South African society. The only two white respondents stated that affirmative action amounted to discrimination against whites, and argued that the manner in which it was being implemented resulted in undeserving persons being placed in senior positions simply because they were black.

Other white employees interviewed by the consultants did not express strong views on affirmative action directly, but rather raised what they perceived to be reasons for this slow pace. The heads of those departments that remain predominantly white acknowledged that this was a problem, but blamed this on the lack of technical skills amongst black employees. They also indicated that certain programmes were put in place to change the situation.

African people interviewed on the other hand felt that racism was rife within the SABC and that black employees, even senior ones, were being discriminated against. They felt that white SABC employees from the past were still entrenched in certain departments and were determined to keep black employees out under various guises. They cited amongst other incidents of discrimination the following:

- ▶ being overlooked for promotion
- ▶ being "trapped" or "set up"
- ▶ insensitive racial comments being made in the presence of Africans
- ▶ the use of disciplinary proceedings to get rid of black people

In response to the question "how would you categorise interpersonal relationships among different racial groups within the SABC?", 40% of the respondents termed them poor, 26% said they were satisfactory, 3% said they were good and 2% said they were excellent.

While the interpersonal relationships between black and white within the SABC have improved substantially from what they were in 1993 and 1994, pockets of tension still remain, as evidenced by the results of the survey.

The interracial problems however do not only stem from those white employees who were with the SABC prior to 1993, but also from white employees, some liberal, who came in after 1994.

The SABC acknowledges that getting the numbers right is only one part of transformation. The other very important part is creating the right conditions and work environment that will allow black employees to reach their potential within the SABC.

This transition period is one of the most difficult and it is recognised that the right support structures need to be put in place so that both black and white employees can feel at home within the SABC and contribute to making it the dynamic media organisation that it can be.

## RADIO AND RACIAL RESOURCES

In interviews with the SABC's consultants, several employees raised the issue of language and the use of English language as the main language of the bulletins.

The predominantly black editorial team is sensitive to these concerns. While journalists are still required to write stories in English, which are then edited and translated, this is more of a practical measure than a desire to elevate English and neglect African languages.

SABC has 19 radio stations within and the editorial team believes that it is essential that the same news is broadcast — unlike in the past where there was "white" news and "black" news. If stories are filed only in particular African languages it may not be easy to include them on other African language stations or non-African language stations such as English and Afrikaans.

Another problem is the inequality around allocation of resources to stage programmes geared at black and white audiences. SAFM caters for English-speaking whites mainly and has a listenership 423 000. Ukhozi FM, the Zulu language station has a listenership of 5 990 000.

Yet for the 1999/2000 financial year Ukhozi's budget is only 38% of SAFM's. This figure excludes the amount spent on the SABC/BBC Co-Production which would double the annual budget of SAFM.

The Afrikaans station, Radio Sonder Grense, has a listenership of 1 552 000 as opposed to Lesedi FM which is SeSotho and has a listenership of 3 493 000. Yet Lesedi has the same budget as RSG.

## SABC'S HUMAN RESOURCE PROFILE

Level	June 1993				January 2000			
	African	White	Coloured	Indian	African	White	Coloured	Indian
Top management	0%	100%	0%	0%	67%	33%	0%	0%
Middle management	0,1%	90%	0%	1%	35%	59%	2%	3%
Jnr mgmt & specialists	14%	85%	0,2%	0,2%	33%	62%	2%	3%
Supervisory level	20%	78%	0%	0%	38%	55%	4%	4%
Rest of staff	34%	29%	0%	0%	59%	29%	0%	0%

At present the News Division has 314 reporters of whom 219 are black, which constitutes 70%.

The editorial team is predominantly African and this has had a major impact on not only the type of stories that are being carried by the SABC, but also the manner in which those dealing with issues such as affirmative action and economic empowerment are handled.

The news division has given attention to bringing in more African and other black commentators. It has employed a news researcher, Boitumelo Mofokeng, to coordinate analysts and experts and to ensure that African expertise is utilised and their perspectives heard on matters of public importance.

At present the SABC has a workforce which is approximately 50% black. This achievement has not been reproduced elsewhere in media institutions. There are still, however, a myriad problems that continue to hamper transformation in the SABC.

While top and senior management are committed to transformation, middle management which is predominantly white and in control of the day-to-day operations of the SABC, does not have same degree of commitment. In many instances there is active resistance to transformation. While sound policies are therefore drawn to implement changes, these policies are not always implemented by middle management and often not followed up by senior management.

SABC's consultants, attorney Christine Qunta and



# Pushing the paradigm



Does transformation of the media mean replacing white staff with black staff to make media more representative? Or does transformation mean a mindset change that involves a new approach to journalism, a new approach to covering our very diverse society? And does this mindset change, this new approach depend on whether your newsroom is entirely black or entirely white? Ryland Fisher, former editor *Cape Times*, probes the issues.

I do not think that transformation simply means replacing white staff with black. However, it is important for newspapers to roughly represent the demographics of the province or the country that they serve. This is important for the Western Cape, for instance, where the majority of the population can be classified as coloured. In this province, would it be advisable to have the majority of a newspaper's staff being African?

But it is important to have a significant number of Africans on any newspaper's staff, even in the Western Cape. There are very few Africans employed at Independent Newspapers Cape.

It is in cases like these, that one understands the necessity of transformation, of affirmative action, of anything just to change the demographics of a company.

This is a pity, because we have become so concerned about getting the demographics right that we have overlooked the need for real transformation.

And that need is reflected in the way our newspapers continue to report from a mainly white, privileged paradigm. Most South African newspapers, even those with black editors, continue to perpetuate this paradigm.

Look at how the media reacted when allegations surfaced about Hansie Cronje's match fixing. Because the allegations came from the Indian police, they were roundly dismissed by almost all media. Now, if Scotland Yard had made those allegations, would we have seen the same condemnation from our media?

Look too at how most black editors and journalists have been fairly sympathetic to Alan Boesak, while most white editors and journalists feel that he should fry for his sins. Now I hold no brief for Boesak, but I must admit there is some merit in the argument that asks why he must sit in prison when so many apartheid era murderers are walking free.

How do we change all of this, how do we encourage a situation where newspapers will be more sensitive to the predominant views in the black community? I believe that only when newspapers employ a significant number of black journalists, including Africans, coloureds and Indians, will they begin to address this issue.

But it should not stop there.

We have to change the way we practise our journalism.

It is difficult to be democratic on a daily newspaper where decisions have to be made in a hurry, often under tremendous pressure. But it is possible for news editors to treat reporters with respect, to discuss sensitive issues, to take time out to listen to a guest speaker on topics like gender and race. In fact, if you do all of these things, you will probably produce a better quality newspaper daily.

We also have to explore different kinds of journalism.

Since I joined the *Cape Times* in 1996, I broke new ground with some initiatives.

"One City Many Cultures", for instance, was an ambitious project to promote tolerance and understanding in

violence-plagued Cape Town. We explored, on two broadsheet pages every day, how different religions and cultural groups relate to rites of passage and other important issues in life. President Mandela launched the initiative and Archbishop Tutu signed the first pledge to promote tolerance in Cape Town. It culminated in a major "One City Festival" in September 1999.

This was an important initiative in our city at the time, when racial and cultural intolerance was at its highest.

Of course, all of these projects will come to nothing if the money is not found to make them happen. And therein lies much of my frustration, not being able to get our group to be serious about making a commitment to making these kinds of projects happen.

I worry too that a newspaper like the *Cape Times*, which had changed quite a bit under my editorship, is going back to what it was before 1994: basically a newspaper aimed at white liberals.

Hard work we had done to reposition the paper, with projects such as "One City Many Cultures", is being undone.

I understand the need to position newspapers in a way in which they will have maximum circulation. But if the changes to the *Cape Times* are to grow circulation, they have not been very successful.

I believe part of the reason for this is the inability of my successor, a white male, to understand the need to change the paradigms of our journalism.

And here I speak respectfully about John Scott, who is probably the best satirical writer in the country. However, he is limited in his ability to create newspapers with which the majority of people can identify.

Most newspapers in this country are afraid to lose the old while tentatively reaching out for the new. And yet for long-term survival, we need to reach out more aggressively for new readers, at the risk of losing some of the old.

Our newspapers must become more South African, in feel and content.

I have been asked whether my leaving Independent Newspapers is a reversal for transformation.

I suppose it is, because they will be losing a senior, high-profile black editor. But more than that, if I may say so myself, is the loss to the group of someone who has consistently tried to redefine the parameters of our journalism.

After 20 years of journalism, I am braving the big bad world as an entrepreneur, trying to make money as a communications consultant. I am hopeful that I will still make an impact, as an outsider, on South Africa's media.

Maybe, just maybe, some day things will change.

"Most black editors and journalists have been fairly sympathetic to Alan Boesak while most white editors and journalists feel that he should fry for his sins"

## JOHN SCOTT, EDITOR OF THE CAPE TIMES, REPLIES:

It grieves me that Ryland Fisher, my former colleague with whom I had a reasonable working relationship for more than two years when I was his deputy, should now question both my own and Independent Newspapers Cape's commitment to transformation.

He more than anybody should know that leading black members of our executive including Moegsien Williams (executive editor), Ishmet Davidson (general manager), and Bonnie Jutzen (HR executive), would not tolerate anything less than total commitment to employment equity in its fullest sense. To suggest otherwise is an insult to their integrity. Nor would I have been appointed editor of the *Cape Times* had I not enjoyed the fullest confidence of Cape MD Shaun Johnson in my own resolve and ability to play a major role in this process. For the past six months we have all put a massive effort into producing a comprehensive five-year employment equity plan.

Ryland mentions the "One City Many Cultures" initiative. I have promoted this fine project at every opportunity, and since assuming the editorship have spent many hours co-chairing (with the City of Cape Town) joint venture meetings to bring this year's "One City Festival" to fruition. And far from reverting to some imagined racial exclusivity and losing circulation, the *Cape Times* has in the first six months of this year not only held its circulation steady but in fact increased it.

While the departure of a senior, high-profile black editor like Ryland Fisher is to be regretted, he was not necessarily God's gift to journalism. He was innovative and full of new ideas, a point I was the first to make to his many critics. But he also alienated many people, both on the *Cape Times* staff and among its readers. People management is at least as important an aspect of editing a South African newspaper as understanding the need to change paradigms.



# Beating the Black Drum



**Abbey Mokoe** gets mad at the media for perpetuating racism.

An acquaintance of mine, a white fellow, recently told me about his confrontation with the bosses of the Independent Newspapers. "I told them," he said, "that you have no business having blacks on your staff because they bring no diversity into your newspapers. They write what you tell them to write and, they have no choice! After all, they have children and their families to look after."

This acquaintance went further to say Walter Sisulu's 80-something birthday story and picture was played very small in the inside pages. Yet some unknown white woman made front pages because of her relationship with the British Queen.

This was the observation of a reader. There are many more like him.

However, I want to point out right here that I work for Independent Newspapers in Gauteng. No one, yellow, pink or pale will dare order me to write what they would want me to write. I speak vehemently for myself. I am no tool of anyone.

Now, let me also hasten to put my other colours to the mast: racism in the media is actively alive, and is kicking black asses. Most honest black journalists know this too well.

The most glaring examples of racism are in the everyday coverage of news. One quick look at our media offers plenty of evidence.

A white-run newsroom, despite a sea of black faces, recently went frantic after hearing that some squatters had chopped off a dog's ear in their informal settlement. The concern, the determination to find the culprits, the resolve to pressure the police in effecting a speedy arrest, all these were elements in the bosses' brief to their young black reporters.

What the powers-that-be did not realise is that, as a black scribe, my immediate concern about squatter camps is the plight of men, women and children who languish in squalor and filth in those set-ups. This primary concern has nothing to do with my liking, or disliking, of dogs and, indeed animals in general. I have a dog that has just given birth to two puppies, for interest's sake. And I'm looking well after the threesome.

Take another example. Makhaya Ntini was vilified in the media even after being acquitted of rape. Some lily-white women's groups still persecute him to this day. You see, like most of us, Ntini remains guilty as charged.

On the other hand, Hansie Cronje admitted to taking money for giving information to bookies. There has been no condemnation of Hansie, like there was of Ntini. Whatever condemnation Hansie experienced has been so little it is not worth talking about.

Business reporting is also largely racist, showing white people who always save the companies they run, while black people run them down. White people can do no wrong, according to the business press.

The only time black people make headlines is when something negative occurs, but on the whole they're never paraded or depicted as pioneering crusaders. There are many, like Dikgang Moseneke and Zwelake Sisulu, who warrant space, but the only time they get it is when they share the limelight with the likes of Marinus Dalling in reports on mergers between Afrikaners and black empowerment drivers.

Ironically, in business publications convicted fraudster Greg Blank is considered a hero despite his despicable white-collar crime record. His skin-colour has much to do with his rehabilitation. Hooray New South Africa!



In 1997 I was elected the founding president, or chairperson, of the Forum of Black Journalists in Johannesburg. The reason we formed this pressure body was exactly our response to our plight as recipients of racist practices in the workplace. I was at the time a magazine editor for a group I choose not to mention because nothing would have me stoop so low.

Just a day after my photograph appeared in newspapers, my bosses in Cape Town arranged a plane ticket and the next day I was at the Waterfront under the guise of a working lunch when in fact I was being grilled about the FBJ.

"We thought you were just a member of this new organisation, so you are actually the boss?," they said. Not a question as much as a remark of a bitter disappointment. Another boss, one of the two very old Afrikaner chaps obviously stuck in history's myopic quagmire, inquired sheepishly: "Do you believe in trade unionism?" At this point I was getting really flabbergasted.

"As a matter of fact I am a registered member of Mwasa," I replied. The grilling session abruptly ended. We went back to the office where I was politely told: "Please be careful about the work for which we have employed you. We don't want your involvement with this FBJ to affect your job."

From that day the bosses started to find fault with every little thing that I did or said. All the way from Cape Town they could call me to say "we hear you have been out of office for the last two hours. Please don't take long lunch time."

Eventually, I had to choose between my principles and appeasing the blokes in Cape Town. So I quit!

Racism in the media runs deep and do not be fooled by smiles and hugs and lunches and sweet talk.

It remains common that if you are black and you speak out, you are jeopardising your career path and hampering your chances of upward mobility. Recently, there was an incident in which a black journalist had white colleagues harassing him because he had planned to do a story on their white friend. I am pointing this out to illustrate that even white colleagues at the same level as you cannot escape the illusion of white monopoly on intelligence.

When you object you are accused of racism in reverse by these same experienced racists, bigots and zealots! Sad.

■ Abbey Makoe works for the *Sunday Independent*

**LIZ KHUMALO, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, DRUM, RESPONDS:**

Mr Makoe's recollection of the informal discussion with two colleagues (not management) is so selective that it does not really merit a response. The questions about the Forum centred around the Forum's intention to get involved with the training of black journalists and he was in fact encouraged to continue his involvement.

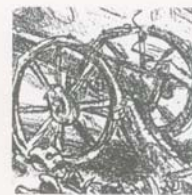
He should know best that the true reasons for his resignation from *Drum* had nothing to do with his involvement with the Forum.





What's a melanin-deprived journo to do?, asks Yves Vanderhaeghen

# White Man Whingeing



I don't think of myself as a problem. I use the phrase "white middle aged male" with an objective awareness of the imperative for change that it connotes. But since it describes three attributes pertaining to me, I say it with a light ironic inflection calculated to convey to the listener that I do not consider it to apply to me.

That's because I have all my adult life considered myself to be progressive and feminist (pace Ms Dworkin). I have also, since before the term became jargon, actively promoted and, where possible, implemented transformation.

It doesn't help. I'm still freaking out.

Since about the start of the HRC hearings into racism in the media last year I have felt unexpectedly and unbearably defensive. My very reaction has been emotionally distressing because, given my beliefs and personal history, it has been so incomprehensible as to prompt a crisis of conscience almost debilitating in effect. To be told that it goes to show that, deep down, all whites are irredeemably racist has not been helpful.

Nevertheless, the possibility had to be considered. So I did. I ran a virus scan. It found a Hatebug with readings as high for Armani Africanists as for Gucci Gringos. There was a "Die Yuppie Scum" bug there too, but apart from identifying some subliminal misanthropic tendencies I concluded that my defensiveness had nothing to do with closet racism.

This turmoil came to a head with a fax about two days before a SA National Editors Forum (Sanef) workshop asking, among other things, whether I had ever been passed over for promotion. I flipped. Obvious question, irrational response, I know, but I flipped. Innocuous though it may have been, the question was really saying that if you are black it is expected that your answer will be yes and that it would have been because you are black. Conversely, if you are white, you are unlikely to have missed out and if you did you probably deserved it.

I am angered because my very self and my entire career in journalism, are all dismissed and trivialised by the insensitive, fuzzy assault on "white middle aged males" and "white media" without regard to individuals who may inhabit those terms. Secondly, the style of the debate about "white media", however much I agree with some of the criticism at an intellectual level, makes me very vulnerable.

On the first count, I am aggrieved personally and professionally. When I think of the Eighties, which is when I reached adulthood, went to university, joined the student political leftwing, started working, I think of regular harassment by the cops, offering shelter to refugees from burning townships, arriving home after night-shift to find my partner had been detained. Not an ounce of my being identified with "The System". Sure, I'm not Joe Slovo, or Ronnie Kasrils, or Bram Fischer. My actions may have fallen short of my aspirations, and my courage short of my ideals, but I object to being cast into the same white hole of apartheid sins, from which nothing good can emanate, together with assorted political psychopaths and racists.

The use of the adjective "white" as an all-purpose pejorative is inaccurate, unethical and so lacking in insight and subtlety as to be a hazard to humane discourse.

It fails to acknowledge that rational thought and individual conscience can enable the individual to overcome circumstance. If the term is applied, pejoratively, to a particular white person who, motivated by racial animosity, harms or oppresses an individual or group, then okay. To use it as a politically generic category into which all whites are lumped indis-

criminally, is to deny me my life, my struggles, my crises. I'm not claiming any great contribution. But it is not nada.

At the risk of protesting too much, I am as defensive about my career in newspapers. I cut my teeth as a night-sub. The entire table was white. All were liberal to left. I, fresh out of the student movement, brought with me a principled commitment to change.

We dissected the emergency regulations, pored over the legal opinion on loopholes, and took our chances. Every opportunity to slip one through, we took. It didn't make a huge difference, I suppose, but a lot of effort went into it and it heralded the start of change. Also on that team was the future chief sub who epitomised for me integrity, fairness and plain old decency. He's now been swept out of management along with the dead wood by Independent Newspapers.

What's my point? Good riddance to genuine racists, but the failure to distinguish between who is and who isn't, is destructive and terrifying. Secondly, while acknowledging the historical racial ills of almost all South African media, it is simply not accurate to make sweeping generalisations about "white media", now or then, to describe a homogenous set of (presumably reactionary) values. To do so dismisses the efforts of good people as of no relevance, and their values as worthless.

You know what's so terrible about this, is that I find myself doing it too. At the Sanef workshop, for example, there was a white woman who looked like she had "transformation problem" written all over her. It turned out she had great political credentials and a black husband to boot. Did I feel a jerk.

I don't really expect to be transformed out on to the street. But I fear that I am vulnerable. Made vulnerable not by being incompetent, racist, fascist or unprofessional, but because my position is so easy to undermine amid indiscriminate broadsides aimed at "white media" and "white middle aged men".

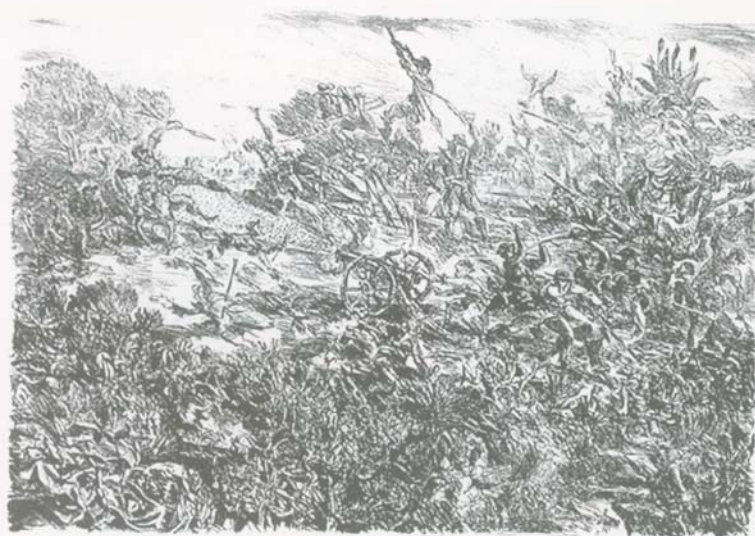
I know my words sound no different from those of beleaguered racists, but that can't be helped. I still feel that to have been guided by conscience and principle is insufficient armour against crusaders whose righteousness has blinded them to the weasel of calumny lurking at their heels. And I'm terrified that when the dust has settled, all you'll be able to see of me is a white man whingeing.

Yves Vanderhaeghen is Assistant Editor at The Natal Witness

## HILLARY GRAHAM b.1943

### The Battle of Grahamstown: action at the mud fort

The lithographic image is supposed to look like an early nineteenth century print in a local newspaper, perhaps made in Grahamstown immediately after the battle. I suppose one could refer to the image as a form of 'popular realism'.



Following the nature of the complaints that triggered it, the current HRC inquiry into racism in the South African media has tended to focus on media product, with its research seeking evidence of racism in news reporting. While the scrutiny of news texts is a standard activity in media studies, it is now generally agreed that the analysis of news involves a good deal more than canny textual analysis.

To be valid and reliable, a study of racism in the media needs to address the whole media cycle, engaging moments of production, distribution and consumption. In short, to acknowledge that news is generated by an organisational complex: media ownership and control; gatekeeping mechanisms; professional codes of journalism; marketing and distribution; and audiences.

In this context individual news items manifest as secondary symptoms of a complex institutional culture, rather than simple cause or result.

Which is not to say that every piece of research must fully cover all of these dynamics. But unless some sense of the whole frames and informs enquiry, it lays itself open to question.

Then there are the basic requirements of any worthwhile research project: a clearly defined question to be investigated; carefully designated data; appropriate design and methodology; and rigorous analysis and interpretation. As editors have been quick to point out, the HRC inquiry is deficient on most of these fronts.

But let us stay with textual analysis, since this seems to be the preferred tool. Central to such analysis will be one's definition of racist attitudes and precisely how these may be identified in news reportage. Here the reports of both the Media Monitoring Project (MMP) and Claudia Braude take too much for granted.

Their analysis is informed by discourse theory, which asserts that language and narrative are prime sites for the securing and contesting of social meaning. But neither report addresses primary 'message characteristics'.

The key operational discourse in news items is a set of internationally entrenched professional codes: news values; categories of story; approved modes of narration; codes of news photography; headlining; captioning and general layout and design.

Serious news analysis sees these codes intersecting at every point with another powerful set: the local discourses (social and political agendas) of the place and time in which news is being produced. So one is dealing with two separate dynamics: the peculiar codes of news, and then the local frames and idiom with which they work.

What follows is simply a list of examples illustrating how the conception of news analysis outlined above might produce very different results from those of the HRC research.

First, news values. Not every event qualifies to become a news story. Events involving conflict or violence ('hard news') are strongly preferred. Crime, accidents, strikes and corruption are prime news fodder. They sell newspapers, and will be reported in ratio to various groups in the population at large. Since most South Africans are black, black protagonists and victims will predominate. So a bald count of such items does not reveal much.

These stories will also involve dramatic headlines and photos. This is grist to the mill of media worldwide, and not peculiarly South African. So hold 'hard news' as proof of racism.

What does matter here (and to their credit the MMP attempt this distinction) is whether the item suggests that race is in some essential way the reason for violence, crime or corruption. These are the items to isolate and submit to further scrutiny.

But even when we have a category of items which appear to be explicitly prejudiced, the thoughtful analyst will need to consider not just

# & race, class & other prejudices



Racism is real, but class prejudice is the culprit that claims black media victims, writes Eve Bertelsen.

one variable (racism) but a number of variables. This can best be demonstrated by a quick look at the MMP's 'content analysis' and Braude's 'discourse analysis'.

Content analysis claims to be strictly systematic, quantitative and objective. Its strength is in testing single, independent variables. In the case of the MMP's work, a designated sample of items is coded against a list of 'racist' propositions and it finds high support in 'white' media for the view that blacks are violent, criminal and irrational and that black lives are unimportant.

(In passing, one might question whether narrative constructs – these 'racist propositions' – embedded as they are in complex news stories, can be objectively coded by content analysis. It would appear, rather, that every act of coding involved a judgement call/interpretation.)

But my point is a broader one. Content analysis insists that the unit of analysis (here, a racist proposition) should demonstrably belong to one and only one category. If there is any question that it falls simultaneously into two categories, new variables must be added.

On this score, it is instructive to compare the MMP's findings with the famous content studies of the Glasgow Media Group in the UK, published as *Bad News* and *More Bad News*. There the researchers found the British media culpable of vilifying the working class in the form of trade unionists and striking workers. The GMG's 'class' stereotyping bears an uncanny resemblance to the 'racist' stereotyping identified by both Braude and the MMP.

Workers are dirty, lazy, irrational, operate in mobs (are nameless, depicted en masse), prone to violence and so on. And yet these are *white* journalists depicting *white* workers. Which might give any researcher pause for thought.

So, hold the variable 'race' for a moment and test instead for 'class' (a factor shared by both sets

of data), and you come up with a different research question, and different findings.

Might there perhaps be an element of class prejudice in such representations? This seems highly likely, since the lower orders have habitually been depicted in this way in centuries of media and literature around the world.

So at least two important variables for a start then: race and class. More might be added. Racism is always permeated by prejudices of class, gender and other ideologies that operate in specific situations.

As both Braude and the MMP are only testing for race, and 'race' as a *catch-all* category, some of their findings are rather puzzling.

Yes, they admit, they find examples of both negative and positive stereotyping of blacks. Braude's account of the media's handling of Sam Shilowa's appointment as premier of Gauteng and Tito Mboweni's as governor of the Reserve Bank support my case. Shilowa is denigrated by the mainstream press, whereas Mboweni is showered with praise.

All Braude can conclude is that the first report is a reprehensible instance of racism, while the non-racism of the second is to be commended.

But if (since both men are black), we hold the variable 'race' here, and test for 'class' (vested interests, agendas, ideology), the finding is different. If we read attentively, we discover that Shilowa is a known leftist, and is appointing ministers from the SACP/Cosatu camp, all of whom are presented as a threat.

Whom do they threaten? They are explicitly depicted as threatening to business interests (and those of the newspaper itself). So, it turns out, it is their *class politics*, and not their *race* at all that is being denigrated.

And is Mboweni simply the honourable excep-

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 20



REGINA GONQA  
b. 1932

*Okwakh' okudile – Yours is what you have eaten.*

With the loss of cattle owing to the Battle of Grahamstown, I have tried to show how the cattle, like mothers, can no longer feed their families or their children. They have nowhere to graze, nowhere to call home. Egazini was a terrible battle because it made life difficult for mothers and wives. The proverb I have used for this image deals with how sometimes you cannot call food eaten unless you have swallowed it properly.

# race, class & other prejudices

▶ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

-tion, a good black man? Again, if one bothers to actually read the story, it becomes clear that it is his economic philosophy that wins him plaudits. As his *ideological position* is in tune with that of the press, his *race* becomes immaterial.

In both of these cases, the political and economic views of the actors are the primary variable in the reportage, and the issue of race is negligible.

One could extrapolate from these examples. If class interests and ideology are admitted as significant variables in South African news reporting, the picture that emerges is very different from that presented in the HRC reports.

Of course there is racism in the media. The privacy of black people is invaded, and crime and corrupt behaviour seem often to be put down to race. But crucial in all this is an unfashionable supplementary question that is never asked: what is the general *social position* of the large numbers of black South Africans dubbed criminal, threatening, nameless or unimportant? And what interests are at work in such representations?

The answer would appear to be that they are generally members of the working class, urban lumpen and rural poor. Or, in the case of corrupt managers or government offi-

cial, people whose behaviour threatens to besmirch the national image so dear to business interests.

In the case of the 'Johannesburg hospital crisis' or 'decaying CBD' of Braude fame, or widespread reports on 'incompetent' black managers, while race is certainly a factor, one might identify a 'subtext' which seems to evade Braude's psychoanalysis. By omitting to supply the *context* for such crises (e.g. drastic cuts in public spending driven by corporate pressure on government policy), the press unfairly put the urban poor and black managers in the firing line, while the real reasons for inner-city squalor and unmanageable institutions remain unspoken.

Can it be that the HRC and its researchers are blind to any dynamics other than race? Perhaps they have themselves been traduced by the vested interests that contour South African news reporting?

Racism is real, but it will always be found to articulate with other powerful forces shaping our social and political life. And the same goes for fashionable antiracist rhetoric, suffused as it often is by self-interested agendas. If there is a hidden subtext in South African news, it is more complicated than the HRC reports suggest, and it remains to be exposed.

■ Eve Bertelsen lectures in media studies at Wits University



**VIOLET BOOI**  
b. 1940

*Kaliphandw' igod' umunt' engakafi*  
– A grave is not dug before a person dies.

Makana was taken as a prisoner to Robben Island. His family and others did not believe that he was dead and waited for him to come back. I have shown the women of his family who are carrying the cross for him as they wait. All hope for the Xhosa people was taken away. But I also feel that there is hope for us today.

## media & markets

South Africa is a society where all things are defined by race, and the media are no exception. Journalists think in racist ways about both the stories they choose to tell and their audiences.

In print media, the continued use of racially-based newspaper editions points to the assumption that the reader's sense of news and interest is determined by his or her race.

In the old, apartheid style, the approach is to distribute 'white', 'black', 'Indian' and 'coloured' editions, an approach which perpetuates racial stereotypes.

On any given Sunday morning, a person living in a black township will wake up to a different edition of the *Sunday Times* than that distributed in formerly whites-only areas. This edition, which gives prominence to entertainment and soccer, is sold as the "soccer edition".

While all editions carry the same main story, other stories will be omitted from the front page, depending on for whom the edition is meant. The assumption is that the reader by virtue of his or her race will not be interested in particular stories. All editions come with supplements which are unashamedly racist in their approach.

On May 2 1999, a month before the last elections, all editions rightly carried a story on the president-to-be's possible cabinet on the front page, yet the main picture on the 'black/soccer' edition was that of the funeral service of a Bafokeng prince. The 'normal/white' edition ran a picture of the survivors of the London gay bar bomb.

A smaller picture of the London bar and the story were used in the 'soccer' edition – but the story about the rural prince of the North West province was omitted from the 'normal' edition. Instead, a story on the New Zealand rugby team was used, followed by a story on the disappearance of five schoolgirls from Kempton Park, a formerly whites-only area.

Both these stories were left out of the 'soccer' edition. In their place was a story about workers in Nigeria celebrating their regained freedom.

Also on this front page was a bar



Skin colour still determines story selection, says Zandile Nkutha.

tagging the entertainment news in the city metro, the 'soccer edition' supplement.

From the front page on this day alone, the choice of stories and prominence given to each in different editions shows that the publication has deliberately thought of its audience in racist ways.

A year later, on June 18 2000, amid Zimbabwe's turmoil prior to the election, the same newspaper carried a story about the leader of the Zimbabwean war veterans illegally occupying white farms. It was on the front page of both the 'soccer' and 'normal' editions.

However, the bar tagging the stories in the different editions was chosen on the basis of the race of the readers at which they were aimed.

In the 'soccer' edition, the picture of South Africa's biggest pop artist Brenda Fassie was used, with the headline, 'Caught in the Act'. It told how naughty Brenda gave away scandalous news about her new toy boy.

In the 'normal' edition the tag refers to stories about disgraced cricket captain Hansie Cronje and the British royal, Prince William.

In a post-apartheid South Africa, the reader's skin colour still determines the news he or she will get.

■ Zandile Nkutha is a political reporter on the *Sowetan*.

**Mike Robertson, editor of the *Sunday Times*, responds:**



If we are to accept Ms Nkutha's somewhat novel definition of racism, then the *Sowetan*, the paper she works for, would be among the most racist in the country.

We don't accept her definition, nor do we have any interest in engaging her in a debate based on such shallow journalism, except to say that in seeking to provide knowledge to readers, the *Sunday Times* recognises that some interests are shared, others are not.

The market will judge our success, but at this stage it would appear we are doing pretty well.

### STUDENTS DEFY TV GENRE BOUNDARIES

The M-Net Edit initiative was launched in March 2000 for creative, visionary, daring, bold and disciplined film and TV students.

R25 000 has been awarded to the winners

**EDIT 2000 WINNERS**

**Short films**

- No Sir, I'm not on the menu - University of Natal
- Holy Water - Laduma Film Factory
- Moonlight Film - Pretoria Technikon

**Game Show**

- Guzzle The Puzzle - Wits University

**Animation**

- Hoogenboosen Affair - Pretoria Technikon
- Newt - RAU University

**Documentary**

- The Small Silent War - Fatchetstroom University
- Shifa - Viva La Diva - Wits University

**Entertainment/Magazine/Variety**

- The Funk Experiment - Rhodes University
- In Site - University of Port Elizabeth

**ESSENTIAL DATA**

31 October -  
deadline for programme submissions

November & December -  
programmes aired on M-Net

March 2001 -  
The Edit Awards for outstanding talent

For info: edit@mnet.co.za

EDIT

Emerging Dynamism in Television  
an m-net initiative

MAGICWORKS

Earlier this century, representing 'pure' Afrikaner nationalism, General Hertzog said: "As against the European, the native stands as an eight-year-old against a man of mature experience – a child in religion ..."

In the novel, *Disgrace*, J. M. Coetzee represents, as brutally as he can, the white people's perception of the post-apartheid black man. This is Hertzog's savage eight-year-old, without the restraining leash around his neck that the European had been obliged to place in the interest of both the native and society.

It is suggested that in these circumstances, it might be better that our white compatriots should emigrate because to be in post-apartheid South Africa is to be in 'their territory', as a consequence of which the whites will lose their cards, their weapons, their property, their rights, their dignity. The white woman will have to sleep with the barbaric black men. Accordingly, the alleged white 'brain drain' must be reported regularly and given the necessary prominence!

J. M. Coetzee makes the point that, five years after our liberation, white South African society continues to believe in a particular stereotype of the African, which defines the latter as:

- immoral and amoral;
- savage;
- violent;
- disrespectful of private property;
- incapable of refinement through education; and,
- driven by hereditary dark, satanic impulses.

Many practitioners of journalism in our country (including the foreign correspondents) carry this stereotype in their heads at all times. Accordingly, this informs the entirety of their work, including:

- the determination of what is news;
- the prioritisation of news items;
- the interpretation of the news;
- the presentation of the activities and the views of blacks in positions of authority; and
- the portrayal of blacks in position of authority.

As it became obvious, during the 1980s, that the apartheid system was nearing its end, a particular category emerged in our national politics. We refer here to the concept of 'white fears'.

Had this discussion taken place honestly, the point would have been made that these fears arose because white South Africa was convinced that the stereotype of black people, indicated above, in fact reflected the truth about black people.

To address these white fears, consistent with the longstanding policies of our movement, we placed high among the challenges that face our people the objective of achieving national reconciliation. The consequences that white South Africa expected, consistent with their black stereotype, were not realised.

Thus Nelson Mandela's success as a leader came to be measured by the white media according to the degree to which what he said and did was consistent with what this media considered as necessary to allay white fears.

The white media resolved that the way to resolve this problem was to proclaim Nelson Mandela as exceptional relative to the rest of the black leadership in our country, especially the black leadership within the ANC.

He was atypically good whereas the rest of his colleagues were, necessarily and by definition, primitive and the very cause of white fears.

This was clearly stated in a *Sunday Times* editorial on February 18 1996. It argued that

# stereotypes

## steer the news



once President Mandela stepped down in 1999, we would have "to overcome the dreadful image of African venality and incompetence ..."

Having correctly understood the intent and meaning of the editorial, President Mandela wrote: "Further, we should all be proud the (South African) success of worldwide significance has come out of a downtrodden people – out of Africa! Yes, Africans, with their supposed venality and incompetence, have achieved this feat! Thus, I find quite distressing any insinuation that I do not belong to these African masses and do not share their aspirations."

By attributing exceptional (national reconciliation) qualities to Nelson Mandela, which it was said the rest of his ANC colleagues did not have, the point was being made that the latter would behave in a manner consistent with the white stereotype of black people.

Consistent with what this stereotype dictates, the formation of an African government can be expected to result in the following:

- crime will increase, especially all forms of theft, with murder thrown in in abundant measure;
- rape will increase, with white women being the most threatened, the jeopardy doubled by the

'fact' that rapists are likely to be HIV-positive; ■ corruption will become the norm rather than the exception; and,

■ democracy and human rights will be subverted and ultimately destroyed.

It is true that, like all other countries, we have to confront the problem of crime, the challenge of rape, have to fight against corruption, and be vigilant in defending and advancing democracy and human rights. Accordingly, there is nothing racist about the reporting of crime, rape, corruption and issues of democracy and human rights in our country.

However, racism, driven by the white stereotype of the African, informs such reporting. The racist paradigm dictates that facts seen to be inconsistent with the white stereotype of the African savage should not be given such weight as would negate this stereotype.

Many contemporary African journalists help to sustain the racist images. Accordingly, they too become part of the media establishment which necessarily must portray the 'new South Africa' in as negative a light as possible, because they too have absorbed into their consciousness the white stereotype of the black savage.

The stereotype directs that the news that must be found and reported is precisely of the events and occurrences that the stereotype prescribes as being typical of the behaviour of the African barbarians 'once the whites have departed' from their positions of power. The news must therefore be about crime, corruption, government ineptitude, moral decay and economic collapse. It must show that when the African barbarians took over from the civilised whites, the rot started and is escalating beyond control.

Within this paradigm, facts must not be allowed to stand in the way of the propagation of the white stereotype of the African barbarian.

The truth is that violent crime, a serious problem in our country long before 1994, has been declining in our country since 1994. The fact is that the figure of 'a rape every 26 seconds' is entirely false. Corruption has been endemic in South Africa for very many years, deriving from the fact of white minority rule, and is now only being confronted, precisely by our democratically elected government.

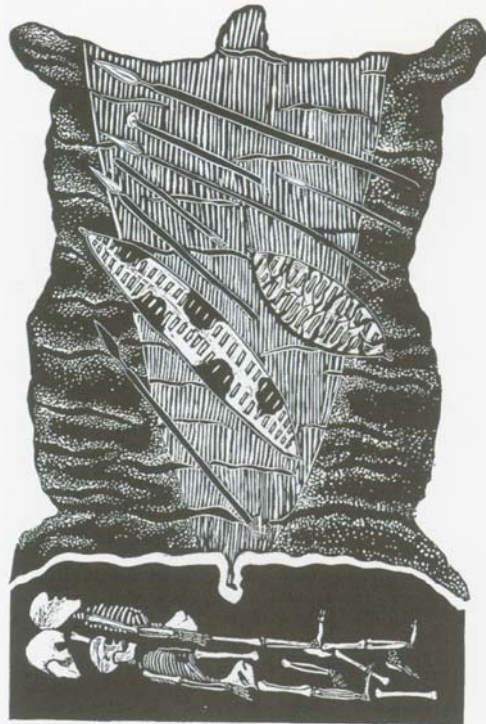
The truth is that for six years we have had a democratic government which has governed according to a democratic constitution and worked very hard to defend and promote human rights, whereas all previous white governments have upheld tyranny and oppression most brutally.

Since none of these truths are consistent with the racist stereotype, at best they must not be reported and, at worst, they must be denied. South African society continues to be structured according to the racist prescription that the whites are superior and the blacks inferior. There is a need to conduct a systematic and protracted campaign to destroy the white stereotype of black, and especially African, people – and publicly to challenge the expression of this stereotype whenever it raises its head.

Stories are prejudiced right from the start, says the ANC in its submission to the HRC Inquiry.

**The ANC proposes that serious and transparently monitored efforts must be made to:**

- Deracialise the ownership of the media in our country;
- Deracialise the management of the media organisations;
- Deracialise editorial control in our media organisations;
- Improve the professional capacity of especially the black journalists and deracialise especially the echelon of the senior journalist corps;
- Deracialise the "panel" of outside (non-media) commentators on whom the media relies for "independent" comment;
- Discourage an "advertisers boycott" in response to black ownership, management and editorial control;
- Convince everybody working in the media that they, like the rest of our society, have a responsibility to contribute what they can to the achievement of the constitutional objective of the creation of a non-racial society.



**CHUMANI XONXHA**  
b. 1984

*Umlom' awashaywa – The mouth is not struck.*

People who lived near the battlefield told me that the way the amaXhosa recorded this history was by burying personal items and bones at Egazini – the place where the battle took place. I know that one day this will all be uncovered and we will see this history at last.

One of the prominent features of a demonstration in Harare on April 1 was that scene in which a white man, injured and with blood streaming down his face, is hoisted above the crowd, with the obvious intention of highlighting, in the most visible way possible, the shocking horror of violence on that day.

These were scenes replayed over and over again in some sections of the local media, including *The Farmer* magazine, the publication of the predominantly white Commercial Farmers' Union (CFU).

Likewise, most of the foreign correspondents – including those from the BBC and SABC – gave 'eyewitness' accounts of the demonstration, of 'bloodied' white victims; of blood 'spurting from the head of a white lady ... and then from the head of her husband'; of 'Another white man' who was 'set upon' as he came out of the bank; and of the white farmer in Marondera who 'was so red' with his wounds, 'you couldn't tell that he was white'.

So, many readers in Zimbabwe will have been shocked more by the photograph, in one of the daily newspapers, of Ian Kay the white farmer from Marondera, than by the news about a black policeman killed in the same violence. The BBC report on the same incident mentioned the death of the black policeman almost as an afterthought. The account on the white victims was newsworthy enough!

The image of a white minority under persecution from a black majority is sustained in the

# white heroes & bêtes noires

orchestrated TV footage – particularly on the BBC, Sky News and SABC – of white-owned commercial farms being invaded by black war veterans and peasants. It is a distressing sight to say the least, especially given the predicament of any individual – and his family – caught up in this crossfire over the land question, and the white settler colonial legacy in Zimbabwe.

It is this picture that provoked the inevitable feelings of racial affinity in European Union circles, including the attempt by some therein to suspend non-humanitarian aid to Zimbabwe "until it is seen to respect democracy, the rule of law and the right of minorities within its borders".

The British were even more hysterical, and unveiled plans to evacuate some 20 000 of the 40 000 former white settlers. "But we would not turn our backs on them (the whites)," asserted a British Foreign office spokesman.

However, it is a picture that is incomplete until the historical details are filled in and the current reality highlighted:

■ The fact that the real land grabbing of the white settler colonial era has bequeathed a situation in which about 4 000 white farmers own 12 million hectares – or more than 50 percent of Zimbabwe's prime agricultural land – while about two million black peasants occupy 16 million hectares, "often in drought-prone regions", acknowledges a BBC reporter, Joseph Winter;

■ And the fact that this 'land question' was glossed over at Lancaster House 20 years ago, with neither the EU, Britain nor any significant actor in the northern hemisphere making the kind of noises that would be expected of champions of 'democracy' and 'justice', about this historical and socio-economic obscenity.

But amnesia and downright blindness to social and economic realities also arise out of the myth of 'white indispensability' to Southern African economies.

Not until the realisation that black labour has been indispensable to the development of both the agricultural sector, and the economy in general, does the notion of 'white indispensability' begin to dissipate into the myth that it is.

It is part of colonial historiography, including the view that without whites there could have been no development in Africa.

The answer for all those who share this warped view of history, is simple: imagine the white settlement without such material and human resources as the land itself, minerals, and the enormous black labour reserves.

There are hardly any black heroes or heroines in history; I mean in that 'history' in which race and white liberalism are part of the dominant paradigm. Likewise in the media that is so dominated by the same throughout Southern Africa, and in the West.

With reference to Zimbabwe, there is the preoccupation with the *bête noire* on the part of white journalists in our midst, a tendency not seldom reflected in the uncritical parroting on the part of some of our own in the media in particular.

For, it is the white hero and the *bête noire* that makes news; therefore, it is as impossible to caricature a white fascist as it is possible to demonise a black nationalist.

Not surprising, white fascists like Ian Smith and Piet Botha have been allowed to retire almost victoriously to the end under post-independence and post-apartheid, their glaring atrocities and the political and economic consequences thereof virtually concealed under the flimsy cloak of so-called reconciliation; while black nationalists like Robert Mugabe are being demonised beyond recognition, their historic sacrifices almost forgotten in societies now punch drunk with the fad of 'new democracy' and phony 'multiracialism' that speaks more about concealing blatant historic injustices and economic inequalities.

Indeed, contemporary Southern Africa – and the world at large – is a history obscenely rewritten by white liberals and their black cronies, and then scrawled across our media, in language and images that glorify white over black, might over struggle, myth over reality.

Events in Zimbabwe in particular, and in Southern Africa generally, are beginning to expose such myths and lay bare the realities of the political and socio-economic dynamics.

■ Ibbo Mandaza is editor of *The Zimbabwe Mirror*.

A warped view of history lies behind the coverage of the recent turmoil in Zimbabwe, writes **Ibbo Mandaza**. White has been glorified over black in language and in images.

## NOMATHEMBA TANA b. 1953

Uyob' uyakwaz' ukuphuma nomlil' emanzini – You will indeed be clever to come through water with fire.

It is said that Nxele told his warriors that the British bullets would turn to water and therefore the warriors would not be harmed.

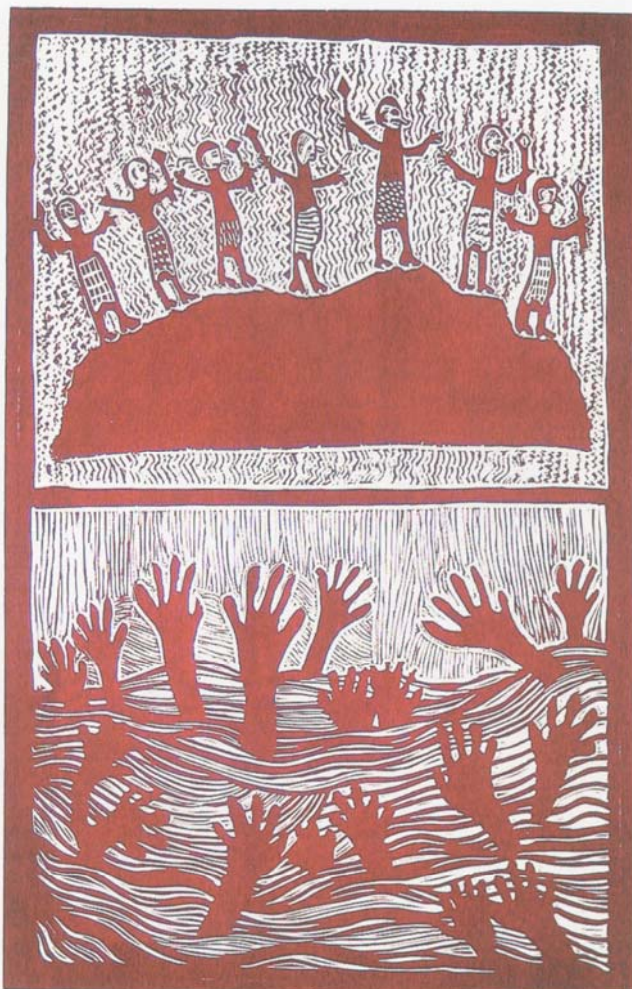
In my image I have divided my story into two parts that link to each other.

The top half of the image shows the warriors going bravely off to the battlefield with their spears. The bottom half of the image shows the women clapping for the brave warriors to spur them on to battle, because they also believed that the warriors would be safe from the bullets.

But then, as history tells us, the warriors were shot down by the guns and cannons of the British and they had to run away.

History says that many warriors tried to hide in the river near the battlefield. Here they drowned and the water turned red with their blood.

Therefore the bottom half of my picture also shows the people drowning.



# cricket's infamous coolie creeper



Journalists legitimated the use of this racist label, argues Lynette Steenveld.

In February 1999, cricketer Brian McMillan urged a team-mate to bowl a 'coolie creeper' to opponent Ashraf Mall. He was subsequently reprimanded for the use of the term because it was racist, and ordered to make a public apology.

The coverage of this incident in the local press explored whether or not the term 'coolie creeper' is indeed 'racist', as claimed by United Cricket Board (UCB) officials. 'Racist language' was never defined, but there was a sense that terms which demeaned particular 'racial' groups, could be considered 'racist'. Another issue that troubled journalists was whether the unwitting use of 'racist' language by a user, in this case a cricketer hero, implied that he was a racist.

At the heart of the coverage was a concern about language as a vehicle for racism. However, there was little written about how the portrayal of groups is related to the wider social context.

Virtually all the newspapers represented the issue as one in which a respected cricketer – one of our boys – affectionately referred to as 'Big Mac', uttered a 'harmless' cricketing term which was then taken up as a political issue by some sports bureaucrats.

His action was legitimised in terms of:

- his standing in the cricketing community;
  - the fact that the term is traditional 'cricket jargon' which has been used the world over for a long time;
  - that the person who should have been insulted (if it were a slur), namely Mall, was not, but laughed along with the others;
  - the context in which the term was used was the 'old cricket pastime of sledging or chirping'.
- This 'reasonable' reasoning is based on the controversial assumptions that:
- language is 'innocent';
  - that the areas of 'sport' and 'politics' can be separated into two mutually exclusive domains;
  - that sport is a-social, a-historical and a-political,

instead of being socially (and politically and historically) constructed;

- that language use is similarly a-social, a-historical and a-political.

These assumptions underpin the media arguments which, taken together, underrate the racism entailed in the whole issue.

While legitimising the innocence of McMillan, most newspapers acknowledge that some form of hurt was caused. In so doing, the journalistic claim of 'balance' could be made, even though the overwhelming meaning of the reportage was that it was 'only a cricketing term', and that it is the 'politicisation' of sport that has caused the problem. In other words, without this interference, there would be no problem.

As in this particular story, generally the 'liberal' press follows the norms of 'balanced, fair and objective' coverage. What this means is that in most cases 'both sides of the story' will be given. But what is evident is that the way in which these 'two sides' are covered is often qualitatively different. Thus the ideological stance or perspective of the writer or paper is evident despite this apparent attention to journalism's ideals.

The media's attitude to, or perspective on, the use of the term 'coolie creeper' can be identified as follows:

- First, through the selection of sources. These are often 'key' definers – but from a particular,

limited perspective, and used in a particular order. For example, McMillan was the key source, and where the UCB's Cassiem Doerat was quoted, it would typically be low down in the story.

■ A second way in which the journalist's perspective is evident is in the assumptions on which arguments (and comments) are made. Thus, because sport and politics are seen to be separate domains, 'interference' of the one into the other is wrong.

Another assumption is that to be offended by the use of particular terms implies that one cannot take a 'joke', or that one 'has a chip on one's shoulder'. These latter two justifications are typical of the 'blame the victim' syndrome.

■ Thirdly, the kinds of 'validation' resorted to. For example, the argument that the 'coolie creeper' phrase has been used 'the world over', 'for a long time'. This implies, illogically, that the words are acceptable.

■ Fourthly, the lack of context, or scope of context. Thus while a history of the use of the phrase might have been given, what was absent from this history was the social and political context of its use, namely, colonial domination.

■ Fifthly, the narrative construction (which 'facts' are chosen) and the framework of the story. This was evident in the way journalists portrayed the matter as a language problem or a problem of political interference into sport. A different perspective would have framed the story differently.

■ Finally, the choice of words. Terms like 'cricket jargon' and reference to the UCB 'nannying' are not neutral. The formulation of the issue as the 'problem' of 'delving deeply' into the meanings of words implies that if this were not done, then there wouldn't be a problem.

One can posit at least three reasons why the media presented the story with arguments mainly in favour of McMillan.

■ First, the economic imperative to attract audiences exerts pressure on the media to work within the presumed 'consensus' – that which 'everyone believes to be true'. In this way, journalists end up both reflecting and reproducing the perceived 'common sense' of the audience or niche market that their publication serves.

In the particular world inhabited by most of the writers, there was little question that McMillan's conduct was legitimate and that readers could be presumed to share this assessment.

■ Secondly, the routines of news gathering, which are determined by an economic imperative. These result in the use of elite, known, 'reputable', 'taken-for-granted' sources, and a lack of time to chase other sources.

■ Thirdly, poor journalism. This is manifested in poor research, or not enough research; interviewing that is not probing enough; writing stories without a context, or an inadequate context; writing that evidences poor logic and poor language use.

While media racism can be identified in language, it is also the result of a wider set of economic imperatives, news routines and standard journalism. And it can manifest itself not only in the use of particular words, but also in the logic of the arguments used to report them.

■ Lynette Steenveld is Chair of Media Transformation at Rhodes University's Department of Journalism and Media Studies.

## DOMINIC THORBURN b. 1958

### "Salt in the Wound"

This image is derived from an original daguerreotype portrait of Elizabeth Margaret Salt.

At the height of the battle, the main defence garrison of East Fort found themselves running out of gunpowder.

Elizabeth insisted she would run the gauntlet to Mud Fort to fetch a keg of gunpowder.

The legend goes that, despite appeals from the menfolk, she set forth clutching a bundle which appeared to be a baby in arms.

Reported the *Grocotts Penny Mail* on August 28 1912: "Margaret stepped out into clear sunshine, and the pressing savages paused to see her, yells echoed round her head, spears shook uncertain, kerries brandished. She walked on serenely."

Her return with the gun powder "helped win a memorable day".

Elizabeth Salt exploited the Xhosa moral of not harming women and children in conflict.





# equality and expression



Both rights are fundamental for a third right: the right to participate in a democracy, argues Lynette Steenveld.

The subpoena debacle that preceded the HRC Inquiry into Racism in the Media raised the problem of the relative weighting of 'freedom of expression/the press' versus 'the right to dignity/equality'.

It is arguable that the hegemonic view is that freedom of expression is sacrosanct in a democracy – indeed that one of the ways of judging whether a society is democratic or not, is whether the state upholds freedom of expression and freedom of the press.

The reasons for the believed primacy of this right are:

- Firstly, that speech is an expression of self and is thus an essential human characteristic. Preventing or limiting this right would thus be a violation of human dignity, freedom and autonomy.
- Secondly, freedom of expression is necessary for a 'search for truth' in a 'marketplace of ideas' from whence the most valuable ideas or views could emerge.
- Thirdly, for democracy to function, citizens must have access to a range of views.

But, argues Johann van der Westhuizen, in his contribution to the book, *Rights and Constitutionalism: The New South African Legal Order*: "Freedom of expression is not only abused by overstepping the limits of decency or good taste, or by spreading half- or untruths. It is also abused by those who are bent on destroying or undermining democracy instead of enhancing it, and on eradicating the equality and liberty of others, rather than on fostering tolerance and discourse".

In sum, he argues that "freedom of expression ... has to be interpreted within the context of appreciating where our country comes from and where we want to go". In other words, Van der Westhuizen explores the very notion of 'freedom of expression', and what its potential limits might be, by pointing to both its social context, and to the potential continuum of speech which might 'undermine democracy'.

The problem that is being grappled with is the right to an absolute notion of freedom of expression, versus the right to equality and dignity.

The argument for an absolute notion of freedom of expression is that sharing/contesting/debating ideas is the basis of a democracy. One of the premises here is that all people are equally powerful. It eschews the view that some people have more power than others, and are therefore more able to exercise their right to free speech.

But this view does not take into account historical circumstances, such as the power relations of colour, gender, sexual preference or age, which operate in South African society. Denise Meyerson writing in the *South African Journal of Human Rights* takes note of inequalities, but suggests that power relations in society should not justify the imposition of limitations of free speech. Rather, in her view, efforts should be made to extend the access of people currently/previously disempowered.

There is the fear that limiting freedom of expression in some way opens up a loophole for governments to prevent speech/ideas that they disapprove of. But it could equally be argued that having no limitations on free speech, privileges those with power to speak.

This view is held by Charles R. Lawrence who writes in connection with the limitation of hate speech in America: "If we are truly committed to free speech, First Amendment doctrine and theory must be guided by the principle of anti-subordination. There can be no free speech when there are still masters and slaves".

In other words, proponents of hate speech legislation see it as enabling the speech and participation of groups who might otherwise be silenced by those who use the unqualified free speech argument to inhibit/limit the freedoms of (weaker) groups to participate in a democracy.

Laura Lederer, for example, writes: "... the purpose of racist speech is to keep selected groups in subordinated positions. Racist speech functions as a sophisticated form of hate propaganda that both creates and props up a system of inequality and exclusion".

In support of this view, Raymond Suttner argues in the *South African Journal of Human Rights* that one must "understand the 'good' which forms the rationale for freedom of speech", and if some utterances are deemed to be inimical to the rationale or existence of the freedom, then "in suppressing them one is not suppressing a freedom, but a threat to that freedom".

He further argues that suppression of racist views (for example) is as much a part of freedom, as the expression of democratic views. In other words, he also argues for the distinction between different social content of various utterances, which should affect the decision of what should be allowed to be expressed.

Suttner's (and Van der Westhuizen's) argument is that "there can be no absolute criterion for determining the scope and limits of freedom of speech ... The justifiability or otherwise will depend on the application of 'principles' to concrete conditions".

In sum, the HRC's Inquiry into Racism in the Media has thrown into relief two questions. First, why, and for whom, does freedom of expression matter so much? And second, why, and for whom, does the right to dignity and equality matter so much?

Drawing on the civil rights tradition, American commentator John A Powell identified the problem rather well when he described the two questions as "two narratives that describe different worlds".

The free speech tradition, he writes, tells the story of "people asserting their autonomy through participation, free thought, and self-expression in the polity ... wary of government constraint ... such constraint [being] an evil to be avoided in society".

The equality tradition, on the other hand, tells the story of "people whom communities and government conspired to exclude from any meaningful participation in the polity or public institution. It tells the story of a government that until very recently actively engaged in efforts to exclude, and now passively stands by while private actors and powerful social forces continue to shut the door to persons seeking full membership in society".

"This tradition also tells of a long struggle for status, not just as members of the polity, but as complete and respected human beings. Indeed the great evil to be avoided, as seen from this framework, is discrimination that undermines or destroys someone's humanity".

In short, the free speech constituency could be seen as representing those who already have access to an existing system that is organised in a way that they are familiar with, and that suits them.

The equality constituency represents those who are newcomers, and who do not only want to participate, but also want to have a say in the rules and conventions governing participation.

Powell suggests that in a democracy, participation is central to both the right to freedom of expression, and to equality.

The importance of freedom of expression, as noted above, is that it enables citizens to participate in the governance of society as a whole. But this assumes that all people have an 'equal' voice. Thus the right to equality is a means of 'ensuring' this right, so that ultimately, the participation can be truly democratic.

In Powell's words, "It is from membership and the right to participation that all other goods are produced and take on meaning".

This leads him to proposing the following criterion in a possible legal framework: "if the speech activity injured participation by excluding others, this would weigh toward proscribing it, or would at least weaken the court's protection".



CHRISTINE DIXIE b.1966

## Reflect

*reflect, v.t. re-flekt.* To throw back, esp. after being struck; to consider mentally; to bring reproach or discredit on; to censure on.

*reflection, n. reflek-shon.* The state of being reflected; thorough consideration; attention to states of self-consciousness or mental operations; the expression of thought; censure; rep.

## finding the

The South African Human Rights Commission believes, in the words of the 1993 Vienna Declaration, that "all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated".

We believe that our Constitution has sought to treat human rights holistically and to eschew the bogey of a hierarchy of rights. The Vienna Declaration goes on to state that "the international community must treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing and with the same emphasis".

Kofi Annan captures the current mood in international human rights theory when he says: "One cannot pick and choose among human rights, ignoring some while insisting on others. Only as rights equally applied can they be rights universally accepted. Nor can they be applied selectively or relatively, or as a weapon with which to punish others. Their purity is their eternal strength ..." (Tehran, December 1997).

One cannot deal adequately with human rights without contextualising them. It is clear to us that racism has been the defining characteristic of South Africa from the moment European settlers set foot on its shores. Racism has defined the relationship between black and white people from time immemorial.

The manifest purpose of the struggle for liberation was to address the culture of racism and inequality that had become embedded in South African society. That is why the first substantive set of rights in the Bill of Rights deals with Equality.

That is why American human rights jurisprudence emphasises freedom, because it speaks to the very heart of the history of America. To us, racism has the same or comparable significance. For others, the delivery of basic needs as in economic and social rights is what gives content to the rights

■ Lynette Steenveld is Chair of Media Transformation at Rhodes University's department of Journalism and Media Studies



Somerset and Ngqika were two major forces in the Battle of Grahamstown. Their images have been cropped as if they are being viewed through a gunsight or telescope. Inextricably part of each other's history, they are visually linked by their red badges. Badges are symbols of status, while the colour is associated with the blood issuing from the Egazini battle. Red was also the colour used on the maps of the time to indicate conquered British territory. In the centre of the print is a mirror with a red circle. The viewer becomes drawn into this history, to become both a target and participant in history's unfolding.

mirror;  
st  
rtful  
e's  
ach.

## rights balance



South Africa has no reason to place freedom of expression on a pedestal above other rights, says Barney Pitjana, in these excerpts from the HRC's interim report.

Barney Pitjana is chairperson of the South African Human Rights Commission.

culture we all espouse.

What the Commission seeks, however, is to understand these societal forces that cause different groups of South Africans to emphasise different rights. Not to end there, but to use that to express and define the need for South Africa to have a balanced understanding of human rights.

What is vital for us is the understanding that no rights are absolute, and that the exercise of all rights should promote the values espoused by the Constitution: "human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms, non-racialism and non-sexism ..."

The national Human Rights Conference sponsored by the Commission in 1997 stated that: "Conference believes that freedom of expression is a central tenet of democracy. Conference believes that freedom of expression is best promoted when it upholds the values established by the Constitution and the law."

South Africa has no reason to place freedom of expression on a pedestal above other rights. The media in South Africa cannot justify why they must be treated any differently from any other structures of society which have to abide by our Constitutional principles.

The Commission wishes to place on record that it is mindful of the implications of this exercise for press freedom. We believe, however, that the best guarantor of press freedom is a society that respects human rights. The press has the same responsibility to respect human rights as everyone else in society.

A study of racism in the media, hopefully, will heighten the sensitivity of all South Africans to the issue of racism and will ensure a greater respect for freedom of expression. We believe that these matters are interrelated.

A cursory glance at the list of fundamental rights listed in chapter two of our constitution will instantly suggest that it is very easy for some of them to collide.

The tension among the rights is both inter- and intra-rights. In other words, there may arise a tension between two separate rights – for example, when one person asserts her right to free expression against another who asserts his right to dignity.

And then the same right can give rise to tension when people assert it against one another at the same time. This might happen, for instance, where different people assert language and cultural rights against one another. Indeed, some rights have in-built tension – the right to equality, for instance, has crafted into its very fabric, affirmative action, which seems to negate the very notion of equality.

Cultural and linguistic rights are expressed in terms which allow people to organise themselves along cultural and linguistic indicators. They are, however, simultaneously directed not to violate any provision of the Bill of Rights in doing so. This seems to be a veiled admonition that they should not discriminate, even though in practice it might be very hard to do what the right permits and not discriminate.

The foundational international conventions are not a very helpful guide to how one must balance competing rights. Similarly, it would be fairly pointless to have recourse to the Constitution since, as the courts have said over and over again, it has no hierarchy and therefore imparts no information on which right should take precedence.

The courts have often said, when such conflict arises, that the question as to which right must prevail should be determined on a case-by-case basis by balancing the rights involved and the interests they protect.

My reading of the Vienna Declaration suggests that one must first try to make the rights work together as a system before seeking to choose one over another in any given set of circumstances. However, this is easy, and perhaps possible, only in respect of rights that are complementary.

So, for instance, in determining the meaning of the right to life in *S v Makwanyane*, the Constitutional Court invoked a number of other rights – viz. equality, human dignity and the freedom and security of the person. An examination of these rights would reveal that they are, however, complementary, rather than competing. Therefore the question as to what one does in the face of competing rights must remain open.

Then, as I understand the instruments and the judgments of the courts, one has to make a choice. But the choice is not to be made *a priori* or, to put it somewhat differently, the choice is not metaphysical. It is made with reference to concrete and specific circumstances and facts.

One listens to the evidence and to the argument and then decides that in this case right X must prevail over right Y. Consistency (the precedent system) then requires that, in all future conflicts involving the same rights and where the facts are materially the same, right X must prevail.

But this does not mean that right X is more important than right Y. Therefore it is possible that under different circumstances and with different facts, the opposite decision might be arrived at. National Media Ltd & Others v Bogoshi, for instance, was widely celebrated as a victory for freedom of expression. To the extent that it struck down the doctrine of strict liability, it was decidedly a victory for freedom of expression.

However, that does not mean that freedom of

## weighty considerations

expression now takes priority over one's right to one's good name. Should Bogoshi (the plaintiff in the initial case) have succeeded in proving all the elements of defamation in terms of prevailing notions of justice, the question might be answered totally differently, as in *Gardener v Whitaker*.

The effect of this is that the rights in question remain of equal status. The facts in every case will determine the direction in which the scale must be tipped whenever there is a conflict between rights. But is it really so?

In the Bogoshi judgment, the Supreme Court of Appeals affirms the equality of freedom of expression and the right to one's good name. The court then cites authorities to underline the 'equal' importance of freedom of expression.

What is curious about the authorities that the court cites, is that they suggest that freedom of expression is foundational to other rights. (See at p1208.) One of the authorities goes so far, indeed, as to suggest that after the right to freedom of worship, freedom of expression is the most important right.

But there is a view in SA that is fairly established, namely, that we live in a regime that is characterised by constitutional core values. Equality, freedom and dignity are normally cited as the core values that inform our constitutional dispensation. Therefore, when a conflict of rights arises, it has to be resolved on the basis that these core values are allowed to prevail.

In large measure this view is already embodied in our constitutional text. Thus, in recognising our freedom of expression, section 16(2)(c) already directs that the freedom so recognised must not militate against equality, for instance. In recognising our right to establish schools funded out of our own resources, section 29(3)(b) already directs that we cannot discriminate on the basis of race at these schools.

When one considers the weight of these constitutional core values, and the provisions of the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, it seems clear that freedom of expression will hardly ever come out at the top. And this is despite the fact that some of the authorities cited by the Supreme Court of Appeals in Bogoshi appear to grant a foundational status to freedom of expression in relation to other rights.

Therefore, it seems to me, our scales are not truly amenable to a balance. As I read the situation, our courts are more likely to find in favour of equality than freedom of expression where the two rights collide.

Quite apart from the fact that freedom of expression comes to us already limited in the constitutional text in respect of equality, our history will predispose us to view with suspicion and hostility anything that smacks of a negation of equality and of human dignity.

One must, however, hope that all of this is only in the short term, and that in the longer term we shall come around to truly appreciate the equal status of all human rights. And that we will also deal with the conflict between civil and political rights on the one hand, and social and economic rights on the other.



Our scales don't balance – for now, writes Mandla Seleane.

Mandla Seleane is a researcher at the Human Sciences Research Council.

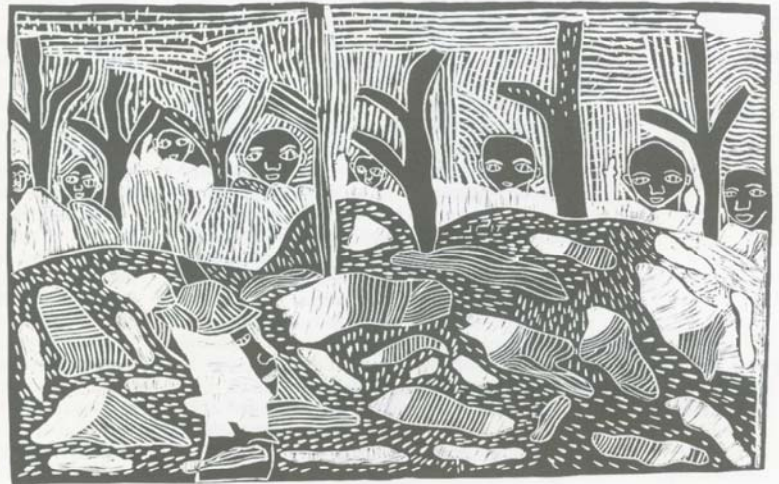
# freedom VS racism

**ZOLA TOVI**  
b. 1975

*Ukuzalwa wedwu ngumlu wanyama*  
– To be the only child is a misfortune

My image shows Xhosa warriors waiting to attack behind the trees at Makanaskop. In front of the warriors is a single man. This is Makana telling his warriors that they must not be scared to go and fight because no harm will come to them because all the bullets will be turned to water.

I believe Makana was a prophet and that his powers must have made him a lonely man. I have therefore placed him alone, and not with the other warriors.



## THE FXI'S POSITION IS THAT:

■ There should be no hierarchy of rights.

■ FXI considers itself part of the broader human rights family and therefore wishes to see the human rights agenda advanced.

■ Because freedom of expression is compromised already by having internal qualifiers in section 16 of the Constitution, no further inroads should be made on it.

The conundrum of defining racism is one that confronts all of us. It is important to note that there is a tendency to equate covert racism (some of it may be more overt, but generally it is the problem of subliminal racism we are dealing with here) with outright 'hate speech'.

Although many commentators wish to advance the idea that covert racism is banned by our Constitution, we need to be clear that 'hate speech' per se is not banned. It is only that hate speech which 'constitutes incitement to harm' which does not have the protection of the Constitution.

The topic of legal consequences of the Human Rights Commission inquiry needs to be addressed because we fear that certain expectations regarding the power of the Commission have inadvertently been created.

Several complainants asked the Commission to find certain publications and stations guilty of contravening the rights of dignity and equality. In terms of the powers of the courts and in particular the Constitutional Court, FXI is sure the Commission will agree that it does not have jurisdiction to rule on competing constitutional rights.

In addition the Commission cannot ask for the prosecution of any publication under any piece of legislation.

Although the complaints received may in future be dealt with under the recently passed Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, no institution can have charges brought against it in retrospect (section 35 (3) (1)).

In terms of future actions under this piece of legislation, it is clear that the drafters appreciated that there needed to be a degree of certainty to bring charges of discrimination against those disseminating or broadcasting information which may be discriminatory.

Consequently section 6 reads that no person may:

■ disseminate or broadcast any information;

■ publish or display any advertisement or notice, that could reasonably be or reasonably be understood to demonstrate a clear intention to discriminate against any person.

The emphasis is ours to indicate that apart from having to initially apply a test of "reasonableness", complainants will also have to prove intention. Therefore

much of the subliminal racism that has been discussed would be difficult to prosecute under this Act.

Regarding the current investigation, what the Commission can do is make recommendations. We therefore urge that these recommendations made should take cognisance of the need not to undermine one fundamental right by giving preference to another.

It is our belief that the Constitution should be construed as a whole and that no right should be seen in isolation to the other rights.

There will be occasions where the courts will be faced with human rights dilemmas. The theory that where constitutional rights collide, it is necessary to make the choice which realises fundamental rights, i.e. an interpretation favouring the protection of fundamental rights must take preference, is an approach which should be considered. This is elaborated on in *The Interpretation of Fundamental Rights Provisions*, an Article 19 publication, where the following from *Asakura v City of Seattle* (judgement of the US Supreme Court, 265 US 332 (1924) at 342) is quoted: "... when two constructions are possible, one restrictive of rights that may be claimed under it and the other favourable to them, the latter is to be preferred."

The conclusions the Commission reached in considering the complaint by the National Party on three statements uttered by the ANC, and which the NP claimed violated the right to human dignity of FW de Klerk, are illustrative of the application of this theory.

In this case the Commission limited the right to dignity in favour of freedom of expression, saying it believed that "in this instance the limitation is essentially for the maintenance of a vibrant and open democracy where debate and freedom of speech are essential elements of a democratic society".

The current debate does not address the fact that the vast majority of the population is unable to access the means of communication. Therefore even if the mainstream media were forced to conform to some politically correct formula of content, this would not resolve the fact that nothing will have changed for those people – particularly women – who are discriminated against because of their poverty, and whose dignity is most impaired because of their economic status and their rural location.

Only when there is a diversity of voices will the problem of racism in the media diminish.

The full text is at:  
<http://fxi.org.za/addendum.htm>



Executive  
Director **Laura  
Polcutt.**

Legal remedies  
for racism are  
limited, but  
media diversity  
is part of the  
answer, says  
the FXI in  
these excerpts  
of its  
submission to  
the HRC.



Your  
text book  
for the  
university  
of life.



INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPERS  
KWAZULU NATAL

ADD A NEW DIMENSION TO YOUR LIFE.  
READ NEWSPAPERS.

DAILY NEWS THE MERCURY SUNDAY TRIBUNE THE INDEPENDENT ON SATURDAY POST



Chris Whitfield combats coded language in his newsroom.

Chris Whitfield is acting Editor of the Cape Argus and Editor of the Weekend Argus.

As recently as the 1980s, race was openly entertained in mainstream South African newspapers. The colour of criminals and their victims, the fact that an event had taken place in a 'black township', the race of accident victims, were all recorded as a matter of course.

Stories were frequently weighted according to the race of the central characters: a 'white' newspaper would, for example, give far more prominence to an accident in which two white people died than one in which several more of another race had been killed.

Such overt and gratuitous reference to race faded in the years that followed. But did its overtones?

Many newspapers have worked extremely hard to rid themselves of the racism that lay at the root of such practices. Some have codes of conduct with specific reference to race and its coverage. Some editors' contracts are explicit on the issue and require a commitment specifically to further racial co-operation and harmony.

The Press Ombudsman is unequivocal, and almost all newspapers have developed informal traditions and practices designed to eliminate prejudice (an example would be an instruction from the editor to stop publishing stories along the lines of: 'For the first time, a black man/woman has been appointed as ...').

That said, it would be disingenuous to suggest that these guidelines and practices have removed all suggestion of racist content or decision-making from newspapers (or, for that matter, that blatantly offensive material does not get into newspapers through error, incompetence, misunderstanding or even malice).

The most problematic areas for our newspa-

## word wounds

pers have probably been those of stereotyping and the use of a none-too-subtle 'code' to signify race.

An example: four young whites who break a shop window could be described as a 'group of teenagers', whereas a similar group of blacks would be 'a gang of youths'. White suburbanites may be referred to as 'ratepayers', blacks as 'township dwellers'.

In Cape Town, the distinction is often made between 'residents' (whom you might find in Fish Hoek) and 'the community' (on the Cape Flats). And an old word that has taken on new shading: 'development'. This is sometimes used to indicate the race of a member of a sports team, and is quite often dropped into copy when the reporter is being unnecessarily coy about race.

Occasionally, there has been less effort applied towards humanising black people in copy. Some reporters, for example, tend to be more descriptive in feature writing about whites - describing their hair, their features, their mannerisms - than about people of other races.

Another area of our reporting which concerns us has been the resilience of stereotyping. The Pagad phenomenon, for example, took us largely unawares. We found we were not sufficiently informed about what was happening in areas of the city where Pagad was strong in order to analyse or even report on the phenomenon.

What happened was that our reportage tended to rely on stereotypes rather than on the facts or the real dynamics of what was obviously a complex situation. We found ourselves, to the ire of many, equating Pagad with the Muslim community and vice versa.

We believe that eliminating such tendencies from news copy requires a two-pronged process: the people responsible for 'processing' copy (department heads and sub-editors) have to be alive to them; and reporters have to be educated about the language our newspaper would prefer them to use.

Part of the process is best achieved through discussion. About 10 months ago the Cape Argus news editor instituted a regular Friday meeting at which such issues can be debated.

The meeting is intended as a forum for discussion on issues affecting the paper, and is generally attended by the editor or a member of the editorial management. Reporters are encouraged to question decisions on content and to wrestle with ethical, legal and other practical issues relating to their craft.

We have found the informality of the meetings conducive to unpicking the codes and assumptions inherent in the language we use, and to the decisions we make about our newspaper. On occasion, race-related issues have been vigorously aired.

We are also looking at training as an area in which these issues can be effectively addressed. In the long term, though, we hope that by making our newsroom more representative, by allowing open and frank communication and by relentlessly advocating a culture of reporting excellence, these weaknesses can be overcome.

# Media Diversity

## Who cares!



### Who needs it?

As part of a democratic country we as South Africans need media diversity.

### Why?

- Access to different media plays a critical role in underpinning the democratic processes.
- Access to information allows the public to make informed decisions.
- Encourages robust discussion and debate.

### How can this be achieved?

By creating an enabling environment to assist in the sustainable development of different media organisations.

### What is happening?

Print Media SA established a Print Development Unit (PDU) in February 2000 to facilitate the growth of emerging print media enterprises to full viability.

### The objectives of the PDU are to:

- Foster media diversity in South Africa by encouraging the development of

small print media enterprises;

- Establish support mechanisms in the areas of media management, funding, training, advertising, printing and distribution;
- Ensure that there are newspapers and magazines available across the country.

### The PDU strategy:

To establish a print fund which will provide support to:

- **Development programme:** To provide in-depth assistance to the individual print enterprises participating in the programme.
- **Training programme:** To develop and implement a training programme for small print media focusing on identified needs.
- To establish partnerships with organisations in print media and small business development to assist the PDU in facilitating the sustainable development of small print media.



For further information please contact:

**Natasha Stretton**  
Print Development Unit  
Tel: (011) 447-1264  
Fax: (011) 447-1289  
E-mail  
natashas@printmedia.org.za

'Race and media' is all about identity politics. And someone who thought – and did – a lot about this was Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko. He also did a lot of journalism himself, and he did a lot to transform journalism.

Biko wrote for the media – not just his column 'Frank Talk' in the SASO newsletter, but also pseudonymous opinion pieces after his banning and befriending of *Daily Dispatch* editor Donald Woods.

He also helped change journalism in the 1970s. "Start giving some decent coverage to the Black Consciousness movement," Biko told Woods, who then agreed to assign a reporter to the beat, and to allow a Black Consciousness proponent to write a regular column.

Biko did not wait for Woods to choose the reporter – he nominated Thenjiwe Mthintso to be hired for the job. He put forward his associate Mapetla Mohapi as the columnist (Mohapi later died in detention, allegedly by hanging himself with his jeans).

In short, media transformation for Steve Biko was a two-pronged matter: first, encourage conscientised blacks to do journalism – a whole generation of reporters was inspired in this way; second, change the worldview of whites like Woods already working there.

Biko is probably best known for black exclusivism as a foundation for black pride in the 1970s, i.e. for building a strong black identity against the tribalistic and slave mentality fostered by Apartheid.

But Biko did not conflate race identities with skin colour. Nor did he regard black and white identities as permanently segregated ghettos that could share nothing between them. These insights remain relevant to the 21st century.



For Steve Biko, to be black or brown in skin colour was a necessary, but not sufficient, condition to have a black identity.

For Biko, Black Consciousness was a means to an end, i.e. South Africa as "a land where black and white live together in harmony without fear of group exploitation". This would be "when these two opposites have interplayed and produced a viable synthesis of ideas and a modus vivendi".

He saw a future of fusion beyond a harmony between separate and parallel race groups living without racism. "You have got to synthesize. This is all part of the values, the beliefs, the policies that have got to be synthesized in the bargaining process between black and white in this country".

Thus he argued that "at the present moment we have a culture here which is a European culture. The black contribution will change our joint culture to accommodate the African experience. Sure, it will have European experience, because we have Whites here who are descended from Europe. We don't dispute that. But for God's sake, it must have African experience as well."

Herein are the seeds of seeing a democratic South Africa going further than a racist-free, multi-racial society, and becoming an entirely non-racial one. This thinking is of enduring relevance for identifying and combating racism in the media. To transform our media means we need a clear notion of the opposite condition: i.e. what a racism-free media is, and what route is needed to get there.

If the goal is a media melting pot that com-

# over the rainbow



Black Consciousness has a lot to offer in countering racism in the media, writes Guy Berger.

bines racial identities into a common South Africanism – wherein colour is not a measure of culture, class or consciousness – then Black Consciousness offers some ideas on getting there. A start to de-linking race from expected traits, part of eliminating race as a signifier of anything significant, is to counter the negative aspects of racial identity. To replace these with positive aspects is what Black Consciousness emphasises.

If blackness was negatively portrayed in the apartheid-era media, positive role modelling is now called for. Such measures constitute corrective action against the historical consequences of white racism.

Without reaching some kind of parity in the status of racial images, it is impossible to proceed to the ultimate goal of de-racialising society entirely. The end point of transformation then is doing away with racial distinction altogether: deracialisation such that race has no social significance at all.

In short, racial identities need reconstruction. Black identity must be given due status, White identity taken down several notches – and both without making the classic racist mistake confusing identity with intrinsic pigmentation or seeing races as impermeable and permanent laagers.

For Biko, to be black or brown in skin colour was a necessary, but not sufficient, condition to have a black identity. In fact, for him, not all those who were not-white, could be counted as black. To

be black (with a capital B) was to identify with the struggle of people oppressed by racism: it was, for Biko, a political definition and a political identity.

The implication of this perspective is that racism, in the sense of anti-black views, is not exclusive to pale people. It can be practised by anyone. What we are looking at in media racism then, is not so much whether images come from a particular racial journalist, but whether they intrinsically have negative connotations.

Biko's thinking also draws attention to the way that racial identity gains rationale from political purpose. 'Race' is still about power and politics and combating racism in the media means appreciating this factor.

It means a political project, à la Biko, to include black voices in the media, and a valuation of Blackness as part of constructing a rich and democratic South African identity.

This requires a frame of mind that celebrates black culture, history and experience. There is still lots of room for this perspective among South African journalists – irrespective of their skin colour.

The challenge bequeathed by Biko is a journalism that proliferates racial colours positively, but which also blends these beyond biologically-given hues. This is surely the way to the proverbial pot located the other side of the rainbow.

■ Guy Berger is head of the Department of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University.

## BULELANI FATMAN b. 1984

### *Ithemba alidanisi* – Hope does not kill

I chose to make a work for this proverb, because I think that although the history of our country has been difficult, there is still a lot of hope. I have chosen four sites where the battle took place in 1819 and I show what is there today.

There is a rugby field where men still fight each other in sport at the actual battle site, Egazini.

Where the British had their guns, the barracks of Fort England, now stands a hospital for the mentally ill.

At the site that some people call Makanaskop, and where they say Makana stood watching the battle, I have shown how people have built their houses there.

At the place where amaXhosa tried to run away, I show how a school is now built there.

I think that it is very important that people do not give up hope for a better and more peaceful life.

By showing how people have built over the places where the battle took place, I hope to show how people are moving on with their lives. I have put all of my interpretations into the shape of a traditional Xhosa cooking pot, called an *unopoty* because I can see how the history and the stories still feed the identity of the people.





Access will determine how quickly we cross the digital divide, writes Tanya Accone.

Cyberspace has been touted as a colour-blind, non-racial neighbourhood, a place where the colour barrier is dissolved and where we can all hang out harmoniously. Surely this must be the case, for in our anonymous interactions with users, race, gender and other identifiers are of no consequence. Or are they? Does race simply vanish in a virtual world?

The web is a place of culture and commerce unique in that it is not imbued with any particular group's sense of self or worth. It is a medium whose short history is studded with examples of its ability to successfully foster special interests, provide a haven for community, act as a powerful political tool and fulfil its promise in the field of education.

But almost any way you examine it, segregation seems to be as much a part of cyberspace as any other reality, virtual or otherwise. There is no denying that until fairly recently, the web was a world dominated by white concepts, content and

# is the web a white place?

creativity, and a resulting questionable intellectual culture. And the real tragedy of the medium is that those who stand to gain most, are least likely to have access.

The discrepancies between those on either side of the digital divide are dire. Teledensity favours the wealthy urban elite, and the basic cost of a personal computer is often multiples of the annual income of the average African citizen.

Even in South Africa, which has two thirds of Africa's total online population, the AMPS figures do not record a statistically significant number of blacks (or any race group other than whites) online. Internet use is greatest among those earning more than R9 000 a month and PC purchasing power goes to those who earn in excess of R4 000 a month.

Until recently, blacks still constituted a disproportionately small sector of the online population in the United States. In fact, until 1999, the trend indicated that the digital divide appeared to be widening. Today the black-white gap is not so predictable. Asian-Americans have the highest Internet and computer use, followed by whites, blacks and then Latinos who trail the pack.

Blacks at most income levels continue to be less likely to be online than white Americans, although they are increasingly going online and spending on computer-related products.

"I don't feel there is much of a divide anymore," said NetNoir co-founder David Ellington, who believes that the divide is more economic than race-related. "The Internet is now becoming relevant in our lives."

Recently *Salon Magazine* broached the issue, querying whether the medium was somehow intrinsically racist or whether the reasons were purely economic. An article in it proposed that African-Americans aren't rushing online because the new medium butts heads with their traditional values and desires.

As in other facets of life, the net has failed to account for and embrace the black experience – there are still only half-a-dozen black-interest portals in the US.

Last year, Robert Johnson, founder of Black Entertainment Television, launched a \$35 million African-American portal site in a bid to mend the digital divide. He was yet another evangelist in a long line which includes the likes of Ellington, Blackvoices' Barry Cooper and Afronet's Willie Atterbery.

"There's no question that a key factor in keeping people online is that they have a compelling experience," says marketing researcher Donna Hoffman. "Obviously, if content is not there, they're not going to stay online."

Some thinkers have posed a chicken-egg conundrum: if the reason for black Internet absence is that fewer blacks have access to computers, then, in turn, there are fewer people to

produce creative, black content and, ultimately, less incentive for blacks to be online in the first place.

Others, like former *PC Magazine* editor Joel Dreyfuss, respond by questioning the value of creating Afrocentric sites. "What I don't want to do is let everybody else off the hook – 'Well the blacks have their sites, therefore we can just do our thing!'"

Perhaps this situation is unsurprising considering that most content producers represent an amalgamation of two sectors traditionally the preserve of whites: technology and the print media. Adding to this towering inequality are issues such as economics and education.

Yet communication has been highlighted as the key driver behind Africa's economic and social development by governments, NGOs, businesses, investors and the United Nations. Africa is perhaps the one place on earth where the will to wire (or wireless) is greatest.

In July, a group of high-tech executives at the World Economic Forum urged the world's wealthiest nations to take action against the 'digital divide' between the developed/information haves and developing/information have-nots – resulting in a project called Opportun!TY.

Despite the perception of the continent, Africa is being wired and progress is being made. The difference lies in the fact that the pace of progress is far slower than in other parts of the developing world, such as Asia.

Many have characterised investing in Africa's Internet future as 'a leap of faith' and it is a commitment that few organisations share. Most of the continent is being wired by NGO initiatives and a handful of companies who are actively driving its development.

Local 'infopreneurs' have taken up the challenge to ensure that Africans are not left on the roadside of the informa-

tion highway. New portal and access deals are characterised by partnerships and joint-ownership of these modern means of production, and content development is being encouraged and driven from a local level, going against the grain of new media colonialism and globalisation.

Empowerment and entrepreneurship in the information technology industry have given birth to a new diversity of online initiatives ranging from culture and community hubs such as IZANIA.com through to black-owned online trading ventures such as Legae Direct. These are all steps in the right direction.

The continent is fertile, eager and more than ready. However, the most significant challenges lie ahead. Investment, infrastructure and enterprise are just some of the hoops to be negotiated before the medium can fulfil the role of providing a non-racial virtual space for the people of Africa.

■ Tanya Accone is Executive Producer of M-Web. She was previously Internet Editor of the *Sunday Times*.



MIRRIAM MAZUNGULA  
b. 1969

Umthi uphamb' inyanga – The medicine has tricked the medicine man

I have shown Makana as the warrior going into war with all the other warriors that would die because of the British bullets. Makana made a big mistake, but we must forgive him for this and move into a brighter future where we can talk to each other peacefully and not fight each other.



IZANIA.com ... a step in the right direction.

# Not yet uhuru



Ownership changes, yes. But what about capital and content? **Gibson Boloka** investigates media transformation

Media in South Africa has been going through radical changes. I deliberately call these changes, rather than transformation, due to the manner in which the whole process unfolded. These changes have taken place in all media forms from print to electronic, as shown by the take over of the *Sowetan* by a black consortium, New Africa Investment Limited (Nail), launch of the *Sunday World*, the unbundling of a few radio stations by the SABC and the establishment of a free-to-air television station, e tv.

My deliberate use of the word 'change' is prompted by the fact that it was a kind of racial substitution which forms an important part, but only a small one, in the transformation process.

It was presumed that through racial substitution, the media would not only be on par with the changes taking place within the country such as racial equality or representation, but would further change the manner in which the media reflect the new society itself. Through equal representation in ownership, it was often presumed that the dominant voices of apartheid would be diluted and give way to a new voice that is representative and reflective of a new society.

Two factors have meant that this has not been the case. They are the lack of capital shift to accompany ownership transfer, and the failure to re-train journalists to work in a new paradigm.

As much as the ownership changes are taking place and being celebrated in both political and economic circles, capital has remained the same. In response to the absence of capital shift, which prompted Nail's discontinuation of N-shares, Dikgang Moseneke lamented the limited capital located in black hands. However, racial substitutions in ownership are still often mistaken to constitute real transformation of media in South Africa.

Capital impacts on content, as I will later argue. But can ownership without capital bring about changes in terms of content? If the answer is affirmative, then one could come closer to shouting over the rooftops: "Transformation!". If the answer is negative, we should whisper: "Change!".

The latter option is the prevailing situation. Contrary to ordinary change which is exemplified by racial substitution, transformation in South African media should have started with re-training media practitioners and managers. These people, whether as individuals or representative of some institutions, are products of a particular history. The ownership changes do not prepare them for the new challenges.

Thus, many South African journalists and editors, even after these changes, still can't respond to the question of what is newsworthy in the new South Africa. The answer that many of them give is similar to the one that they would have given in the 1980s. Recent exaggerated and one-sided reports about land invasions in Zimbabwe prior to the general elections show that while ownership has shifted, content remains the same. Conflict (especially interpreted in simple racial terms) determines what is news. In other words, just like in the old South Africa.

Ownership in the media remains meaningless if it does not implicate content. Otherwise, all that has taken place in the media is nothing more than the Olympics which come and go. In other words, transformation requires, most importantly, a mental shift in an attempt to prepare individuals for a new era. Without this shift, the legacy of apartheid will dominate and continue to be a benchmark for judging good media in the new South Africa.

What I am calling for in this regard is a flexible Africanisation of media content which has to do with chang-

ing the perception about Africa and its people, and with coverage of stories that are based on moral values and respect. In terms of this, before thinking about individuals, we relate their actions to the larger society of which they are products. This differs completely from westernised media content wherein an individual is a news-maker.

However, the changes in post-apartheid media clearly show that ownership in terms of race does not, on its own, necessarily change content. This is contrary to the previous era of apartheid in which content directly reflected ownership.

In my view, capital determines content more than ownership does. And ownership does not automatically mean capital. So with limited capital in black hands, transformation will continue to mean only the taking over of historically white-owned media firms — at the price of heavy loans and without fundamental change in content.

Transformation should be an integrative and ongoing process which comprises all the changes - i.e. in racial ownership, capital and content.

■ Gibson Boloka teaches Media Economics in the Department of Media Studies at the University of the North



DUMISANI BEYI

"Yiz'uvalo, inqobo yisibindi — fear is nothing, the thing is courage"

In this picture I have shown Makana standing on Robben Island, away from the battle, thinking about what had happened in the battle and to his people. Makanaskop is behind him and he recalls how the warriors were running down the hillside. Makana was a great chief and I still remember him today because he did not give up on his hopes even as a prisoner on Robben Island.

# Journalism or Commerce?



Prejudice and pursuit of profit are compromising media's credibility, argues **Muzi Kuzwayo**

It's as old as history itself. The people that are closest to you are the ones that lead to your downfall. Shaka Zulu was killed by his brothers, Dingane and Mpande. Julius Caesar by Brutus, Abel by Cain, and Jesus was betrayed by Judas.

The same thing is happening to press freedom. It is dying a slow death caused by its sister industry — advertising. Unfortunately, the guards are watching the wrong people — the politicians.

Think about it, even the worst dictators, PW Botha and Vorster, could not gag the black press. The *Sowetan* survived the total onslaught, albeit after changing names. The *Rand Daily Mail* was not banned, neither was *Die Vrye Weekblad* nor the *New Nation*. They were starved of advertising.

We advertising people and media owners are the biggest threat to press freedom, and editors are our willing accomplices.

In the past, advertising was in the furthest sty, together with the sales pitches of used-car salesmen. That all changed when media companies became listed on the stock exchange, and subjected to the whims of money-idolaters. In this temple of greed, editors are judged only by the profits they bring, instead of the impact they make on society. It's a shame that Ken Owen is remembered more for making the *Sunday Times* profitable than exposing the evils of apartheid.

Not only do editors have to deal with a diffuse mass of insatiable shareholders, they have to please advertisers, who bring the money that shareholders want. One advertiser told me that he won't advertise in the *Sowetan* because the latter reports too much gore and abuse. This is regardless of the fact that the *Sowetan* is the biggest national daily, and reaches his target market.

Some have told me that they

will never advertise in any of Mafube's titles because they do not like the views of its publisher, Thami Mazwai. They hope to see his publications die. Isn't that interfering with press freedom?

Many advertisements have lost credibility, as consumers no longer fall for their superlatives and empty promises. Seeing an opportunity to make a quick buck, and please their bosses, editors are now selling that credibility to advertisers. They allow copywriters to write their advertisements to look like editorials, and call that deceit 'advertorials'.

They regurgitate slick press releases from PR companies without asking for any verification of the claims. Some even send their own journalists with the orders to find only praises to sing for their clients. When the journalists arrive, they are showered with promotional items which are written off anyway.

The moral erosion sets in. Soon these journalists expect freebies wherever they go. They learn to love and respect the hand that feeds them, and punish the ones that give them nothing. I'll never forget the two journalists who bragged to me about the freebies they get from various PR companies and advertisers. "This", they told me, "was one of the most rewarding things about their profession".

"How could any self-respecting soul regard a free T-shirt or soccer ticket as a good perk?" I thought.

The worst form of deceit in the press is 'wrap arounds'. These are advertorials that are placed on the first page of the newspaper to make the advertisers look like they are making headline news. That is treacherous. Editors who allow such are so low they make the bottoms of admen look like they are higher than the sun. At least admen put the logo so that everyone can see that they are

paying. They earn headline news by being witty or deliberately controversial.

Perhaps the whole journalism profession crossed the line when Isabel Jones started endorsing products. She changed from being a 'guardian of the consuming society' to a cheerleader of products. She sold her credibility and tossed her objectivity for superficial lines written by copywriters. Will she ever take a case against her own clients? How will she ever deal with competitors of the product she endorses? "Objectively", may be the answer. Would you expect me to believe that?

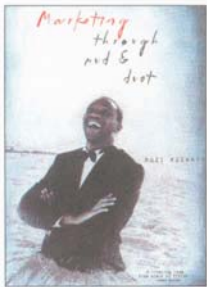
The profit motive is driving newspapers to use all sorts of marketing gimmickry including scratch cards and other forms of coupons. They're reducing the experience of buying a newspaper to that of buying toilet paper. Anyway, when newspapers increase their prizes their profits are reduced even further, and that compounds their problem.

Also, by doing this, editors are helping their readers develop bad habits that will come back to haunt them. They are teaching them to buy on an elusive promise. This is the same promise that killed credibility in advertising. They promised consumers that if they used a certain type of toothpaste their teeth would be whiter. They told us that smoking was good for our image. Now they have to work a lot harder to be believed.

The emerging black consumer market is fertile ground for unscrupulous businesspeople. With a low literacy rate, many people take the written word to be gospel truth. "If it is in the newspaper, it must be true," I've heard many people say. Pensioners have lost their lifetime savings, widows their benefits, and orphans their inheritance. It's not because they are stupid. It's because they are too trusting.

Journalists are our only real line of defence against commercial greed and any other human vice, because our "justice system", as one judge put it, "is like the Sheraton, it is open to everyone". They must break free from the shackles that keep the rest of us lesser mortals in line, and give us a truly free press. Editors must be able to think freely, and unfazed by shareholders. This freedom comes at a price. Sometimes a heavy one! But, as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "freedom is not free". Including, I imagine, press freedom.

Muzi Kuzwayo is head of Kuzwayo Advertising and author of *Marketing through Mud and Dust*, published by David Philip.



**SITHEMBILE MAMANE**

b. 1973

"Yiz'uvalo, inqobo yisibindi — Fear is nothing, the thing is courage"

This work is based on encouragement when there is a difficult task ahead. The warrior has flying objects depicted around him that indicate that there is a likelihood of danger to his venture and that he could lose these goods. The flying objects are the type of things that the warrior would have carried with him into battle. The shield symbolises courage or encouragement. The landscape in the background reminds him about the land that he is fighting for and the place where this battle took place. The masculine quality of the body of the warrior is emphasised to show that he has to take this quality with him to the battle.





Elias T Rusike, Publisher and Chief Executive, *The Financial Gazette*, compares his country's media past and present

# Zimbabwe's Experience

By the time Ian Smith declared UDI from Britain in 1965, the Argus Group of South Africa and its subsidiary in Rhodesia controlled every daily newspaper in the former Federation of the Rhodesias and Nyasaland as well as two Sunday newspapers. Racism and separate development were part and parcel of the editorial policies.

After political independence in April 1980, the new government of Robert Mugabe set up the Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust to take over the 45% South African ownership of the Rhodesia Printing and Publishing Company with financial assistance from the Government of Nigeria.

Zimbabwe Newspapers now owns 51% of the newspaper group. Today, Zimbabwe Newspapers publishes two dailies — *The Herald* in Harare and *The Chronicle* in Bulawayo; weeklies — the *Sunday Mail* in Harare, *Sunday News* in Bulawayo, the *Manica Post* in Mutare and *Kwayedza* — a Shona newspaper in Harare.

What is ironic is that these newspapers, which used to be perceived as racist, i.e. anti-black, are now rabidly anti-white, thus reflecting the present government's policies — especially in the recent farm invasions by war veterans, ZANU PF supporters and unemployed youths. The reporting in government-owned papers has become so anti-white and one-sided, that many whites now read the independent newspapers. These privately-owned newspapers are the *Daily News* — owned by the Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe, the *Financial Gazette* by Modus Publications and the *Independent* and the *Sunday Standard* — owned by Clive Wilson, Clive Murphy and Trevor Ncube, former editor of the *Financial Gazette*.

The success of the *Daily News* and other independent newspapers in Zimbabwe is directly attributed to the decline and unpopularity of government newspapers. Zimbabweans were being fed a daily news diet of lies and propaganda by government newspapers and the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation. The fact that both Zimpapers and ZBC are funded by public money did not matter much. The government uses the two publicly-owned companies to promote the President and ZANU PF to the exclusion of the opposition parties. The appointment of Bornwell Chakaodza as editor-in-chief of the *Herald* was the worst decision ever made. Here was a man who was Director of Information, the government's chief spokesman and chief government censor, who was made editor-in-chief of a national, not even government or party, newspaper. The result has been disastrous.

The circulation of government newspapers has declined and the independent newspapers have increased theirs. For instance, the *Herald* print run is now about 80 000 copies with over 25% returns, i.e. unsold copies. On the other hand, the *Daily News* has increased its circulation from about 40 000 in December 1999 to more than 100 000 at the end of May 2000.

The independent newspapers are perceived as fair, objective and balanced, accommodating the views of

government and the ruling party. Their non-racial approach to reporting has earned the independent media support in both readership and advertising from both black and white readers.

There is certainly a convergence of views between white and black editors in the way they look at and analyse problems. For instance, the invasion of 1500 white-owned farms was seen as an electioneering exercise by Robert Mugabe in an attempt to regain lost support from blacks. Both the *Herald* and President Mugabe have accused Zimbabwean whites of being racist.

For blacks, the need for land redistribution is legitimate, but the methods used are unacceptable. Why did Mugabe wait for 20 years before taking concrete measures to redistribute the land? He deliberately waited for Election 2000 in order to use the land issue against whites and the British, locating it at the Centre of his Party Manifesto, i.e. the Economy is Land and Land is the Economy.

It is very difficult for media personnel, whether black or white, to operate under the present political and racial environment.

“There’s a convergence of views of black and white editors”



**KAGISO MEDIA**

As a core value, black empowerment is embedded in the very heart of Kagiso Media. It shapes and gives focus to our business practices where commitment to shareholder value is as important as the implementation of integrated policies that seek actively to empower the historically disadvantaged.





Exhibitions



Publishing



Broadcasting

As an exemplar of black empowered business, Kagiso Media was recently named “Top Black Empowerment Performer on the JSE for 2000” by Business Map.

Contact Details and Registered Office: Kagiso Media, 2nd Floor Kagiso House, Mellis Office Park, 1-3 Mellis Road, Rivonia, Sandton, Johannesburg. Tel: +27 11 803 2952, Fax: +27 11 803 4860

14874|Citigate

BDFM

## STANDING OUT IN OUR FIELD

BDFM has trained 36 journalists over the past three years. As publishers of South Africa's leading financial publications, our highly successful six-month course has created an exciting opportunity for graduates to launch themselves into a career in the specialised field of economic journalism.

The training is intensive. But it offers a unique opportunity for graduates to enter the world of economic journalism at an advanced level.

**BUSINESSDAY**

**Financial  
Mail**

# Of audiences & adspend



Mokone Molete says it's all change for readership, but no change for advertisers.

**S**owetan is the biggest selling black daily newspaper in the country. As such, it is faced with the challenge of articulating black anxieties and aspirations. In a changing society such as ours, the question becomes:

which blacks are we talking about?

Is it the black people that traditionally looked at *Sowetan* to articulate their anger against apartheid—and there are still many in this dire position—or is it the black elite who grew up on a diet of this newspaper?

While we accuse the advertising industry of treating black people as an amorphous entity, we too are grappling with this as we battle to fill our pages. This confuses our role: do we inform or agitate? Which black society, so to speak, do we serve? Do we pitch our writing at an 'elite' or 'common' level?

*Sowetan*, if one were to believe marketing gurus,

should be enjoying a huge chunk of the marketing cake. The reality is another story. One of the major reasons given has been that advertising agents—and their clients—are white and therefore reluctant to advertise in black publications. For *Sowetan* this translates into very limited editorial space. Needless to say, compared to white publications we are seen to be offering, if not a low quality product, then very little value for money.

### PRESS POWER

The challenge facing *Sowetan* in relation to government is to be critical while at the same time being sensitive to the challenges facing government. An interesting point about the *Sowetan* is that it is seen as a critical voice in political discourse, yet the voices of authority are those of our white counterparts. Are the reasons racist or are we just not effective?

■ **Mokone Molete** is former managing editor at the *Sowetan*, and now works for Multichoice. He made these remarks on International Media Freedom Day at The Freedom Forum African Center.

# We care



She always wanted to play the violin. Then Renelda Scholz of Atlantis was given a break — by Naspers, sponsor of the Atlantis Resources Centre, which forms part of the Atlantis Adult Training Centre. Renelda still vividly remembers her first introduction to the violin. Her hands shook, but she persevered. worked hard ...and like many others she now dreams of one day performing at the Naspers arts festivals

**Naspers — a media group for the people**

# The Language of Race

**"The suspect is described as a thin, black male, 20 to 30 years old ..."**

This is the sort of description that passes for information in too much of American journalism today, part of a dysfunctional racial discourse that doesn't always mean what it says and seldom says what it means.

Excellent journalism starts with an understanding that language has power. It demands clear writing. It leaves little to chance interpretations.

But the mangled language of race is punctuated with descriptions that underscore ethnicity but describe nothing. It is mired in euphemisms and the tortured, convoluted syntax that betray America's pathological avoidance of straight talk about race relations.

Put it all together and you get stereotypes, dangerous misinformation, half-truths, and daily proof that when it comes to race, journalists are chained to habits that defy the cornerstone principles of solid journalism.

And that's the point. Journalists who can't connect with the myriad moral reasons to reform the way they write and report about race and race relations don't have to look further for their motivation than some of the core values that undergird the profession: Accuracy. Precision. Context. Relevance.

You won't find euphemisms on that list.

Yet, 'urban' (a sociological term), 'inner city' (a geographic term), and 'blue collar' (an economic term), are employed to connote race and ethnicity. 'Minority', a numerical term, is often used when the journalist actually has a specific racial group in mind. 'Poor' is euphemised as 'disadvantaged' and often used as a synonym for people of colour.

How might a story change if the reporter asked the question, "What am I trying to say?" Ask that question about the description at the end of this story about a Californian man accused of posing as a doctor and 'treating' patients in a clinic:

"Police believe Moreno worked at the First Street clinic for at least a year, with his partner Rafael Garay. The clinic primarily served Hispanic families." — April 1998

Why is it important for the public to know that the clinic served Hispanic families?

The thing is, race often has relevance in stories. It's just that the relevance goes unexplored and unexplained. In the case above, perhaps the clinic was serving recent immigrants whose English was poor and whose tenuous status in the community made them

more susceptible to scam artists.

But maybe not. Who knows? The story provided none of the context that solid journalism demands.

What the public is left with is a story that singles out a person's race or ethnicity for no apparent reason, harkening to a day when the reason was racism. That's why the practice of using race to identify people, as journalistically unsound as it often is, generates so much emotional heat.

It's about history. White-run news organizations historically used racial identifiers to distinguish the person from white people. Black people, like American Indians, Asians, and Latinos, were regarded as a "separate society". So it was natural to identify them by race so that white readers would know the story wasn't about white people. The use of race had nothing to do with the details of how a person looked. All that mattered was that they were not white.

Racial identifiers were used selectively to support beliefs in white supremacy. They were used to call attention to the criminal, immoral, or threatening acts of other racial and ethnic groups to demonstrate that the stereotypes about those groups were true.

The most benign effect of that practice was to separate people of colour from the white mainstream. The more malignant, lasting effect — in the media and beyond — has been an unfounded but unshakable connection between people of colour and social pathology. It has contributed to some of America's most destructive acts of prejudice, from white flight in neighbourhoods and schools, to injudicious police stops of men with black, brown, red, and yellow skin.

That is why people continue to anguish over using identifiers. Journalists who understand this historic habit worry about contributing to the stereotypes and prejudices to which the practice plays.

Because this is about hurting people, it is an ethical and moral issue. But the larger point here is that it is imprecise to describe someone as black. Or Latino. Or white. Or Native American. Or Asian.

Racial identifiers do carry information — about geography, about bloodlines, about heritage. But they don't describe much of anything.

What, for example, does a Hispanic man look like? Is his skin dark brown? Reddish brown? Pale?

And what is black? It's the colour of pitch. Yet, the word is used to describe people whose

skin tones can cover just about every racial and ethnic group in the world, including white people. What does the word 'black' add to the mental picture the public draws? How do you draw the lips? The eyes? The nose? What sort of hair does a black person have? What colour skin does a black person have? The combinations are infinite.

All racial and ethnic groups do share some common physical characteristics. Still, we don't see the phrase "Irish-looking man" in the newspaper, though red hair and pale skin are common Irish characteristics. Would a picture come to mind if a TV anchor said, "The suspect appeared to be Italian"? Couldn't many of us conjure an image if the police said they were looking for a middle-aged man described as "Jewish-looking"?

There are good reasons those descriptions never see the light of day. They generalise. They stereotype. And they require that everyone who hears the description has the same idea of what those folks look like. All Irish-Americans don't look alike. Why, then, accept a description that says a suspect was African-American?

Here is an alternative: if journalists told their audience that the suspect was about 5-foot-8, about 165 pounds, with caramel-brown skin, wavy, dark brown hair about an inch long, thick eyebrows, a narrow nose, thick lips, and a light moustache, people could pick me from a line-up of men whose skin and face were different from mine. Nobody would need to know my race. It wouldn't matter if I was descended from Africans, spoke Spanish, worshipped Allah, lived on a reservation, or called a Hawaiian woman mother.

Unless the story is specifically about race, race has little descriptive value in a story. A suspect description is about how a person looks. Journalists need to challenge the presence of racial identifiers and their euphemistic disciples in every story.

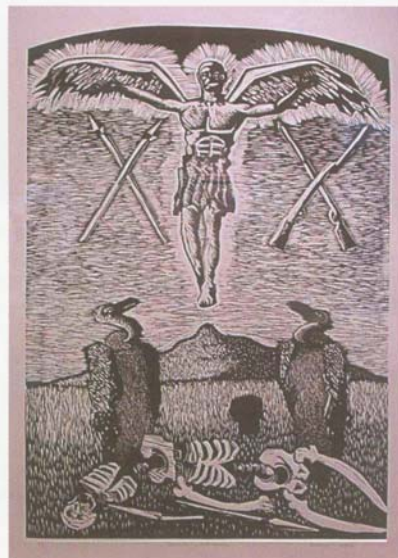
Say what you mean and say it clearly.

This is an abridged version of Woods' article at <http://poynter.org/research/div/diversity.htm>

Get right to the racial point ... if there actually is one. Keith Woods' advice to US media resonates in South Africa



Keith Woods, Poynter Institute



NYANISO LINDI b. 1973

**Ukuza kuku Nxele — Something that will never happen**

The proverb I have chosen to use refers to the understanding amongst the Xhosa people that sometimes some things will never come true — like both Nxele's promises that the bullets would turn to water and that he would return. I have shown Nxele, almost like a Christ figure, or an angel, or something that is not really human, coming back to rectify the death and destruction that resulted from the battle. But, like the proverb, he never could return and so we must make things better and rectify them through our own means today.

# Name of the Game

In the cultural fruit salad of the USA, racial identity is a metamorphosing ingredient, writes Stephen Magagnini



Stephen Magagnini

Several years ago, the American Anthropological Association declared race a false construct created by Europeans to separate and subjugate people different from themselves.

But race remains a political reality. As one successful African American lobbyist in Sacramento put it, 'every time I get turned down for a job, I never know if my race had something to do with it.'

When we write about race or ethnicity, the first step is to figure out how people identify themselves. The fastest way to kill an interview is to insult someone by misidentifying them.

At a charity basketball game in Sacramento some years ago, I approached Manute Bol, the 7-foot-6 inch centre then with the Washington Bullets, and immediately stuffed my foot in my mouth: "You're from Nigeria, right?"

Hakeem Olajuwon is from Nigeria; Bol is from the Sudan. Bol glared at me and said, "I see you have not done your homework. This conversation is at an end."

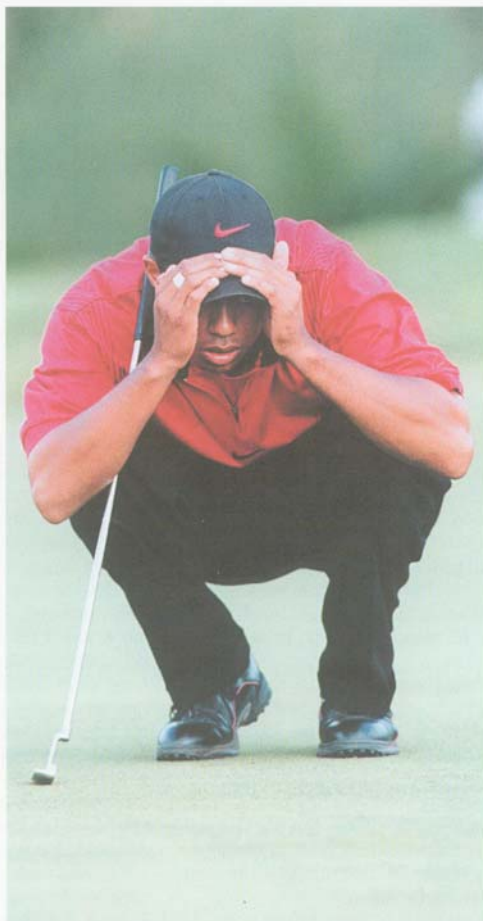
Go around your newsroom and ask people to describe themselves, and you'll probably discover that people of the same 'race' often don't identify themselves the same way. Most American newspapers prefer the term 'African American' over 'black', but there are many immigrants from Haiti, Jamaica and other Caribbean nations who don't want to be called African American. A woman in my office identifies herself as Afro-Jamaican, while other Caribbean immigrants call themselves Jamaican American, Haitian American, etc.

And some Americans prefer the term 'black' over African American because they identify with black culture — music, dress, dance, expressions, inflections — not African culture. Meanwhile, some African immigrants of European or East Indian descent find the term 'African American' misleading, at best. White Americans are often puzzled by African Americans who use the 'n' word amongst themselves but are deeply offended by anyone else who uses it. But while some black rappers, comedians and filmmakers use the 'n' word, many — if not most — African Americans think the 'n' word should never be used under any circumstances.

For a long time, the politically correct term for American Indians was 'Native American,' since the term 'Indian' was 'a mistake made by some white dude who thought he was in India', as one Indian friend put it. But in 1997, while working on a series on California Indians entitled 'Lost Tribes', I met an anthropologist from a southern California nation who said she was neither Native nor American. She, like many indigenous people, chooses to be identified by her nation (i.e., Lakota Sioux, Apache, Pomo, Yaqui).

Even the term 'tribe' is offensive to some American Indians, who say it's a white man's term that devalues their sovereign nations. When identifying Indians by their individual nations is too confusing, the term 'American Indians' is generally acceptable, although I personally like 'First Nations people,' the term used to describe Canadian Indians.

For generations, people of Asian descent were called 'Orientals', a term many find insulting because they say it reeks of colonialism and the stereotypical mysterious,



Tiger Woods ... called himself Cablinasian; a California kid says she's Blackanese

exotic image of Asians. Oriental means 'East of' or 'from the East', which is often a matter of perspective: "If you were in Beijing then a person in London would be 'Oriental,'" says Dr. Christina Fa, an Asian American activist in California. Fa is hyper-sensitive about hyphens — she doesn't like to see the term Asian-

American because she says it implies that Asians are separate from Americans, or must choose between being Asian and American. 'It devalues Asian American culture as a whole', she says.

Fa's parents come from mainland China, but she prefers to identify herself as Asian American because she likes to promote the concept of a pan-Asian/Pacific Islander American. Other Asian Americans — while acknowledging vast differences between Pakistanis, Japanese, Tongans and Hmong, for example — say it's in their political interest to be identified as a whole. Still others, however, choose to identify themselves by their roots — i.e., Korean American — rather than their 'race' (Asian American).

People of Hispanic descent are among the most confusing to identify. While 'Latino' is generally accepted in the western USA, Cuban Americans in Miami generally identify themselves as Hispanic, not Latino, since they don't originate from Central or South America. But in the West, some Latinos reject the term Hispanic because they'd rather not be identified with Spain, which they see as the land of the oppressors.

In the 1960s, many Brown Power activists of Mexican descent called themselves 'Chicanos' — a term some of their parents couldn't stand. In general, people are comfortable being described by their country of origin: Mexican American, Cuban American, etc.

Then, there are white people who, justifiably, don't want to be called 'white' if nobody else is being identified by colour. Caucasian, however, is an old anthropological term that was used along with Negroid and Mongoloid to describe racial characteristics. My guess is that 'European American' will soon supplant 'white' as the identifier of choice.

Finally, the United States has a large and growing number of people of mixed race. Some young people, including at the University of California at Berkeley, call themselves 'Hapas', from the Hawaiian word 'hapa' meaning half. But many Americans of mixed race reject the term because it conjures images of half-breeds.

Others, such as Sacramento attorney Toso Himel — who is of European, Cuban and Japanese descent — are tired of being asked, "What are you?" then, "What are you, really?"

"These questions constantly make you ask yourself, 'What am I, what am I really?'" How people identify themselves by race and ethnicity is a matter of individual taste. Several years ago Tiger Woods began calling himself 'Cablinasian', reflecting his Caucasian, black, Indian and Asian roots.

"What's your ethnic mix?" is a non-offensive way to ask someone about their background. I often ask people, "how do you identify yourself?" or "how would you like to be identified in the newspaper?"

I recently interviewed Tressa Koyomi Murai, 30, a mixed-race Californian who used to be ashamed of her Japanese roots. She said she'd have her (English-Irish American) father — rather than her mother — drop her off at school because she wanted people think she was white.

She hated being asked what she was. But now, thanks to her four-year-old daughter Geneva, Murai always asks others their ethnic mix, and loves being asked. Geneva, who's of African American, French, Japanese and English-Irish descent, is proud of her multiple roots, Murai says. "She says, 'I'm Blackanese'. She's really interested in culture and not embarrassed about her identity. She wants to learn to hula, she loves sushi — she wants to tell who she is."

Stephen Magagnini is senior writer for Ethnic Affairs and Race Relations on the Sacramento Bee

# Breaking out the box

'Where to from here?' is the question we need to address. The short answer is: 'back to basics'. **Lynette Steenveld** starts with the fundamental role of the media in democracy

**D**emocracy means 'rule by the people'. The independence of the media to this process is crucial, because in this political arrangement (system) the media constitute an important institution for enabling the political process.

A significant feature of a democracy is an inclusive, participatory polity. Thus the important expectation citizens have of the media in a democracy: that journalism should be representative of all the people.

Most of the problems the media face, have to do with how they are to represent 'all' the people. Here the key word is 'diversity'. There are at least four areas in which diversity needs to be addressed: (1) structures of ownership and operation; (2) employment equity; (3) representation (views); (4) training.

## 1. Ownership

Arguably, the government's role is to provide an environment (through regulation) in which there are diverse media structures (privately owned newspapers, community newspapers, community radio, public service broadcasting etc.) to ensure the diversity necessary for freedom of expression for all points of view, and for local culture to flourish.

## 2. Employment Equity

Another area where government plays a part is with regard to employment equity. This is positive for newsrooms:

- A diverse editorial staff has the potential to attract a broader range of readers, listeners, and viewers. Target groups respond to familiarity, as a consequence, circulations and ratings could increase;

- Journalism strives for objectivity. Diverse representations are a more accurate representation of reality, and these are better achieved through the use of reporters from diverse backgrounds like class, colour and gender. (The problem here is not to assume that a woman reporter can represent the views of all women, nor a black reporter all black people — there is a diversity of views within these groups);

- A diverse workforce and an explicit recruitment policy will show the social commitment of the media and will contribute to a progressive and positive image of the media.

## 3. "Representations" — or, "the stories we tell"

While it is legitimate for the government to regulate the environment in which journalists operate, journalists, on the other hand, are responsible for media content. Only hate-speech (in which there is incitement to cause imminent harm) is proscribed by legislation. Other content is the responsibility of the media.

**Areas of responsibility in this "representation" which need attention are:**

- News values — or, simply, what makes news. The big question here is whether the traditional list of news values is adequate for reflecting our South African reality. Are various groups and issues adequately reflected by these values, or do they privilege some groups and issues, and marginalise others? In so doing, does this contribute to the media's role of enabling democratic practices?

- If news values decide the "what",

the framing of news deals with the "how". For example, a newsworthy story about foreign residents can be framed in many ways — as "aliens" taking jobs away from jobless South Africans, as "immigrants" adding to the richness of South African cultural and economic life, etc. Do the

news frames used adequately reflect our diverse society — or does the media favour particular perspectives, and marginalise others? Again, how does actual media practice square with its rationale vis-à-vis a democracy?

- Who are the sources of news? What is their stake in the story? Does a list of sources for particular story genres/beats adequately reflect our societal diversity with respect to demographics as well as political perspective? Or has the list become routinised for efficiency, and in so doing abandoned the civic role that journalism is supposed to play?

- Story assignment. Are stories assigned in such a way that they enable a shared sense of citizenship for both journalists, and their read-

## VUKILE TYESE

b. 1959

### Settlement after the battle

Shows the meeting of black and white peoples in search for resolution. The aim is to listen and see each others' expressions of loss and hurt. Through this they can negotiate for a peace settlement and a greater understanding for each other.



ers/listeners/viewers? There is the tendency to assign black journalists to 'black' stories or 'township' issues. While this may be efficient because it is based on the presumption that the black journalist knows the issues better, because he/she has a better knowledge of this environment/culture, this could be an erroneous assumption because of the class background of the journalist. It is based on the racist assumption that all black/white people 'naturally' know everything/anything to do with black/white people better than anyone else. This may be the case, but it may not.

Furthermore, this leads to the scenario in which only 'white' reporters cover 'white' news, 'black' reporters cover black news, etc — which limits the professional skills of reporters to cover any area. We narrow our journalists' competence and we perpetuate laagers for white and black citizens amongst our audiences.

## 4. Training

Given the current demographics of newsrooms there is the need to train more black and women journalists — both in the area of general reporting, and in specialist areas such as business, finance, labour, tourism, legislation.

There also seems to be the need for a better demographic spread throughout the various levels in the newsroom — and especially as sub-editors. A key area that needs to be addressed is the ability of all journalists to be multi-lingual so that they can be assigned to a variety of communities, and work in any medium ('black', 'white English', 'white Afrikaans').

Training needs to be recognised as costly, and as time consuming. Good training cannot be expected through one-off crash courses. Both employers and trainee journalists, or journalists undergoing mid-career training, need to see this as a long-term investment process in which there is no 'quick fix'. Mentoring of junior reporters needs to be standard practice — with big enough staffs to cope with this.

Transformation is often treated as an end itself. It is, however, integral to South Africa's media making a successful contribution to our young democracy.

This is an edited version of a talk by Steenveld, senior lecturer at Rhodes University, at commemoration of International Media Freedom Day, May, 2000, The Freedom Forum African Center, Johannesburg.



Lynette Steenveld, senior lecturer, Rhodes University

# Diversity = Accuracy

American journalists are concerned to get comprehensive community coverage.

In May 1999, more than 2000 journalists across the USA turned their spotlight on themselves. Their mission? To see how accurately their coverage reflected the diversity of their communities.

Organised by the Associated Press Managing Editors (APME) and the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), the activities that unfolded had two themes:

- to address diversity in reporting and editing as an element of accuracy — i.e. as integral to core journalistic values;

- to broaden the definition of diversity beyond race and ethnicity — to include class, geography, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, political ideology, and any other issues that defined people in their communities.

More than 150 newsrooms and 43 Associated Press bureaus agreed to take part, in response to a letter reading:

*"While America's editors say they value diversity in their newsrooms and in their coverage, change has been incremental. We're taking the unprecedented step of asking*



every American newsroom to take 'a national time-out' during the week of May 17 to discuss diversity in coverage as a core journalism issue based on the following premise:

*"We want to accurately reflect life in our communities. If our newspapers are not inclusive enough to regularly portray the diversity of those communities, then we are presenting a fundamentally inaccurate report. That lack of accuracy undermines our journalistic credibility.*

*"We're asking you to sponsor staff meetings, brown bag lunches, pizza parties, whatever works for you. The purpose is to debate the premise we've presented and to see what changes — if any — you might want to make to achieve a higher degree of accuracy and authenticity in your daily report."*

Sixty newsrooms did audits of their coverage of race, gender, geography, class and age. An overwhelming majority reported they were dissatisfied with the results and said they needed to work harder to reach more deeply and broadly into their communities for sources and story ideas.

Among the comments from participants:

*"We found that our photo report reflected the diversity of the area (actually we seemed to be doing better than we had*

*suspectd). However, the survey was valuable because it pinpointed a couple of specific areas — hiring and promotions column in business, and weddings and anniversaries in features — where we needed to make more effort to seek and included photos of minorities." — Tom Eblen, managing editor, Lexington Herald-Leader.*

*"Our most common problem is going back to the same sources too often. Reporters get in a rut, thinking that one person represents a group." — Melinda Meers, managing editor, Florida Today.*

Among the ideas arising during the week were the following:

- The Record Searchlight has a programme called "Community Connection", where editors and reporters have to speak with a group that is dissimilar to their own lifestyle or demographic. The goal is to return with five suggestions for how they can better cover or reach that segment of the community.
- The Wausau Daily Herald has a newsroom 'diversity guru' who reads the paper every day and marks areas where the paper has done a good job of diversifying its coverage.
- In addition to stressing diversity in staff meetings, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram has added a 'Diversity Checklist' to its daily newsbudget, and includes a 'Think Diversity' note on all photo assignments.
- The Sun Herald (Miss) trains its reporters to seek out the voices in the middle of an issue, rather than simply stop with the extremes.

The "Time-Out for Diversity and Accuracy" was partnered by The Freedom Forum and the Maynard Institute. Full report available from the APME.



Real independence since 1846

THE NATAL  
Witness



Kanthan Pillay,  
Head of  
Corporate  
Affairs, e tv

# Racism ... or inept reporting?

Never attribute to malice what is best explained by incompetence, counsels Kanthan Pillay

When Cape High Court Judge John Foxcroft last October imposed a sentence of seven years imprisonment on a man found guilty of raping his 14-year-old daughter, most of us went ballistic. When we heard reports that the learned judge had suggested that the crime was of lesser importance because it had been perpetrated within the family, we blew our collective stacks. If there was one prejudice this confirmed in our minds, it was yet another illustration of the insensitivity of a white man to the plight of victims of power — especially when the victims happen to be black and female.

And amidst the storm came a calm voice of reason from Kevin Rorke of Mowbray in Cape Town who wrote in to my then newspaper, the *Cape Times*: "I find it rather remarkable that people can see fit to pass comment on a High Court judgment on the strength of a newspaper report... Have any of these arm-chair lawyers actually read the judgment or attended the case? I wonder. With the exception of one or two reporters, I suspect not..."

Rorke touched another nerve. If there is a crime that I would hope never to be accused of, it's that of poor journalism. So I went in search of Foxcroft's judgment and spent several hours perusing it with a fine tooth comb. And I was forced to admit that Rorke was right. For example, the *Cape Times*, reported as follows: "The judge also came under fire for his 'insensitive' remarks when he said the interests of the community played a much lesser role in determining the 54-year-old

Elsie's River man's seven-year sentence as the victim was his daughter."

I could find no place where Foxcroft said anything of the sort (and yes, as Managing Editor at the time, I share culpability for the misreporting). What he did say was: "I would also like to mention a case heard in this court where Mr Justice van Reenen gave judgement on sentencing with which I agreed. In the case, a father had raped his two young daughters over a period of seven years. That case was a much more serious rape case than the present sentencing with which I am dealing. ... In that case this court said the father's sexual deviancy was limited to his own family and there was no suggestion that the man's behaviour would surface outside the family unit. ... Because all the accused's daughters have left their parents' home the likelihood that these crimes will be repeated is almost zero. Taking this into account there seems to be no reason for the public to be protected from the accused or that a sentence be imposed which will act as a deterrent so that the accused does not commit a similar offence."

The Foxcroft example is not too dissimilar to another widely misreported story which confronted me in the following month when I left the *Cape Times* and joined e tv. On November 11, 1999, a report was published in *The Star* headlined "IBA told e.tv loses R20m every month" subheaded "Director of creditor company says Midi Television is losing money". Through the wizardry of syndication, the same report also appeared in the *Pretoria News*, the *Cape Times*, and the *Daily News*. "Midi Television, owner of e.tv, is losing about R20-million a month, and will need R300 million before it could break even in September 2001," the report said.

The facts were that Midi TV's business plan as approved by the IBA at the time of granting of our licence in March 1998 called for a capital investment of R334-million over the period October 1998-October 1999, which translates to "losses" during that period of R27 million per month. The report created the impression that the company was performing poorly when the cor-

rect deduction would be that we were in fact bettering our cash flow to the tune of some R7-million per month. Instead of praising the company management for excellent results, the writer painted a picture of yet another black-run company rapidly sinking under a torrent of financial mismanagement.

"If there is a crime that I would hope never to be accused of, it's that of poor journalism"

Conventional wisdom (for example, as presented to the Human Rights Commission's Inquiry into Racism in the Media) would have us assume that the report was influenced by racism (notwithstanding the fact that the writer was black). The argument is compelling. After all, we

are products of a society which thrived on promoting and reinforcing racial stereotypes. But compare the misreporting of the e tv story with that of the Foxcroft judgement, and another simpler explanation emerges: Never attribute to malice what may best be explained by incompetence. Bad journalism is often mistaken for racism.

Adherence to universally-acknowledged basic principles of journalism provides a good measure of fairness to the coverage of people and events. If you publish a fair report, it is difficult to see how that report can also contain elements of racism.

In the case of the Foxcroft story, it was the simple requirement of reading the judgement. With the e tv story, it was a question of reading the business plan submitted 18 months before and on file as a matter of public record with the IBA.

Yes, racial stereotyping exists. Yes, the attitudes of both black and white journalists do not always contribute to racial harmony. Yes, the media often — and without malicious intent — demonstrate racism in the manner in which whites or blacks are portrayed. But bad journalism frequently underpins these.

The way forward is to be found by insisting on excellence in journalism and in monitoring and reporting on instances or patterns of racism. Excellence in journalism is about entry-level training which incorporates essentials of economics and statistics. Excellence in journalism is about holding off on grabbing that sound-bite until you've read through to the very last word.

## CAROL STARKE b. 1971

### Lands Identity

In the battle of Grahamstown, identity and survival became inseparable from the land. Land was increasingly fragmented as a result of the conflicts between the people moving into the area and those who had already been living there.



# Tools to transform



The HRC inquiry prompted the *Sunday Times* to take a soul-searching look at how it handled the news in a changing South Africa. The paper's **Phylicia Oppelt** reports:

**I**n March this year, as the Human Rights Commission's inquiry into racism in the media gained momentum, we at the *Sunday Times* began exploring where we stood in relation to both the hearings and racism.

It would have been short-sighted and irresponsible to retire to a defensive position, declaring the Commission useless. And it would have been equally foolhardy to exempt ourselves — as one of South Africa's biggest and most influential media institutions — from introspection.

Our newsrooms in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Port Elizabeth are populated by journalists from diverse backgrounds and when we sit behind our computers to write or edit stories, our concerns, personal prejudices and backgrounds accompany us.

It was early in March, at one of our Tuesday morning general news conferences that *Sunday Times* editor Mike

Robertson suggested the idea that a committee — comprising a representative group of staff members — explore the possibility of establishing a race charter for the newspaper.

Through volunteering, we formed a committee, comprising Mzilikazi wa Afrika, Herbert Mabuza, Andrew Donaldson, Andrew Trench, Thabo Kobokoane and myself. When we met for the first time, we explored the objectives of a race charter; examining how to maintain our independence as a newspaper and as journalists while carrying an awareness of potential sensitivity surrounding race and racism.

Journalists were united in their view that while we should not shy away from addressing racism, we should not place ourselves in a position of political correctness.

We assigned ourselves tasks that included examining other newspapers' codes of conduct — particularly the US ones since they have a longer tradition of civil rights — as well as looking at the content of the *Sunday Times* and drawing up a list of questions for reporters along the lines of an 'accuracy checklist' that the paper had introduced some time ago. We also used the Ombudsman's Code of Conduct to which the *Sunday Times* subscribes.

We agreed that most of the issues to be covered in the race charter were likely to be seen as self-evident, since

reporters — using their discretion and operating as responsible professionals — would not consciously make themselves guilty of perpetuating racist, religious and cultural stereotypes.

Once we had collected the information, and drawn up the checklist, we circulated the charter among staff members through the *Sunday Times*' staff association, followed by a discussion of the document at our Tuesday news conference.

## SUNDAY TIMES CHARTER

### Code of conduct for Sunday Times staff in dealing with issues of race, religion and cultural difference.

The guidelines that follow address aspects of how we practice journalism — our treatment of the subjects of news stories, our responsibilities to our society and our responsibility for the effect of what we publish. It is important that we acknowledge that, while South Africa enjoys a democratic government, its past still lies with us especially as far as race and racism are concerned. We have to acknowledge too, that South Africa is a multi-racial and multi-cultural society and we have to allow ourselves to portray different practices and beliefs in a fair and honest manner in our reporting, news gathering, editing and presentation of information.

continued >

THE JEFFREY DWOSKI ROOM (COURTESY: SUNDAY TIMES)



(If only life was as honest as the Financial Mail.)



← continued from pg 46

#### SUNDAY TIMES STAFF:

- Will act independently when reporting issues of race, but will take note of sensitivities regarding race, or other issues, in their work;
- Report on these issues where there is a demonstrable public interest; when race is a central issue of the story, racial identifications should be used only when they are important to the readers' understanding of what has happened and why it has happened;
- Will not unjustifiably offend others in reporting on sensitive issues relating to race, religion or cultural difference;
- Will not use language or pictures which are offensive, reinforce stereotypes, fuel prejudice or xenophobia;
- Will actively seek diversity in sources which represent the whole community;
- Will be sensitive to cultural differences and values and will actively seek to ensure that reporting takes these considerations into account;
- In crime reporting, will not make mention of the race or religion of either victim or alleged perpetrator, unless that information is meaningful and in the public interest;
- Will uphold the newspaper's principles of fairness, especially when dealing with issues of race; and
- Will, in dealing with the public, be sensitive to cultural differences and not conduct themselves in any way which might unnecessarily offend.

#### Race Checklist for Reporters and Editors

- What is the public interest in this report?
- Has this report been treated differently because of race? If so, why? Is this justified?
- Is the report — even if factually correct — likely to fuel xenophobia or prejudice? If so, is this justified? Is there any way around this?
- Is the report likely to offend people? If so, why? Is this justified?
- What about the language used in the report? Does it unnecessarily reinforce stereotypes? If so change it!
- What about the voices in the story? Have we actively sought out diverse opinion from ordinary people and experts alike?
- Are there quotes in the story that are racist or possibly offensive? Are these comments balanced by others? Are we justified in using these comments? If so, why?
- Is the report sensitive to possible cultural differences or values? How do we know? Should anything be changed to be sensitive to these differences? If so, why?
- In crime reporting, have we mentioned the race of perpetrators and victims? If so, is it information which is meaningful and in the public interest? Why?
- Has any pressure been brought to bear in reporting this story? Has the issue of race been mentioned? If so, what and why? Do any of these arguments have any bearing on the reporting of the story? Why?
- Have we been fair in the report to all parties?

#### Racial ID guidelines

In the USA, Keith Woods urges journalists to flag every racial reference and ask these questions:

##### Is it relevant?

- Race is relevant when the story is about race. Just because people in conflict are of different races does not mean that race is the source of their dispute. An article about interracial dating, however, is a story about race.
- Have I explained the relevance?

- Journalists too frequently assume that readers will know the significance of race in stories. The result is often radically different interpretations. That is imprecise journalism, and its harm may be magnified by the lens of race.

##### Is it free of codes?

- Be careful not to use welfare, inner-city, underprivileged, blue collar, conservative, suburban, exotic, middle-class, Uptown, South Side, or wealthy as euphemisms for racial groups. By definition, the White House is in the inner-city. Say what you mean.

##### Are racial identifiers used evenly?

- If the race of a person charging discrimination is important, then so is the race of the person being charged.

##### Should I consult someone of another race/ethnicity?

- Consider another question: Do I have expertise on other races/cultures? If not, broaden your perspective by asking someone who knows something more about your subject. Why should we treat reporting on racial issues any differently from reporting on an area of science or religion that we do not know well?

Keith Woods is with the Poynter Institute, Florida.

## Calling South African journalists, media trainers and media scholars:

### COME TO THE COLLOQUIUM

#### TRAINING FOR MEDIA TRANSFORMATION AND DEMOCRACY:

A joint project of SANEF (South African National Editors' Forum), and the Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Rhodes University.

**DATE:** October 18th-20th **VENUE:** Johannesburg

- ▶ This colloquium seeks to explore the problems, issues and potential regarding media training.
- ▶ It draws together key stakeholders who have the power to determine the course that media training will take: media CEOs, media editors, journalists and trainers from various sectors.
- ▶ It attempts to forge smart partnerships between these constituencies.
- ▶ It aims to commit participants to a programme of action that can be implemented.

#### BACKGROUND:

There have been significant changes in media ownership, in the labour market and education/training dispensation, and in attention to racism in the media. All of these have far-reaching implications for South Africa's media, and its role in developing our democracy.

- ▶ Will the changes in ownership and management foster a journalism that can promote participatory democracy and human rights? Will the changes entail greater diversity of media enterprises?
- ▶ What impact is the Employment Equity Act having on staffing of newsrooms, and what are the implications for the output of journalists — the representation of South African reality? Will changing content have an impact on the race and gender of media audiences?
- ▶ The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the Skills Development Act compel the media (amongst other employers) to develop standards and fund skills plans and learning activities. How will standards will be set under SAQA, and how will journalism training be defined, implemented, accredited and funded by the media sector education and training authority (MPPPSETA)?
- ▶ The Human Rights Commission inquiry into racism in the media got the media debating what constituted racism in media content and practice. What implications will the final report of the inquiry have for diversity, freedom of expression, media staffing and media training?

In the context of these new developments, the focus of this colloquium is on the way in which media training can impact on media transformation and democracy.

Training is at the heart of the Employment Equity Act and the Skills Development Act, and is implicit in the media problems attested to at the HRC hearings into the media. This necessarily raises some of the following questions that the colloquium will explore:

- ▶ What kind of training?
- ▶ With what kind of resources?
- ▶ What are our training priorities?
- ▶ Who needs the training?
- ▶ What kind of impact do we hope for?

The key issue is media training as a strategy towards excellent South African journalism that can contribute to building and deepening our nascent democracy. The various stakeholders will be canvassed in advance, in order to develop a draft declaration of intent on the role of training in media transformation and democracy. This declaration will inform deliberations, and provide the foundation for a final statement to be adopted at the end of the colloquium.

#### 7 STEP COLLOQUIUM PROGRAMME:

##### Day one 18th October (evening only):

1. The vision of media companies (panel discussion).

##### Day two 19th October:

2. Speaker on the role of the media in South Africa's 21st century democracy.
3. A critique of South African journalism.
4. The vision of news media editors (panel discussion).
5. Training: Improving the quality of South African journalism (panel discussion).
6. Smart Partnerships: making training effective

##### Day three 20th October:

7. The mechanics of effective training: working groups dealing with Research/journalism; Industry relations; MPPPSETA/funding; Train the trainers; New paradigm; SAQA.

The colloquium will be recorded, and the aim is to produce a booklet which could:

- ▶ act as a record of the views of key media players about their vision for South African journalism;
- ▶ be a sourcebook for implementing training as an ongoing feature of South African newsrooms.

#### COLLOQUIUM OUTCOMES:

1. A vision for South African journalism that the various stakeholders can agree to.
2. Statement of intent from stakeholders — owners, editors, journalists, and trainers — outlining ways of collaborating around training to attain this vision.
3. 'Handbook' for trainers.

For more information, contact Lynette Steenveld: tel. 046 622 7128; fax. 046 622 8447; L.Steenveld@ru.ac.za

# building bridges

South Africa is a society in transition. This phase requires a lot of debate, openness and engagement of the various sectors of society and its people. Newspapers are well placed to provide this kind of platform as they are in a way a meeting place for all shades of opinion and people.

This is a role the *Evening Post* has taken for itself in the Greater Port Elizabeth metropole. As a result, the paper has become synonymous with community activism or, as Americans call it, civic journalism. We seek to become involved in rebuilding our country not only as fence-sitters and observers, but sometimes as organisers and active participants.

Our policy is that a newspaper in a developing African country has to be an instrument for social, economic and political development, and should also be used to strengthen our hard-won democracy through promoting values such as freedom of expression and public participation in the policy-making and governing process, as well as creating a culture of open debate.

Our public outreach programmes also take place against a background in which many people, black people in particular, have never had equal access to the media as a platform for debate, or to have their stories told.

In addition, the people of this country from different racial groups rarely get an opportunity to get together to talk openly about the different problems facing them, be it job losses, crime, affirmative action, race and racism, or violence against women and children in the home and outside.

We have therefore begun programmes that will bring people together and get them to talk in our newspaper, as well as in various venues in Port Elizabeth.

Our opinion pages have become an intellectual battlefield, as writers from all ideological persuasions and social backgrounds engage each other on all kinds of issues, from racism to job creation to HIV/Aids and gender equality.

The guest column 'Brainwaves', which started out as a weekly column, is now published at least three times a week due to the volume of copy received from our columnists, who range from academics to blue-collar workers.

But what has become a clear *Evening Post* trademark are the public debates held every month in the Port Elizabeth City Hall or at the Great Centenary Hall in New Brighton township. The topics have ranged from crime, affirmative action, HIV/Aids, an analysis of the Thabo Mbeki presidency, human rights and the land invasions in Zimbabwe.

A milestone for us was an election preview debate held in May last year to interrogate the different political manifestos. We brought together local and national leaders of six political parties: the ANC, Democratic Party, New National Party, Pan Africanist Congress, Azanian People's Organisation and the United Democratic Movement. More than 2 000 highly charged supporters of the different parties came, clad in different party regalia and singing

songs and chanting slogans. Police and marshalls had their hands full trying to ensure that each party kept to its corner, but the tolerance displayed by the Port Elizabethans on the day, despite rising election fever, was remarkable.

We felt we had achieved our purpose of showcasing our purpose and contributing to entrenching a culture of freedom of association and freedom of expression. The debates take a lot of organising, but the end result is so satisfying that it justifies all the logistical nightmares.

The excitement of the debates is the manner in which they force political leaders and public servants to be accountable to the people they serve. We have had MECs and other public servants being grilled by our readers for lack of delivery. Readers appreciate that we bring people to them that they do not have easy access to.

We also run a bi-monthly Decision Makers Forum where business people, senior public officials and professionals get together for briefings on issues of importance to them. We have a problematic situation where decisions affecting our lives are taken in Pretoria, Johannesburg or Cape Town, without the people of the Eastern Cape having an input or even being informed.

This forum provides the opportunity to bridge the gap between the information haves and information have-nots. We invite national speakers, and in addition to information sharing, the forum provides an excellent opportunity for business people to meet, both from the established and mainly white sector and the emerging, mainly black, sector.

The *Evening Post* also plays a key role in education. We publish a matric supplement twice a week since most schools do not receive textbooks. We have become involved in promoting the culture of learning and teaching in our schools by launching a Winners-in-Education project with other business sponsors. This is a competition aimed at rewarding excellence in disadvantaged schools, and proving that miracles can be achieved in education even with few resources.

Our independent judges visit schools to make assessments. This information is passed on to the Education Department, so that they can be made aware of the difficulties the school has, and then find ways of providing much needed material support.

We strongly feel that our role as a newspaper during this transitional period goes beyond pontification, and that we should contribute to building a new society, one which would – in return – appreciate the role of the media in their lives.

■ Lakela Kaunda is editor of the *Evening Post*.

**VUSI KHUMALO**  
b.1958

## Reconcile

This work is about reconciling our history, in particular the Battle of Grahamstown which took place on April 22 1819. The central figures symbolise the close encounter of the British soldiers and the Xhosa warriors in conflict. The Kowie River runs between both the soldier's and the warrior's legs, while behind the British soldier is the Fort England barracks, the British military base.

Beyond the Xhosa warrior is Makanaskop, where the attack in defence of the invaded land was possibly orchestrated. Above the central figures, hovering over our history with its wings extended, is a dove holding a flower in its beak as a symbol of peace and reconciliation.



Port Elizabeth's *Evening Post* gets cross-community conversation going, reports **Lakela Kaunda.**

# 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." — Sikelelwa 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.

# Thumbsuck

What's race got to do with it? Lots. But also less than we might think. The media's ailment, very often, isn't only the racialism — it's afflicted by another 'ism', viz. the journalism.

Our problem isn't just prejudice. It's that compounded by basic reporting blapses — and nowhere better demonstrated than in the sloppy and racialised coverage of the HRC media hearings.

It's an irony that our coverage of media racism was racial. It's exacerbated irony when we're so inaccurate and unprofessional. Such a double achievement deserves recognition. So, for scoring so highly in screwing up the facts, and for stamping right upon the racial landmines we're supposed to be lifting, here are the **Rat Race Ratings for South African Scribes**:

Top prize for **Slanted Reporting** goes to the *Sowetan* for its claim (only corrected after criticism by the HRC) that white editors staged a walkout during the hearings. (In fact, it was only journalism educator Pedro Diederichs and two visiting Dutch journalism students who made their apologies and had to leave early). The real story — which the *Sowetan*, and everyone else, missed — was worse. The white editors couldn't walk out because they hadn't in fact even pitched up to hear their African counterparts.

SABC takes the **Crass Confusion Award** for its coverage. Radio 2000 stitched its live coverage together with summaries of the proceedings. And proceeded to ascribe various legal objections raised by *Mail & Guardian* advocate, Azar Cachalia, to none other than the HRC's evidence leader — advocate Dabi Khumalo.

While competence was conspicuous by its absence in coverage of the hearings, racial frames of mind were certainly present.

There are too many candidates to issue the **Golden Prize for Racial Labelling**.



*Sunday Times'*  
Mike Robertson

■ The *Sunday Times* rushed to highlight that its editor, Mike Robertson, had grown up coloured and discriminated against, all in response to an offensive parliamentary dubbing Robertson a "black in drag".

■ The *Mail & Guardian's* editor Phil van Niekerk — the so-to-speak white *bête noire* of the HRC — was branded a white by most journos. Had they bothered to check, they'd have discovered that his forebears are coloureds forced to 'pass for white' under apartheid.

■ Rhodes University journalism lecturer Lynette Steenveld, who bristles at any racial assignation, was most unimpressed to be reported at the hearings as a white academic: her family's coloured classification saw them being dispossessed under apartheid.

All this raises the colourful question of who called themselves "black" at the Hearings, and how the Fourth Estate reported on them. The **Citation for True Colours** here must go to *Daily News* editor Kaizer Nyatumba, who let it be known that he spoke not merely as black on the outside, but also on the inside. To which, *Business Day's* Nomavenda Mathiane pointed out that not all blacks are the same — some have uterus! (An aside: If a black journo — of any gender — can be white on the inside, then why wasn't anyone urging white journalists — of any gender — to develop an inner black identity? Or is that we're all just mix-n-matches?)

Gender and race were also reported upon by *City Press*, which scores the **Medal for Provoking Enraged Reader Feedback** — the readers in this case being editors Kaizer Nyatumba and Cyril Madlala. In the form of letters from the Durban duo, *City Press* came in for a thorough bashing. *CP's* features reporter, Andile Noganta, had published a piece quoting a woman journalist who criticised Kaizer and Cyril for failing to give her a job. The article declared: "meantime there's hardly an African in their newsroom, let alone a female." Noganta had failed to get comment from either of the accused — prompting Nyatumba to call him "one-sided" (though whether this has any bearing on Noganta's in-side or out-side remains unclear). Madlala wrote: "I would be happy to furnish your newspaper with the facts should it wish to redeem itself".



*Daily News'*  
Kaizer Nyatumba

The next award for rolling together incompetence and racial nonsensibility goes to *The Star*. Its very own rising star, Robert Brand, wrote that five African editors had blasted the SA National Editors Forum (Sanef) in their testimony — showing that he'd missed completely the carefully-crafted way in which the group precisely avoided doing so. Accordingly, the **Trophy for Not Letting Nuances Negate a Right**

**Racial Rift**, goes to the *Joburg* daily. A special **Racial Insensitivity Rosette** also goes to the same paper, not for impatiently pre-publishing the submission by its editor, Peter Sullivan, but for using an entire page to do so — and for running the text around a huge photo of yet another white man haranguing the hearings (Rhodes' Guy Berger).

Prizes for **Press Paranoia** go to most of the media for panicking at the Inquiry and portraying Barney Pityana as the reincarnation of Joe McCarthy. Prizes for **Press Preciousness** need to be issued to *Business Day* editor Jim Jones and *Financial Mail's* Peter Bruce for refusing to take the oath in their testimony. Peter, however, receives a commendation for explaining his part in that grand conspiracy of white editors who are able to sabotage the Minister of Finance internationally. He wrote: "I have always been aware of these strange powers, but used to think it was because I was clever, and not merely white."



*Business Day's*  
Jim Jones



*Financial Mail's*  
Peter Bruce

The **Racial Rip van Winkle Decoration** nearly went to Nyatumba's *Daily News*, which a bare six weeks after the hearings, ran a front page Zimbabwe story with four; (subs: yes four) credits in the byline (including three newsagencies). It still neglected to give the names of two black victims alongside the identified white farmer.

However, the paper that takes home the Racial Rip Reward is the *Eastern Province Herald*. Months after the hearings, the paper published a letter expressing a reader's disappointment that a beauty competition run by the EPH had featured only white women and white judges. The appended comment by editor Ric Wilson was effectively: sorry pal, Next Year we'll ensure that the event is more representative! In other words, let's roll over and snooze a little longer (it's only seven years since the new SA was supposed to have left white-centrism in the old country.)

Not to be ignored is researcher Claudia Braude, the native who caused all the trouble. It turns out that she's not only a media monitor and meddler, but also an actual media maker. The **Stork, Crow and Dodo Award** goes to the website she built to promote her research into media racism. If you clicked on her button marked "links", you got to...exactly no-where.

One award that goes to almost every hack is the **Narcissism@MediaCentrism.Com** email address. It's for navel-gazing, uninspired, self-absorbed coverage of the hearings. Did any journo ask any of the beleaguered receivers of our messages what they thought about racism and the media? Ag, who cares about audiences anyway?

The malady of South African journalism isn't only racial. It's racial plus.



Claudia Braude

Mail&Guardian

July 31 2000

BARNEY  
PITYANA  
TO EDIT  
MAIL &  
GUARDIAN

NAME: BARNEY PITYANA  
ADDRESS: 1000 BROADWAY  
CITY: NEW YORK  
STATE: NY  
COUNTRY: USA  
PHONE: 212 512 2000  
FAX: 212 512 2000  
EMAIL: bpityana@nyu.edu

Commemorating its 15th anniversary in July, the *M&G* finally tossed in the towel. Guest speaker at the occasion, Dr P, now keeps a copy of this poster on his door

## NOW ... AND THEN

Map your memory: draw a link from each item in the left-hand column to the related item in the right-hand column

HRC 2000	TRC 1997
Media violation of right to dignity	Research role of Freedom of Expression Institute blasted by Thami Mazwai
Chaired by churchman Pityana	Racial reconciliation raised
Emphasis on what the media <i>should</i> do	SABC the scoundrels of apartheid
Afrikaans press participates	Indignant white liberal journalists under fire
Subpoenas issued to make media attend (then withdrawn)	Subpoena for PW Botha, not the press
Indignant white liberal journalists under fire	Afrikaans press boycotts, 114 individual journalists do a personal statement
SABC heroes of transformation	Emphasis on what the media <i>did</i> do
Racial rupture results	Chaired by churchman Tutu
Research role of Claudia Braude and MMP blasted by many media	Media contribution to climate of gross human rights violation