

RHODES 24 JOURNALISM

Review





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Planting the Seeds of Memory



**Sonja Boezak and
Sarita Ranchod**

Despite the relative arbitrariness of 10 years as marker, it provides us with an opportunity to stand still and critically reflect on the road travelled thus far; in terms of what 'freedom' has come to mean and how South African media expresses and reflects freedoms.

Ten years into democracy, we now have the freedom to publicly speak to each other in and through media – and a conversation (albeit mediated) has begun.

But now that we are no longer embroiled in struggling for political freedom, there are new and different

issues, and new, other limitations. The political meaning of freedom seems to have been replaced or superseded by its economic meaning: the freedom to shop, the freedom to consume.

The voices in this Review are voices rising out of and above this excess, debris, the bling-bling obsession with more, the corporate/media co-option/complicity of remaking/re-imaging freedom as the freedom to have, the freedom to buy, creating the 'consensus' that this is what freedom, and indeed democracy means.

It is this new (other) meaning of freedom that enables the erasure of memory. In the aspirational race for more it is easy to forget where we come from; forget about the land that is now available to the highest bidder; forget about the rapes of our grandmothers; forget about peers killed by police bullets... and no, one probably should not dwell on these things... all in the past...

But here are voices speaking about those horror memories of our not-too-distant past(s), voices calling up images of pain and physical violation, of psychological and psychic pain, suffered as children, as youth, as people in this country, on this continent. Here are voices wanting to create the whole by looking at ourselves completely – where we have come from, where we are now.

From these voices come also the reminder that writing and remembering truthfully are painful, difficult things to do. And often there are images and realities

that cannot and will not have themselves be recalled because those realities are still too close for us not to be pained by them; wounds still too raw to be looked at. But sometimes remembering depends on the memory of one other to awaken our collective memory, and to make it possible for us to see and understand ourselves more completely.

This Review reflects the trees that have been and the seeds that are being planted through starting these conversations about memory, meaning and media. The handpicked contributors to this edition have provided a snapshot of media and society in the new 'free' South Africa. They have presented us with the picture, while also holding the mirror up to themselves: this is South Africa, 2004.

Contributors' thoughts, images and words have provided a collective memory of this moment, 10 years into freedom. While from different locations and contexts, through sharing their words and images contributors are in conversation with each other as South Africans and Africans who engage with and in reflections of who we are in and through media.

We are thankful for making the acquaintance of these minds.

Reviewing Review



Anthea Garman

In this 10th year of freedom of media in South Africa, the *Rhodes Journalism Review* has entered its 14th year as chronicler of media in South Africa. RJR was started in the year that actually unrolled the changes we now live with – 1990 – and attempted to document the complex journey out of apartheid. In the last 10 years *Review* has been charting the even more complex journey into freedom.

When I inherited *Review* in 1997 its writers and contributors very much reflected the times; newspapers were dominant as the central medium for news; editors and reporters – mostly male and white – had the most to say about the preoccupations of the times.

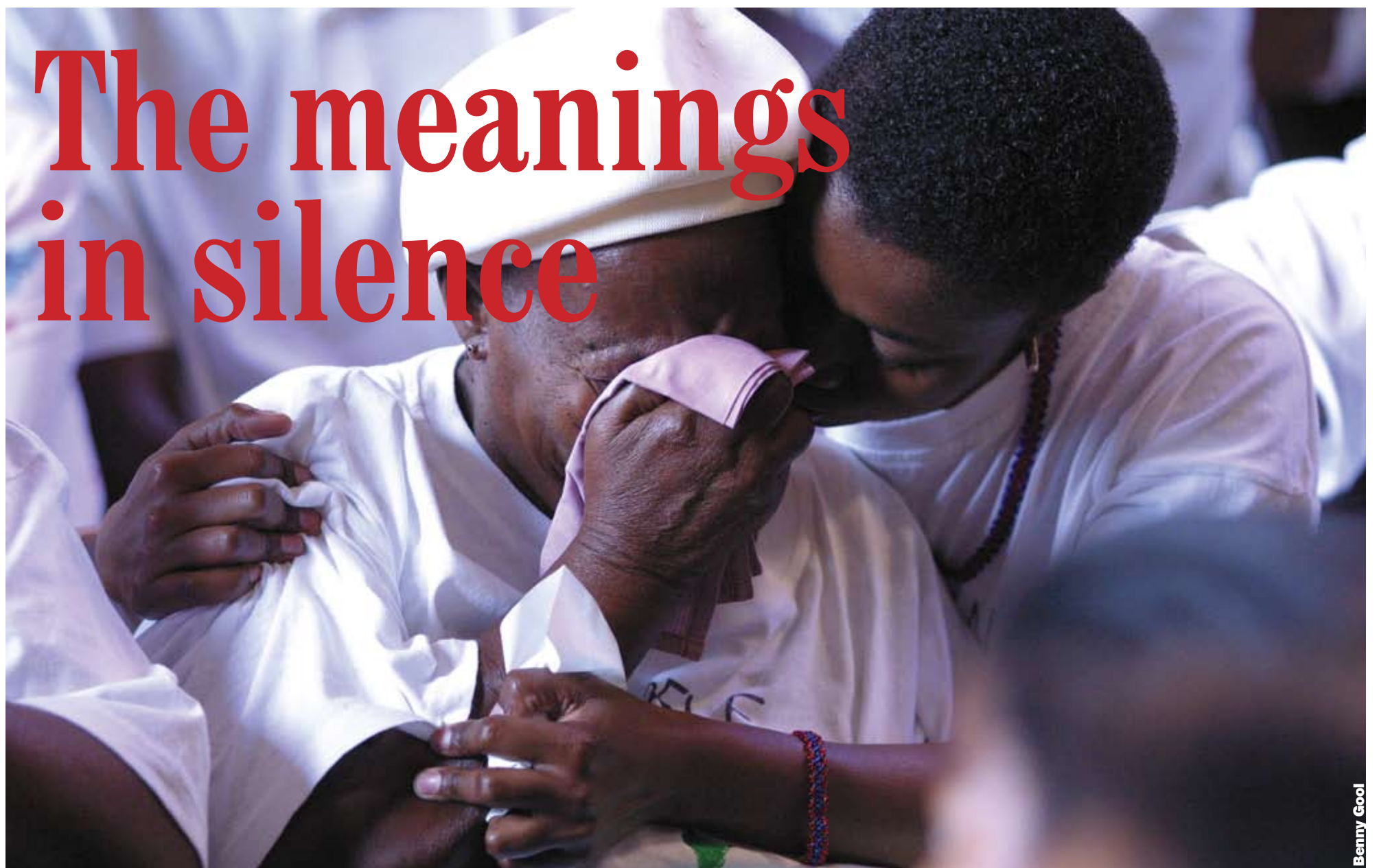
It's a salutary experience to look through the pages that face you in this 24th edition of *Review*: new voices have emerged and they are from all over the media spectrum, the dominance of newspapers has receded, broadcasters speak loudly and those who are located in institutions – of learning, activism and research, have lots to say too. We also see the emergence of those hybrid people who span media and arts, media and activism, media and academia, media and management, media and money. And their subjects are no longer solely news and journalism. Media in all their facets and interconnections have come to the fore for debate. And we've opened up and connected our concerns to Africa and the wider world as well.

Our readers have also shifted in profile: while we're still distributed into every newsroom in the country, increasingly *Review* is used for research and by students of media and gets put into teaching situations as a resource. We also have a rapidly growing readership of African journalists beyond our borders.

Over the years that I've been based in Grahamstown and worked – most often – at a distance from its contributors and the media moments it is documenting, it has been important to ask the question of just what the location at Rhodes can offer through *Review*. I've become increasingly convinced that the university and its remove from the urbanised media concentrations gives us a precious distance which allows us to ask questions – and pull into the debates, voices – that are not the obvious ones.

This *Review* is quite different in focus and emphasis from the publication I inherited in 1997, but I'm very proud of the new things it offers for your thoughtful consideration as you live through a year of reflection of what 10 years of democracy means to us.





Benny Gool

For Nthabiseng Motsemme, coming to terms with women's painful testimonies at the TRC demanded an exploration of the meanings in their silences.

Analysing black women's stories at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) plunged me into a landscape of ideas I never dreamed I would encounter as a writer. It made me wrestle with ways of unifying concepts which I had come to believe were polarised opposites, or could be placed into neat hierarchies, such as it is the case with speech/silence.

Well-trained during my university years in this logical and disconnected Cartesian ideology of viewing the world, I thought myself well-equipped to explore these painful stories women shared during the TRC hearings. However, as I began reading, watching and listening to their testimonies, and my explorations deepened, it became clear that this way of thinking, of producing knowledge and therefore giving authority to what was meaningful, was profoundly limited and would not be able to express what I encountered in women's narrations. As Belinda Bozzoli had noted during sittings at the TRC hearings in Alexandra township, these recollections quickly became less to do with nation and more with "a wholeness of self, body, the family, home that had been breached in ways that left victims bereft of something precious".

I had reached the place we are all familiar with, where what has operated as a normative standard is deeply questioned. You are thrown into a journey

which involves the expansion of both imagination and self. Not only did reliable polarisations of ordering the world and its experiences collapse, but I had to ask more basic questions about this illusive concept called memory, and its meanings. What do South Africans consider legitimate and authoritative memories? Which dominant collective memories are shaping this young democracy? Why these specific memorialisations, and not others? What meanings do we attach to these collective stories? What analytic frameworks do we use to uncover their authentic meanings, if such a thing exists? What do we consider legitimate memory sites, and why? What kinds of socio-political contexts contribute to the formulation of particular meanings around specifically chosen memories? I have explored these questions and others in three works called: *Losing Life and Remaking Nation at the TRC*; *Black Women's Identities* and *The Mute Always Speak: on Women's Silences at the TRC*. I will share some of the themes I encountered when I listened attentively to women's stories.

In women's memories of apartheid horror, many expressed a sense of being diminished. What authors exploring women's stories under violent regimes have noted is, how they struggled, in the midst of everyday violence, to make and maintain homes and relationships; their ways to carry out the delicate work of restoring and repairing relation-

ships across generations; the multiple practices they invented to refigure the home as a place of normality and safety for children in the face of open violence; their failures and how this broke them. I discovered the silences expressed by women telling their stories of loss and pain during the 1980s, were part of a deeply evocative language articulating women's embodied courage and consciousness of their precarious positions as mothers, wives and sisters of often absent men – whose position of authority within the home had been fading in the 1980s, one of the worst moments of apartheid violence. This absence expanded the burden of women's roles as nurturers, providers and compassion-givers in the family and community.

Observing early TRC testimonies in 1996, Fiona Ross noted that those, who could not give voice to their past, were seen as "languageless, unable to communicate". However, several scholars have shown how narrations of extreme human rights violations leave many with an inability to speak about their felt pain and loss. Language fails us, as it becomes inadequate to the task of conveying the experience of systematic degradations and humiliations. I have found this unspeakability of suffering in examples of writings about holocaust memories, recollections of the India-Pakistan partition and in slave narratives. Nigerian feminist philosopher Bibi

“**These recollections became less to do with nation and more with a wholeness of self, body, the family, home that had been breached in ways that left victims bereft of something precious.**”

Bakare-Yusuf, drawing on phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty, argues in her fascinating study on Jamaican dance hall culture that we need to be open to the idea that pain, suffering, humiliation and joy do not necessarily only find their expression through verbal language, but in a number of representations such as songs, dances, gestures, tears, smells, and even in silences.

However, to avoid misunderstanding, let me clearly state that I am fully aware of the negative manifestations of silence and silencing, which can be observed in instances of political repression, the suffocating silences of sexual violation and untold family secrets. My aim is not to romanticise silence and thus undermine the power of giving voice and exposing oppression. It is rather to remind us that under conditions of scarcity and imposed limits, those who are oppressed often generate new creative meanings for themselves around silences. Instead of being absent and voiceless, silences in circumstances of violence assume presence and speak volumes. Further, we are aware of how the language of grief and loss is usually located in silence. When we begin to invest meaning in women's silences, suddenly these narrations of remembered violence by township women are transformed to a platform through which they are also engaged in a process of sharing their *own* strategies of coping and tools of reinvention within the unjust world they daily occupied.

Through the reading of women's recollections of violence it became clear that not only silence should be invested with complex meanings, but also dreams, prayers, gestures, tears, sounds, smells, tastes and flesh. In these places oppressed women often housed their memories and thus grounded meanings of violating events. Many studies have also confirmed how the powerless often used unofficial vehicles to critique power.

At these points we come face-to-face with counter memories, or subaltern memories. Interestingly, exploring these neglected memory sites also serves to emphasise locations where women produce their own forms of authority and meanings about shared experiences of violence. What kind of memories do we encounter at these counter-memory spaces? Women release stories of pain, loss, despair and courage amid an overly strained everyday. For example, in the TRC testimonies they spoke about how they felt they had failed as mothers to protect their children from danger; how they longed for their children who had been arrested, crossed borders or disappeared with little hope of finding them; how they prayed for the safety of their loved ones; how they yearned to be loved by their men who were never there; how they wept over witnessing the disintegration of their homes and communities. However, these are not the stories building nations.

Heroism and sacrifice are the essences which make the stories of nations compelling and therefore worthwhile listening to. In these tales, tears, when shed, reflect sacrifice and not the loneliness of longing and the quiet depression of having lived through a context where your existence equalled negation; the feeling of constant exhaustion, when each moment and each death was and is a struggle to rise and remake yourself once again. Otherwise, who will take care of the children and recreate the everyday life? No, these are not the stories serving the platters of political menus, unless perhaps for the sake of instrumental nostalgia. There are only a few who are *really* interested to hear them.

It remains true that within the surge of interest in memory work in the public arena, we continue to search and immortalise memories in places we can



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visit. We therefore become tourists of our own pasts. If we refer to any dictionary, it will inform us with definitive authority that a memorial is a monument, statue, tomb and perhaps a gravestone. But this is not what I encountered in my exploration of black women's memories and the stories of lived violence they tell. In fact, this idea of "memory as an object" is enriched and extended. At times it led me to places of solace and generative healing for many of these mothers and grandmothers, where their will to endure daily humiliation partially lay.

All this has gracefully invited me to loosen what I believed to be the source of our individual and collective memories and where they rest. It has emphasised that, until we free our thinking from the idea of "memory as an object" and also embrace the notion that it includes embodied practices found in the person next to us in everyday life, we will be mostly telling our already privileged versions. Until then, we will continue to tell partial stories which exclude those who cannot find words to express their pain and/or their chronic socio-economic conditions which are voluntarily trapped within the Eurocentric bias asserting that the world is only knowable through words. We would have shrugged our shoulders and erased these places of memory simply because our current tools of comprehension cannot fully grasp their meanings.

Perhaps we fear the truths they might reveal and the horror we will have to face and collectively share as well. The irony is: by continuing to marginalise these memory sites, we participate in the practice of neglecting those very spaces which actually speak about women's lived experiences of the global conditions of violence.

While I am sitting on my bed and writing this essay, I continue to wonder whether silences, tears, dreams, prayers, songs, dances and other symbolic practices, which serve as critical memory sites for those who have been denied the occasion to tell their own stories, are of any value and have any meaning to the way we write stories about those who continue to occupy the fringes. I am now convinced that part of the reason why we continue to exclude and cast these interpretative sites as "feminised", and thus secondary to objective analysis, is simply because we lack creative languages to interact with them. In many ways we have delinked our political selves and lives from these concepts, which appeal more to our cultural and emotional selves.

But what has any of this to do with those involved in the media world? Firstly, particularly today, when people's freedoms remain under threat all over the world, the media cannot divorce themselves from contextualities and emotionalities which shape our diverse experiences and identities. Secondly, if we remain committed to creating spaces which facilitate the telling of democratic stories as connected as possible to individuals and communities' centres of meaning, then we will have to take the risk of leaping into places which have become unfamiliar for many of us who have been fed on the

restricted diet of the power of articulation and the text.

I want to call to our attention how this visual and textual bias in the western episteme is under great stress and threat. This is because it has proved to be limited, and thus inadequate to viewing the experiences of violence of the others in a comprehensive manner. Thirdly, Frantz Fanon's observation in his intuitive book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, that the struggle towards freedom is not merely about the attainment of political independence, but also lies in the ways we remake dignity for those whose experiences have been diminished and distorted, seems to me more relevant than ever, as South Africans celebrate 10 years of democratic rule. For we cannot afford to forget that totalitarian regimes thrive on telling stories that homogenise, exclude and label taboo multiple sources of truth. And we must remember, when we distil violence by taking out history, politics, culture, gender and class, that we will have succeeded in reducing it to fantastical caricatures.

In my eyes, ears and skin, this is not different from continuing the legacy of imperial accounts of the "savage object". Making efforts to link our stories to the everyday practices and fractured meanings of existence of individuals and communities is indeed a challenge, but also part of the unavoidable search of telling free and democratic stories.

Let me end by sharing a personal story, whose meaning I leave to you to consider:

Recently, under a bright moonlight, my deceased father's sister stood naked, as my mother, female cousins and myself washed her body. This is part of a cleansing ritual for widows, when they have finished their period of mourning. My cousins and I, new to the custom, laughed gingerly as my aunt shivered from the winter evening breeze. We all touched her body. Apparently, in the old days, this ritual was done in nearby rivers. But we are making do with an open deserted veld we have found to carry the ritual out. There was not much explaining of what was about to happen, only a few instructions from my mother: "Chop this special plant and mix it with water as this is what we will use to cleanse your aunt." – "No, we must leave everything here at the veld." – "Don't forget the matches as we must burn your aunt's mourning clothes out in the veld." This was a symbol that the individual and family are leaving behind a period of darkness. I submit, as a tradition of healing is being passed on to us by the older generation. But I am not sure whether I will ever pass it on to others in my lifetime.

However, right now I wonder if journalists had happened to be driving by that night and witnessed this performance, what would have been the first thought on their minds? African magic? A couple of witches? Or would they have marvelled at this moment as of an intergenerational healing memory being passed on between women? What meaning would you attach? I am still finding mine...

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Pumla Gqola investigates the environment in which the textures of “South Africanness” are being explored and created especially in the media.

Where have all the rainbows gone?

Everywhere you look this year there are reminders and encouragements to celebrate freedom, to participate in the culmination of a decade of building and enshrining independence. It has been hard work, we are reminded by billboards and advertisements in newspapers, television and popular magazines, but it has been well worth it. Public declarations of pride and joy abound. The roles of the media in this celebration attest to the reciprocity of the relationship between culture and politics.

Whereas a decade ago it became necessary to stress unity, sameness and “rainbow nation” identity as crucial markers of being South African, the second decade of democracy is set to articulate South Africanness in another way. This shift of positions within memory-making and collective identity formation illustrates more than a superficial incarnation of development; it speaks more directly to the diverse applications of memory politically. Collective memory prompts engagements with some form of historical consciousness, and requires a higher, more fraught level of activity in relation to the past than simply identifying and recording it. Memnonic activity is crucial for the symbols through which each community invents itself because it resists erasure. Desirée Lewis, reviewing a recent collection of South African writing and its frames, reasons that evidence of South Africans’ “time and imaginative space”, in other words, freedom, lies in its public performances. She notes that “much cultural expression and the platforms for this have been looking simultaneously backwards and inward, opening paths into multiple pasts that are not unidirectional and straightforward but labyrinthine and multi-layered”.

This distinct opening up has gained more prominence in recent years. A few years ago I wrote an article on how race and racialisation relate to and are influenced by nation-building and self-definition in a democratic South Africa. “Rainbowism”, I argued, was central to shaping identities in a post-apartheid South Africa; the mere evocation of the identity “rainbow nation” in the print and electronic media, as well as popular culture, also worked to silence dissenting voices on the (then) state of race and racism in South Africa, thereby moderating more radical anti-racist critiques of a society in formation. This constant assertion of “rainbow nation” identity needed to parade as a descriptive activity in order to successfully navigate its existent aspirational effect: this was the only way in which this desired state could be actualised. In other words, the more we be-

“
In the 10th year of South Africa’s democracy, it is possible that at the precise moment we perceived ourselves as achieving “rainbow nation” status, its assertion became redundant.
”

gan to see and describe ourselves as such, the more South Africans could become a “rainbow nation”.

In the 10th year of South Africa’s democracy, “rainbow nation” has disappeared almost entirely from public parlance. It is possible that at the precise moment we perceived ourselves as achieving “rainbow nation” status, its assertion became redundant. While the media had given us little reprieve from declarations of “rainbow nation” citizenship, the dominant trend now points to their apparent commitment to uncovering the textures of that status. Njabulo Ndebele predicted: “The emergence of an identity, with social values embedded in it, will in time, solidify into memories of cultural practice, which can be both a blessing and a curse, that predispose us to replicate our values and social practices wherever we are in the world.”

Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s coinage of the “rainbow children of God”, and its incarnations across the political spectrum in speeches, editorials, and advertisements has been replaced, of late, by a particular fascination with “diversity”. It is logical that diversity would be the preferred means of expression because, according to Samuel Kiguwa, “[t]raditional politics exercised before the 1994 changes served to silence the voices of the weak and oppressed, consigned their histories and experiences to the margins and subsumed all experiences under the dominant outlook”.

A “Proudly South African” television advert shows a 10 year-old black girl conducting an outdoor cacophony of sounds which gradually blend together for a discernible melody. The sonic variety is buttressed by bodies which bear diverse marks of race, adornment and dance movements. As the scene concludes, bold letters declare the conductor’s birthday as the 27th April 2004, accompanied by the slogan “Born into Freedom”. The national flag propped against a white backdrop subtitled “Proudly South African” seems a natural sequel. The clever design blends the “proudly South African” campaign with pride in national identity.

Analogous visual and word play is evident in another television performance, this time the national anthem, which marks the transition between SABC2 broadcasting and the crossing over to the trans-national SABC Africa, at midnight. The national anthem is sung by South Africans situated in varied geographies: mines, football fields, outside restaurants, urban areas and rural landscapes. As with the advertisement above, vibrant colours are set up against well-lit backgrounds to underline what has become one of the country’s favourite

English words: diversity. The suggestion is that there is place for everyone. The multi-coloured clothing, surroundings, complexions and other symbols serve as shorthand for race and echo and expand the “rainbow nation”.

The importance and centrality diversity has assumed is evident beyond television. It has implications for the negotiations of space, and for re-thinking identities in South Africa. This too should be unsurprising, given the rigid policing of spatial and bodily integrity under apartheid. Part of the contestatory activity of memory, which engages this history, participates in the structuring of popular culture, as Nkhensani Manganyi told the Sunday Times in an interview on 20 April 2003. That this is part of a larger South African popular sensibility is clearer when attention is paid to the new place of music and visual arts in showing the innovation, which is being celebrated in the media as part of the South African identity.

Art has been linked explicitly to self-formation, to opening up possibilities. Examples of this, such as the rebellious playfulness of clothes named Stoned Cherrie, Loxion Kulca, and Craig Native, make sense alongside the unprecedented cross-over appeal of artists like Phuzikhemisi and Mandoza. Here, innovation is about referencing previous and ongoing black cultural and experiential terrain, and at the same time it links with new creative forms. The media’s own explorations and investigations into identity synchronise with this creative playfulness, as evidenced in the hyper visibility of these creative cultures.

It is in this environment, where media are partners in the creation and exploration of the textures of South Africanness, that even the conservative *Volksblad* would carry ongoing front page coverage of Brenda Fassie’s hospitalisation and death. However the specific coverage is interpreted, a new spectrum of possibility was suggested here. From a different position in the political spectrum, the *Mail&Guardian* on 11 June 2004 would foreground the existence of difference within the ruling political party, the ANC. That this thread runs through the paper’s lengthy interpretation of the ongoing Bulelani Ngcuka/Jacob Zuma controversy is significant; as is the journalistic trend to link apparent ANC membership flexibility with evaluations of the successes of the South African democracy.

Freedom is repeatedly interpreted as the ability to aspire to and achieve greatness, where greatness is open to restyling. The Woolworth’s advertisements in the print media are the best example of this



“Diversity has become significant because it permits celebration, participates in important socially transformative work and is hip.”

in their integration of architects, performers, visual artists, engineers and other (young) professionals as evidence of the freedom of diversity. The associations between these professions and creativity are clear; their juxtaposition reinforces the range of possibilities. What define South African “essence” links with diversity, is an ability to choose from a range of ever-increasing possibilities. The suggestion defies failure: everybody wants to be a Nkalakatha. In a country and time where a much loved kwaito artist can rock white clubs in conservative central South Africa, and a previously unknown white woman can shoot to the top of kwaito hit lists, crossing over has never been so appreciated. Diversity has become significant because it permits celebration, participates in important socially transformative work and is hip.

From all of this then, it appears as though freedom effectively permeates all terrains in South Africa, at least at the level of representation. When South Africans can be whoever they want to be, and inhabit those positions proudly, perhaps we really have become the “rainbow nation”.

The media have had as significant a role in that as anybody, and yet, I am not as convinced as Xolela Mangcu, who said in his lecture which was part of the Rhodes University Centenary Series, that “despite the constant attacks and problems of racial bias, the media have done a wonderful job as a vehicle for self-expression”. It is obvious that we have a press free from governmental and other intimidation. Nonetheless, this recognition is not the same as acknowledging that the media are equally available for the expression of our different realities, of our various forms of taking issue with reportage. This certainly appears to be the case, and in many of the instances discussed above, proves to be so. There remain, nonetheless, traces of very disturbing

tendencies in the print media.

Television and radio have risen to the challenge of language much more imaginatively than print. Language is used here both in the literal sense of the official 11 languages and more abstractly to denote the kinds of discourses which have been foreclosed. This foreclosure accompanies a facet of diverse expression which participates in at the same time that it problematises the celebration of diversity in the construction of South Africanness. While there are numerous examples of this, the sloppiness which characterised the Zine Magubane coverage in the *Sunday Times* (October 2002), and its re-publication by other newspapers nationwide, such as the *Daily Despatch*, among others, or the puzzling Xoliswa Sithole saga in *The Star*, suggest more than cases of insufficient background checking. The editorial response was a closing down of ranks in the face of Magubane’s challenge to what she maintained were fabricated published citations of her, pointing to the presence of something more nuanced than carelessness.

The specific kinds of multiplicity questioned, suggested and engaged in, in both the work of Sithole and that of Magubane, pose difficult, albeit necessary questions for the project of collective South African identity formation and the power dynamics attached to these performances. It may well be a coincidence that both these black women’s work, at the time of their controversial exchanges with the print media, explored ways in which power informs who can articulate which realities in contemporary South Africa and when.

These are two examples of a broader phenomenon, which seems to undermine the general claims to accessible self-expression. It suggests that there are certain participations in innovation which cannot be co-opted and made to function in the interest

of specific diversities.

This raises questions for the meanings of diversity and what it can acknowledge and celebrate if there continue to be attempts at gate keeping. Participation in uncovering and contributing to the “proudly South African” sensibility centres on stressing freedom in negotiating identity.

This uncovering of diversity needs to be attentive to the manner in which every cultural production and all knowledge-making is implicated in relationships of power. Diversity and a powerful expression of freedom are not in and of themselves automatically transformative. While the opening up of identity, which the country’s media have contributed to, is an acknowledgement and result of freedom, inattention to the crevices of power in representation can work to threaten precisely this freedom. It can, and sometimes does, suggest disparity between the mythologising of diversity and its felt contradictions.



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The streets and the gods of truth

Sello Duiker reflects on the influence of the past on young artists in South Africa and pays tribute to the inspiration of street culture.

It is hard to believe that 10 years of democracy have passed since the new democratically elected government came into power in 1994. While growing up in the turbulent '80s, it seemed as if the reign of terror and oppression would never end. But like most things it did.

Thinking back, I remember what kept us going through those dark years: the hope that one day we would all enjoy the fruits of living in a democratic society. Thinking back, my immediate inclination is to make a list of the political luminaries who inspired us by their dedication to the struggle: Luthuli, Mandela, Biko and Sisulu, to name only the most obvious ones. But perhaps there was another subtle force that gave us hope, at least for me – and that was art.

The first time art ever consciously made an impression on me was in high school when I learned about Bushmen paintings. It suddenly occurred to me that art even in its simplest form, has the ability to make us aware that there is something beyond the mundane. It can force us to search inside ourselves for meaning.

This was an important realisation because censorship was so pervasive during the draconian 1980s, that it felt as if we weren't ever really talking about what was happening to and around us. Under the blanket of censorship the township was boiling with confusion and frustration, waiting to explode. The situation did explode – in bursts of toyi-toying, protests and vigilantes and chanting bitter invectives against the government.

It never ceased to surprise me how humorous and creative many of the activists could be in the midst of the oppression. There was struggle poetry and voices like those of Wally Serote and Sipho Sepamla, which rang with compassion. During that time of brutality, Breytenbach's delicate love poetry to his wife reminded me that we were people with

“**In the 1980s the street was where township kids went to look for justice and heroes, where one found one's tribe and a street ethos that became a way of life.**”

feelings, dreams and aspirations, even though the township was like a war zone where neighbours were forced to spy on neighbours, children ran wild and participated in gruesome necklace killings. It felt all the more as though our voices were being smothered, the light sucked out of our eyes as we watched our elders being humiliated by security policemen and other figures of authority.

1986 and 1987 were particularly difficult years – curfews and raids were the order of the day. Where did one go for refuge? Where did you go to keep your dreams alive, to re-awaken a sense of well-being when there was so much despair?

My own natural reaction was to read as much as I could. It was the only way to survive: it offered me a form of escape. I felt I had to learn to articulate the disturbing silence that was being forced upon all of us – a state of being which I called “The Madness”. There was no information coming from the regime about what was happening in the country, so I had to make sense of things in my own way.

I threw myself into poetry.

I started wondering about the visual artists. What did they have to say about the state of affairs? How were they responding to The Madness?

That was when I stumbled across the angst-ridden work of Jane Alexander. Who can forget the eerie *Butcher Boys*? Their overwhelming presence looming over you much like the omnipresent regime who somehow always knew how to silence dissident voices. These ghouls with repulsive faces and oppressive bodies were creatures which could only have been inspired by something as vile and inhuman as apartheid. The *Butcher Boys* personified to me the grotesqueness of apartheid and the absence of dialogue we were trapped in.

There were works by lesser known township artists like Mvemve too, which reminded me of where we came from. These pastel drawings often



depicted shebeen scenes or familiar township pastimes like kids playing football in the street. They were a tribute to happier times, when Sophiatown – that island of social and cultural harmony in the turmoil of Jozi – was still a reality.

In the face of all the confusion I started writing poetry, earnestly trying to find a voice; my voice. And then in the early '90s, a musical revolution began stirring in the townships, particularly Soweto. Youths began to celebrate township life in a way they had never done before. In retrospect it is clear that it was an attempt by young people to articulate their township experience and make sense of what it meant to grow up under apartheid. A musical genre called kwaito was born.

At house parties, in selected discos and on a few adventurous radio stations, the music would be played while the music industry snubbed it. Hijackings, fast life, crime and boys lusting after girls were some of the themes that kwaito explored. Kwaito spoke to its audience in their own lingo, a mishmash of different vernaculars, English and tsotsi-taal, known as “scanto”.

The very nature of kwaito was irreverent and controversial. Often songs didn't have much in the line of lyrics, but sex always came up in some form or another. Community leaders were quick to criticise kwaito for glamourising thug life and for encouraging youths to be preoccupied with sex. But in a country where young black people had been denied a voice for so long, it was hardly a surprise that they would again rebel – in a very different way, but much in the same spirit as during the 1976 uprising.

In a country with one of the highest rape rates in the world, it should have come to no surprise that young people were sending out mixed messages about sex. Perhaps those early kwaito days with their songs, invariably about specific female body parts, were presaging the HIV/Aids crisis that we



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are now experiencing. Already then we should have known that a deadly disease was killing us furtively. Now I mourn for the artists we have lost to Aids.

Ten years into democracy and township life has changed profoundly. There has been a substantial exodus of intellectuals, artists and people with education, creating what ironically could be called a brain drain from the townships to the suburbs. Yet kwaito continues to grow, reaching and touching its suburban cousins, Amabourgeois – the “chosen” beneficiaries of the new democracy. A new kind of lingo has evolved, somewhere between the leafy Johannesburg of the northern suburbs and the townships.

Some people said kwaito was just a passing phase and would soon disappear. But it has not happened. On the contrary, next to hip hop, kwaito is the biggest selling music genre among the youth, and cross-over kwaito artists like Mandoza continue to popularise the music within unlikely sectors of the population. Kwaito continues to explore new themes, like Aids awareness and getting an education. Boom Shaka’s smash hit *Thobela* ushered in a new creative interest in the township and about urban life. Sure there is still the bling-bling obsession with material things and money, but perhaps that is the inevitable result of the American invasion of youth culture everywhere.

Kwaito obviously spoke to the youth then, and still speaks to them now. It certainly spoke to me. My interest in it stemmed from my self-discovery as a writer. Kwaito made me aware of using language, particularly English, in a localised way. At Rhodes I discovered the incandescent writings of Dambudzo Marachera and Bessie Head. I enrolled in ’95, the year after the historic first democratic elections. We were still basking in the euphoria of the honeymoon period.

Campus was alive with energy and excitement.

Perhaps as students we naively felt anything was possible. For me it was the true beginning of my creative awakening. Hippos, security police and sirens waking you up at obscene hours of the morning slipped to the back of my mind. I was falling in and out of love, making friends and discovering the meaning of the word democracy that was still a little awkward in my mouth. I ended up starting a poetry society with two friends, called *Seeds*. With hindsight I can admit that it was more about drinking copious amounts of wine and trying to impress girls than about words. But once a term we did manage to publish a collection of poems.

It is hard to draw a line between the verbal and the visual. In my second year at university I discovered Gerard Sekoto’s work. In my fiction and poetry I now strived for the lyricism of his *Song of the Pick*. The vivid colours, the forms and the sense of rhythm in his earlier work, done while still in South Africa, inspired me to use language exuberantly.

Unfortunately, Sekoto, seeking his muse far from his motherland, left the country like many artists and writers, including Arthur Maimane, Lewis Nkosi and Can Themba who died alone and forgotten in a cold city. One of the best side effects of the 1994 elections has been the return of our exiled artists, musicians like Hugh Masekela and Miriam Makeba, and writers like Keorapatse Kgotsile and Zakes Mda.

I celebrate the efforts of all those committed artists, writers and musicians by relishing the freedom to create and “write what I like”, to quote Biko – because our freedom came at a price. How many bodies disappeared in mass graves? What happened to activist heroes like Tsietshi Mashinini and his young comrades of 1976? It seems as if history has swallowed them along with apartheid. Let us not forget them. Let us not forget current injustices.

Perhaps art should be regarded as a social barometer. What better way to find out what is happening in any country than to look at what its artists are doing. Gratefully we have moved away from protest art and struggle poetry. We have finally started to tell our own stories, “warts and all”, without feeling political pressure to keep silent about certain aspects and overemphasise others. And that is humanising, if nothing else.

So when the opportunity arose to write my own story – for I believe emphatically in the personal before the public – I grabbed it with both hands.

At the beginning of 1997, after completing a first degree, I found myself in Cape Town, a student at one of the advertising schools. It was different from the rugged streets of Soweto, where hawkers sold you bogus goods and roasted mealies could be bought on a street corner. I lived in Sea Point, quietly going about my activities as a student.

The people on the streets of Sea Point always had something to say, something to gossip about, even something to warn one against. There were 13-year-old drug pushers, undercover cops, pick-pockets, even members of the Moroccan and Russian mafia. There they all were, part of a vibrant and ever-changing Sea Point; some in business, some out, some suffering extortion and others bribing cops.

Among the bustle of people making a living by any means necessary, I noticed another ignored member of street life: the street child. For some reason street children seem to stand out more in Cape Town than elsewhere. Unlike in Johannesburg, where the mass exodus from the CBD has left the decay, the underclass and other undesirables – street children included – behind in the inner city, Cape Town’s street children are very much part of the

city. So I couldn’t but notice a number of them on my way to college every morning, sleeping huddled together under threadbare flea-infested blankets, neglected and left to fend for themselves. After three months certain faces became familiar to me. “Heita, hoesit, away,” we would begin. I was slowly opening myself to them, and as much as I chastised myself, I couldn’t resist the urge to spare them my change.

It soon became useful to know some of theseurchins, especially when walking down certain streets at night where, rumour had it, these kids were waiting for an easy prey: a careless reveller, drunk after an evening at the club. They were always testing me. Sometimes when they were high on glue and buttons, they would swear me rotten, and even threaten to hit me, but they never did. I suppose it was just their way of saying, “I’m not just any kid”.

And then one day I followed a small circle of street children into their world. For three weeks I helped them look for a lost friend. Time enough for me to discover, that when you live on the street, the world is often a harsh, cold pavement with greedy pigeons competing for food with you, and a dangerous bully around the corner, ready to bludgeon you.

While the world sleeps and other children lie snugly in their beds, these kids sniff glue, smoke buttons and anything else that would make them forget that childhood is passing them by. They are aggressive as a matter of course, tough and street-wise. Fights erupt easily, and they usually last until someone bleeds or concedes defeat.

In the 1980s the street was where township kids went to look for justice and heroes, where one found one’s tribe and a street ethos that became a way of life. It was where township children learned about protest, kangaroo courts, vigilantes and necklacing. It was where dusty roads erupted into a cloud, with the stamping of feet echoing through the air. It was where impulse and energy thrived, where the generation gap boldly defined itself. Mothers and fathers, tired of protest, returned from work only to find their sons and daughters seeking their gods of truth on the street.

There is a legacy of street fighters and icons, people who have given the street experience credibility. Street culture still permeates our townships. There are bomkhosi, itinerant mealie ladies who pepper the air with their cries as they walk by. There is street football and bhati for girls. There is knowing your neighbour by watching how their kids behave on the street. And there is a sense of community as everyone grows up together. But the city streets are different. There is also the dark side of street culture. Some children are at the complete mercy of its darkness. *Thirteen Cents*, my first novel, is about their long nights.

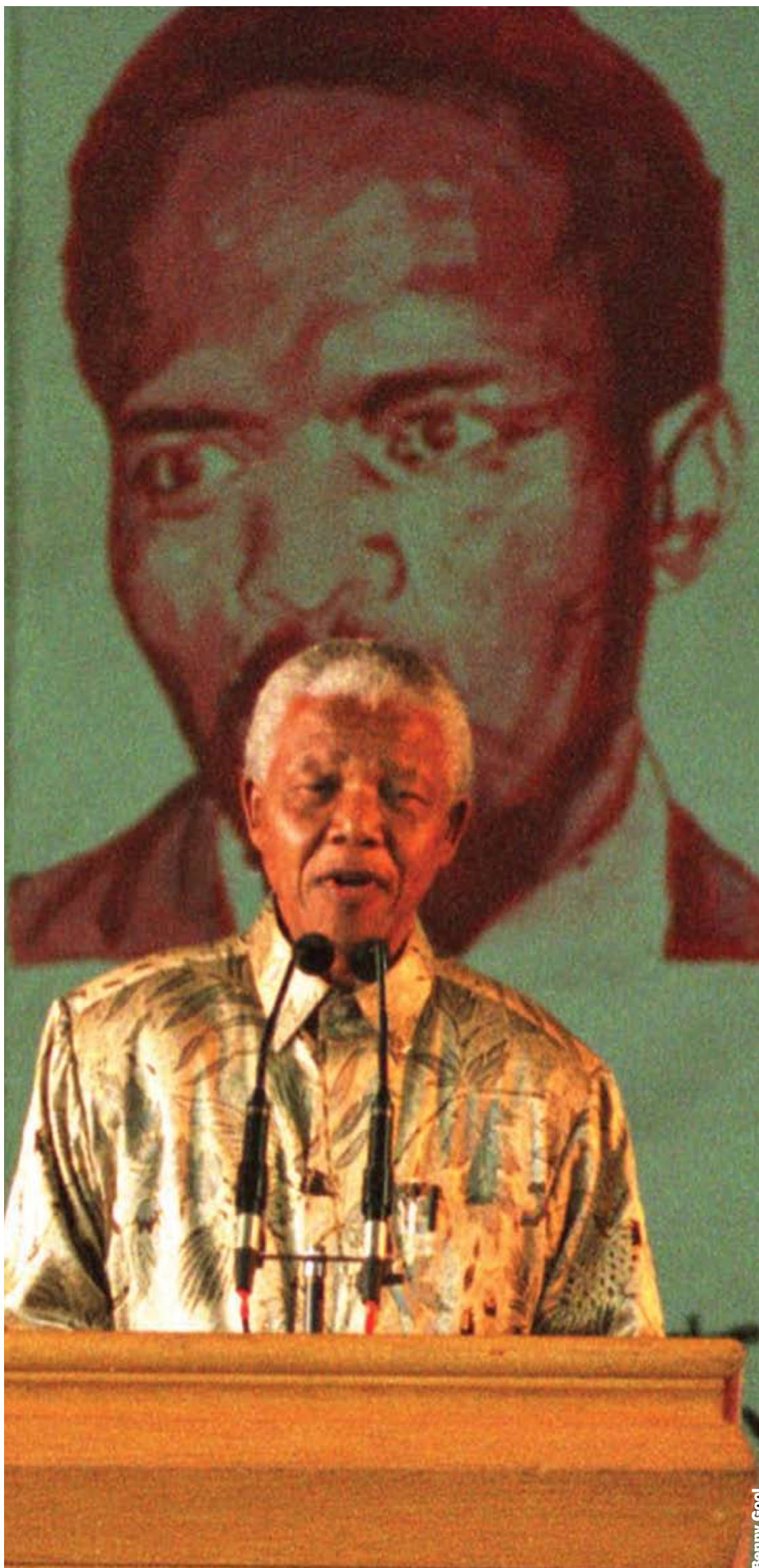
Life is still turbulent today for young people, but unlike the ’80s, it is not because of an unjust and cruel political system. It is harsh and confusing for many, particularly on the street, because despite our democratic system, not enough has been done yet for the poor and the homeless.

Perhaps this is where art has its place today.

One of its roles is to attempt to openly and freely capture the myriad details that make us, here at the most southern tip of Africa, unique. But even while we are celebrating this wonderful gift which the last 10 years brought with it, let us not forget, that the role of the artist, the musician, the poet, the writer is to wander the streets, to keep being ever wakeful to notice and to voice what is often easier to push out of sight and out of mind, like the kid curled up in the corner, an old blanket hiding his face.



Sello Duiker is the author of *thirteen cents* for which he received the Commonwealth Writer’s Prize for Best First Novel, Africa Region. His second novel, *The Quiet Violence Of Dreams* was awarded the Herman Charles Bosman Prize for English Literature. He has also written for television. He currently freelances while working on his third novel.



Perverting black power

Steve Biko's memory and meanings are diluted by capitalism and a new form of racism in the media, says Sandile Memela.

Steve Biko's meanings, and how he is remembered in post-apartheid South Africa, are undermined by meaningless interpretations of his Black Consciousness, the absence of a strategy for uniting (with) grassroots communities and the lack of vigorous practical plans to uphold his legacy and re-inspire black people to pursue an agenda for self-determination.

These weaknesses have made it easy for worn out "black power" exponents to be passively absorbed into a racist, money-driven status quo that disrespects African people and values.

The media are still largely in white hands. Young, gifted and black professionals, who pay allegiance to capitalism, are promoted and sponsored in and through the media to serve their interests. No matter what anyone's hopes are, today black media practitioners stand diametrically opposed to what Steve Biko, as a revolutionary analytical journalist, represented.

Ten years into freedom and democracy, the twin forces of racism and capitalism not only dish out high-profile positions to inexperienced but articulate black 30-somethings indiscriminately and as quickly as possible, but they are unleashing them to the so-called black market (sic) to destroy everything that stands for black pride.

This runs counter to the defiant spirit of Biko, who was not about rolling over to die, or willy-nilly accepting dictates from bosses. Ironically, this is what is now considered a pragmatic way of dealing with the racist capitalist system: becoming part of the problem by allowing oneself to be absorbed into the system's ranks. Until journalists, irrespective of skin colour, offer editorial visions, strategies and content aligned with the genuine aspirations of the African poor majority and promote an agenda of

“
The second decade
of freedom and
democracy needs a
revolutionary mindset.
”

critical political consciousness and individual self-determination, there is little hope that we can give meaning to our memory of Biko.

The ascent of the “rainbow nation” philosophy alone did not undermine the struggle to maintain Biko’s relevance in the period leading up to Nelson Mandela’s release from prison. It was dimmed by an internal weakness in the character of Black Consciousness exponents and a keenness to gain privilege. Biko emphasised non-collaboration with a racist, capitalist system, adopting a philosophy that encouraged people to embrace communalism and the ethic of “umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu”.

It was therefore important that the so-called non-racial movement not only co-opt clear-thinking leaders who upheld his legacy, but to destroy his vestiges. The internecine wars of the 1980s saw the assassination of Black Consciousness leaders, the incarceration of others, the infiltration and undermining of community and student organisations as part of the programme to corrupt and repress Biko’s militant spirit.

As more and more self-seeking exponents of his philosophy joined non-racial organisations, including the media, the best and brightest of his disciples were removed from working within their own communities. Instead, they suddenly mushroomed in white-controlled institutions where funds were available in excess. The setting was thus ripe for relegating Biko’s memory and meanings to the dustbin of history.

Today, a significant number of Black Consciousness-inclined media people and other professionals have been sucked into the vacuum-cleaner of predominantly white-controlled institutions. Among these are opinion-making journalists and intellectuals with solid struggle credentials, now widely considered “stars” because of an original and unique point of view, embedded in Biko’s thinking. Alas, that they are only rewarded with irregular eccentric columns, meaningless walk-about office work in newsrooms as mentors, lucrative perks that include mortgages in suburbs, allowances for status cars, and allowed to do as they please with the company’s time. If they were dedicated, and keeping the memory of Biko was not risky, why after 10 years into freedom and democracy is there no large body of protégées creating waves in the media (and other fields) to reshape a new nation with critical consciousness?

The second decade of freedom and democracy needs a revolutionary mindset. Instead, Biko’s disciples have become sought-after speakers on the cocktail circuit offering them a sycophantic audience of movers and shakers enjoying the economic crumbs of black economic empowerment. They waste their time and energy in long-haul flights to attend international conferences and seminars in the capitals of the world, when they should channel their energies to educating their people, including their own children, for critical self-examination and appreciation of indigenous languages and culture.

Unlike Biko (who declined offers for scholarships abroad), his disciples are lured like any ignorant, unprincipled and weak human being by the promise of 15 seconds of fame on TV programmes, unprecedented salaries and material wealth. By speaking of the myriad ways in which some of Biko’s disciples are seduced and tempted, the idea is not to point an accusing finger. However, few will deny that there is an urgent need to jostle us out of our complacency, to pause and ponder, to speak a word of caution. This would create a more sober mood for critical vigilance.

If exponents of Black Consciousness in the

media and other facets of life abandon their responsibility to do much more than enhance their status and material accumulation, they are complicit with those corrupting structures which desire to leave the black African majority behind. Yes, we are creating a self-annihilating environment, where media professionals are hijacked at gunpoint, insulted at glittering functions, have booze thrown onto their faces and are dismissed as “irrelevant black tokens”. This would be an expression of the loss of confidence in the media, lack of trust for journalists in a world where hopelessness and rage are the order of the order. Are we not there already?

It is this neo-colonial globalised social context that has seen narrow nationalists emerge as so-called symbols of black achievement. These opportunistic careerists, largely paraded as movers and shakers in the media, have gone back to the abandoned African majority to exploit their longing for clear-thinking leaders who intuitively understand their spiritual and economic crisis. They have correctly identified the growing chasm between the elite and the poor, and responded by projecting themselves as the bridge to achieving the impossible in the absurd. Of course, this strategy is to mislead the gullible masses to believe that, yes, it is possible to grow up in a matchbox house in Soweto and to end up owning a mansion in Sandton.

It is not, however, a meaningful intervention for Biko’s disciples, even if self-appointed, to collaborate with narrow-minded new Pan African nationalists, if their engagement is not linked with strategies to reconnect his philosophy with the grassroots. Sadly, desperation has made more and more folks inclined to embrace conservatives who support the status quo because they are able to deliver some bread on the table, even if it is without butter and cheese.

These are the smooth-talking individuals, who offer a measure of hope and are prevalent among the needy majority. They have intimidated fearlessly independent Black Consciousness exponents, who have allowed their integrity to be compromised because they, too, now want to indulge in the never-ending material supper. Many of Biko’s former contemporaries have abandoned pursuing the agenda of black self-determination, while those enjoying the always short-lived limelight in the media have toned down their clear radicalism.

In fact, some like Xolela Mangcu, the Executive Director of the Steve Biko Foundation and political commentator, had his column in the *Sunday Independent* discontinued because he would not translate the late Minister of Safety and Security Steve Tshwete’s clan names into English. Obviously, his self-determining and assertive attitude was seen as a problem because he was not willing to kow-tow to white figures of authority.

This is a common occurrence, especially when Black Consciousness-inclined journalists make their white colleagues feel abandoned, irrelevant and unimportant in the articulation of an authentic African vision and agenda.

Phrases like “black man, you are on your own”, and “black self-determination”, used to be on the lips and in the writing of Biko’s exponents, but have been dropped from popular vocabulary. It is political manoeuvring on the part of Black Consciousness exponents not to use these phrases because they conjure up offensive images of white exclusion and unfounded black racism.

Ironically, most people respond with embarrassment when Biko’s political language is not covered in abstract jargon. In fact, those who use his kind of plain language are considered as caught in a time warp, backward, or lacking worldly sophistication.

Yet terms like black majority and black self-determination still accurately depict and project the plight and aspiration of the African people. Unfortunately, this reminds us that apartheid is still alive and has only shifted gear from politics to economics.

This realisation is unwelcome because it not only shatters the myth of the “rainbow nation”, but reveals that white power continues to over-determine and shape the destiny of most black people, especially those celebrated movers and shakers.

Despite class differences, many black people are subjected to racist assaults which undermine the spirit of black self-pride that Biko represented.

Significantly, the less privileged the individual, the less likely the media are to highlight and defend their human rights as enshrined in the Constitution.

Biko did not hesitate to engage (at an intellectual level too) an ordinary black hand, so to speak, who recognised racism and white exploitation. He wrote about these experiences in his seminal anthology of columns, *I write what I like*. He desired efforts to empower people from diverse backgrounds, including the lowly, and this entailed more than just paying lip service to the philosophy. He lived and died for it.

Of course, black movers and shakers in the media and other fields can come up with creative strategies to liberate themselves both psychologically and materially. We do not have to wait until black people own most facets of the economy before we can live and enjoy our lives as human beings. A measure of our self-determination is always in our own hands.

The memory and meaning of Steve Biko in the media should be a radical liberatory subjectivity, which puts self-determination into our thinking and habits of being in ways that give us the confidence to pursue the truth, wherever it takes us. Then our democracy will be founded on solid foundations. It can become a reality for every journalist irrespective of skin colour, class or background, only if we construct a liberated vision of a better life for all that will concretely improve the lives of the African majority. For example, there is nothing wrong with the much acclaimed Steve Biko Memorial Lecture taking place at the hallowed halls of the University of Cape Town and being turned into exclusive invitation-only banquets in Sandton. Or that programmes to uphold his legacy should be confined to a select few or one region of the country. But there is no reason why occasions that promote the memory and meanings of Biko, encouraging critical thinking and debate, should not be taking place among the ordinary folks to inspire them/us and give them/us a sense of self-determining political purpose.

These consciousness-raising opportunities rarely happen the way Biko did things because most black people across class and ideology have left community-rooted Black Consciousness behind. Even though an increasing number of black people have moved into Sandton and other suburbs, they are all socialised by the media to identify with values, habits, lifestyle and attitudes that remove them from the centres of their own lives: the “I am black and proud” African personality.

When the black-run media denies people access to content and programmes which are not rooted in their own memories and the meanings of their heroes, it splits the heart and mind and makes life harder and more painful.

Although the African Renaissance we see and hear of today echoes Steve Biko, 10 years into freedom there is very little that acknowledges his self-sacrifice, relevance and memory.

A shame.



Sandile Memela is acting editor of the weekly *Sunday World*, South Africa’s original tabloid newspaper. He writes a provocative column, “Mamelang” that critically focuses on the role of the black middle class, examines the soul of black folks and celebrates the prevailing confusion that is post-apartheid new South Africa. Issues of class division, race consciousness and the co-option of the black middle class keep this multi-award-winning journalist from sleeping.

Twitches of a dead monster

Sandile Dikeni volunteers to try and answer John Pilger's question of nearly 10 years ago: is apartheid dead?

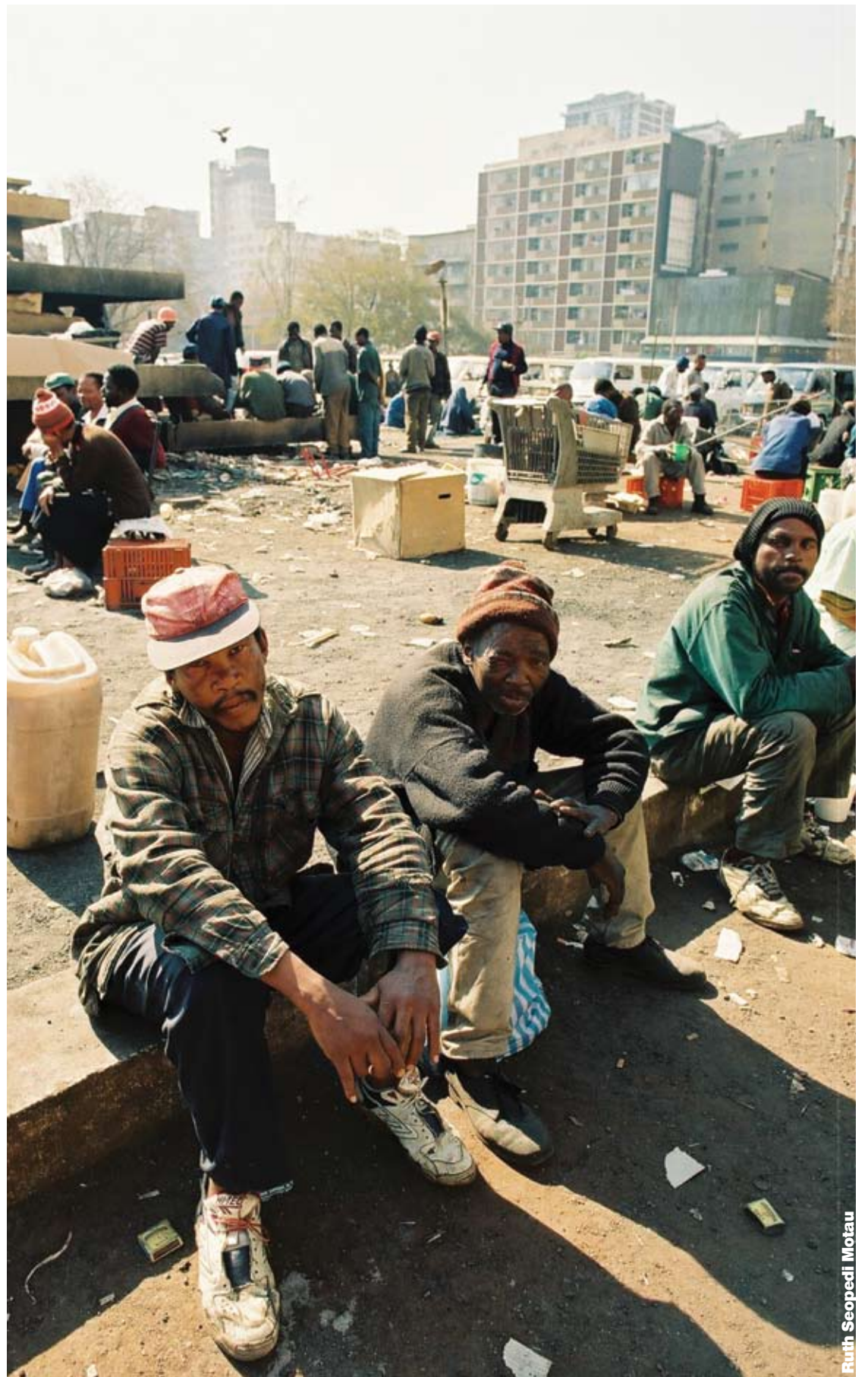
Nearly 10 years ago, when we began the elegy to apartheid – our eyes were still wet and our souls heavy at the prospect of an uncertain future under the blinding flags of a promised democracy – John Pilger, the Australian journalist, in a documentary he made on South Africa, asked the question: “Is apartheid dead?”

Those who at the time were placed to answer on our behalf (an impressive panel that included Khehla Shubane, Kgalema Motlanthe and some other dignitaries) never really answered him. Partly because he had answered the question for himself in his documentary with the same name, but also because those, who were supposed to answer him, were too eager to claim the scalp of the apartheid monster and hold it up high, instead of bearing witness to the birth of a baby called democracy. In this context their words became angry wind and the quality of their retorts became justification of the uncertainties that South Africans felt about their future.

Ten years down the line, I volunteer to answer John Pilger and all those who still want to ask the question.

Mr Pilger, your visit to my country came at a strange time. It was both the time of a death and the time of a birth. You found us with our eyes moist for the birth and the death. You found us with tears of sadness and tears of joy. We were at the mortuary and maternity wards of the same hospital. A graphic representation of that moment – you would certainly appreciate as a filmmaker – would probably be the last scene in a horror movie where the hero or the heroine stands above the corpse of the monster, weeping, and blinded by the tears and the moment does not see the subtle twitch of the hand or eye of the beast, that suggests to us as viewers – from a distance – the sequel.

“Those who were supposed to answer, were too eager to claim the scalp of the apartheid monster and hold it up high, instead of bearing witness to the birth of a baby called democracy.”



As a keen observer of the apartheid drama in South Africa, you might have observed a sequel in the making, when you pronounced that apartheid was not dead. I also believe that your observation might not necessarily have been, as many here at home said, “a wish that apartheid was alive so that the film be born”. I rather think it was an eyewitness account speaking of the passion of a progressive democrat willing to observe the death of an epoch of horror. In other words, a search for the reassurance that, “this thing” would not wake up.

As a co-observer, I must testify that there were moments in your testimony, when I was with you. But as a participant inside the moment, I knew that the best way of certifying death was by putting the

stethoscope against the chest of the beast and listening to its secret pulse. I have been listening for the last 10 years. And I now can tell you: apartheid is dead! It took some time to die, but it is now finally dead. There were the twitches that you observed; there still are some twitches; they are signs of a nervous system in collapse.

However, of what use is this pronouncement of death if it does not help us announce the other birth? Ten years after the announcement of the epoch of democracy, the most interesting question is certainly: “Has the baby been born?”

During this decade I have learnt that to midwife the birth of democracy is nearly as difficult as killing apartheid, and to kill a democracy is easier than to



Neo Nsona

kill apartheid.

I believe that the apartheid state has been transformed into a democracy. The new question is now whether this democracy, in its 10 years of existence, has delivered or is delivering the desired fruit to its citizens.

An easy way to answer this question might be provided by a quick reference to a government document titled *Towards a Ten Year Review*. You will be surprised by a flowing narrative that clinically tabulates the achievements of this new democracy. But even in this clinical narrative we are able to discern the hesitations due to the brutal realities of living within an inherited organisation called the nation state. In a somewhat dry manner the authors make this point early in the introduction: "The findings of the *Ten Year Review* need to be examined in terms of state power and its limitations. This will help determine whether certain objectives were in fact realisable if only the state was more efficient and whether there are some objectives that are beyond the scope of direct state intervention."

The above quote, which sounds and reads like an excerpt from a Trotskyite contribution to the politburo, forgets to mention the African context of the South African state.

Within the context of an African nation state (as undesirable as it might be for some of us), the South African democracy has done well in many respects. One aspect has been the maintenance of the state itself. The silent prediction was that African political power (read "black" and sometimes "neo-liberal" in our context) couldn't sustain state power. And so, governance outside the apartheid state paradigm, and in the hands of black political power, would fail. The new South African state is living evidence that "blacks actually can run a country!" But so what?

President Thabo Mbeki, in his 2004 State of the Nation address, lauded writer Rian Malan for his acknowledgement, in a piece reflecting on 10 years of democracy, that the South African state and system actually work!

Good for the president. Good for Rian Malan.

But for some of us, apart from the unreal fears of Malan and the white minority, the real question would be whether "state limitations" have allowed us in the last 10 years to provide for the poor of South Africa. Have the black poor finally found a path to walk out of crippling poverty towards a future where they can share in the wealth of a rich country they have built with their "dark, black granite hard hands" through tremor and toil?

Trying to find clear and final answers to these questions from the *Ten Year Review* is an arduous task. After a thorough read of the document, one feels guilty about the motives for reading it. It is as if the motives of the writers were planned in order to provide us with an alibi or some strange absolving mea culpa, when the poor confront us after 10 years of democracy.

And this is where I actually run away from the book and look somewhere else for what these 10 years have meant for me and for my country.

For a great part of these 10 years, I have woken up in sweat after a nightmare that persistently dominated my sleep. The mutilated face of my late grandmother framed the nightmare that tormented me as it dramatised my past of hurt, torture, humiliation and a desperate passion to fight and escape the apartheid dragon. The nightmare had become my personal symbol of what the face of apartheid really looked like: a face with multiple second-degree burns. Her charred lips revealed burnt and broken teeth where a stone had crushed her. There is a deep gash on the forehead where the stone pierced her burnt flesh and a mixture of blood and puss is gushing from it. The remains of her left eye, hanging on a sensitive thread of nerves and veins is contrasted by the right eye bleeding tears and black sticky liquid from her cornea. Her head revealing the light brown patches of the skull, where the fire licked both dermis and epidermis in attempts at devouring the innards of her brains. And then the stench of rotten flesh, mixed with the odour of bodily excretion, coloured by the distinctive pungent smell of naked fear. I hear the voice of the doctor asking her:

"Where does it hurt?" And she, with the last remaining broken eye and the painful movement of the muscle above her bleeding brow, indicating downwards towards her womanhood, where they tried to push a splintered, burning lance up her body. Or sometimes in a softer variable of the nightmare, her eyes again indicating downwards, because when they burnt her, the fabric of her underwear stuck to the skin of the softer parts of her underbody, and as she tried to remove it, tore the cooked flesh... And then I scream.

I started screaming in confinement at Victor Verster Maximum Security Prison. The screams became louder in solitary confinement at Macassar police station near Cape Town. And every time I wished the nightmare was a mere figment of my imagination, and that one day, I would wake up and realise that my poetic experimentations in dream form were merely the sad poetics of living in a horror land called apartheid. But it was not. My nightmare was a recall of a real incident.

My grandmother, Emily Manong, 78, was brutally murdered in a desperate micro-context of betrayal, poverty, envy, love and hate, in a small and extremely poor township in Victoria West in the Karoo. It was a black context the authoritative voice in the commercial media dubbed "black on black violence". The actual gory narration of the plot in this murder belongs to a novel or some other artistic expression. The real cold brutal fact is that her murderers were never convicted. In one ironic fashion, this trial was a witness to the warped soul of apartheid's judicial system. In another, it was a sobering moment about how much expectation we had heaped on the system. The apartheid court could not get a conviction because the real murderer was apartheid itself. The macro context of this murder was apartheid.

It was only after the introduction of a new state that we could bear witness to the scars in our souls: when the TRC allowed us to testify to our future. And even then, we could only offer fragments of the real horror picture. I do not think there is a final narrative that will be able to capture the horror of our time.

But then there is a future, slippery and unpredictable, that the new architects of our society are attempting to build with dreams and a few concretes.

The task so well attacked, even prematurely, by the early autopsy of John Pilger, has been about how we mirror the national contours and even the hidden faces of this South African discourse in the new media which is available to us. The challenge had to do with the fact that Pilger, an outsider, provided us with some mirror reflecting aspects of ourselves and probably led us to a controversial discourse we were not ready for.

The challenge for us as narrators of our own history and discourse is how we present it to media like the SABC, in a space and time allowed by our own readiness, and that of the publisher, without hurting ourselves because of our proximity both in time and narrative to the story to be told.

Ten years down the line I have found only some of the words and images representing my own reflections. This is an indication that apartheid is dead. But the real death will be when these images (not only mine, but many of ours) populate our screens and pages to the point where we recognise ourselves on a daily basis in the chase of a normality and a return to some humanity, better than what our history represented and still represents.

For now, I am happy to say that my eyes are dry, and in a way, I am ready to see and read in a clear manner. My nightmares are also ebbing away.



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Benny Gool
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The promise of democracy

M&G Ad



Waste, good stories and bad feelings

Kopano Ratele
wonders what sort of new collective identity our media are making for us.

It is a Tuesday morning in May 2004, a few weeks after the big celebration of 10 years of political freedom at the Union Buildings. Before even stepping out the back door of the house, I know there will be a small foreign tribe on the streets of the neighbourhood where I live. Some members of the tribe, from the experience of other Tuesdays, are young-looking, others old, some thin as a new year's wind around these parts, and all are in dirty clothes; all my colour, all but one, my sex.

On cue, as I push the bin through the gate, there is a head inside neighbour David's garbage bin. David moved into number 12 a few months ago. I've never met him, to tell the truth. We may only have nodded at each other once. My partner has spoken to David's parents. They had bought the property for him, they said.

The head lifts, as I leave my bin on the kerb for the garbage truck and walk back into the yard, but not before our eyes meet.

I nod. He nods back.

I get back into the yard, close the gate behind me, and make my way into the house, as he closes the lid of the bin, throws something onto his Pick 'n Pay trolley, steps off the kerb onto the road, and pulls away.

I will forget the man. No, this is not entirely true; there are more processes happening here than I am able to describe in this story. Psychosocial relations and identities in particular, and everyday

life in general, are characterised by excess, waste, a thousand and one fragments which, however hard we try, can never fit into a story. (This debris of our daily lives is, ironically, what motivates stereotype, racism and sexism. All these are attempts to reduce and regularise social relations and simplify the world.) The same holds for cultural life and psychological relations in South Africa: distinguished not by linearity and natural order, but by complexity, disorderliness and always excess; not by formulae but by illusiveness, fragmentation, movement – and because of the spectacle, the madness of apartheid in our country, exaggeratedly so.

It is a social scientific truism that a group is more than its individual constituents. This ought also to be understood in the sense that the whole may be lessened and coloured by the parts that constitute it. There is therefore profit to be drawn, from studying the differences among the individual elements of the group, in trying to understand the group, in investigating the personal in an attempt to make sense of the socio-political subjectivities, in trying to understand the nation.

These twin mirror problems have bedevilled the social and psychological sciences from the onset: that the nation is made up of individuals, and that the single individual is nothing if not an incomplete representative of the different groups that make up the nation.

To get back to the man... no, I can't forget the man, for then I would have to forget myself. How can I, when he is part of us, something that can't be overlooked; when he reduces our freedom, something that has to be reported until it is fixed. Having said that, I will be able to go on with the minutiae of my still fairly new suburban life, my still fairly new democratic right to be here.

In particular, it is the wretched situation of the men that can't be pushed out of the head that easily; the picture of these men pulling contraband shopping trolleys and foraging for rotten food that can't be forgotten. For what occurred this morning is a variation of an interaction that happens every Tuesday morning around here. This is replayed on suburban streets around the country on garbage collection day. And what happened today, the mind is learning, not without struggle, to process, or more correctly, repress; and the eye is learning to overlook, not without unwelcome emotions, the images at many traffic lights of our new country.

If for no other reason, I can't ignore the situation of the men because another man, or perhaps this same man, came to David's or my bin last week, or the week before that. This or another man will knock on my door on another day in the near future. Maybe I will rifle through the refrigerator or food cupboard for something for him, if I feel generous at that moment. If I don't, I will peep at him from behind the slot for letters in the front door and say sorry, I have nothing. I will lie. I will feel uneasy for a beat or two. And then I will go back to listening to Gil Scott-Heron about the revolution that's not on television, or finish last Friday's *Mail & Guardian*, or brew myself a cup of Kenyan coffee, while visualising Walden Bello's different world before going to work.

Beside the big stories this month, Abu Ghraib, Brenda Fassie and the football World Cup bid, a man scavenging in the garbage bins in a Cape Town suburb on a May morning in 2004 is not going to make front page. Come to think of it, it won't make any other page.

Why not? Besides the fact that hordes of able-bodied men are always having to rummage for dumped food is a story with no words to tell it, this



Benny Gool



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is another kind of surplus to the story of freedom and the rainbow nation. More to the point, there is no story to this story. Not when compared to getting an angle on Danny Jordaan, or, going back a few years, to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings. Not against the exploits of Colin Chauke nor the case of Moses Sithole. Not when put alongside stories of the Norwood killer, urban terror in the Western Cape, or the station strangler. And there is certainly no contest, when put alongside Nelson Mandela becoming the first president of the democratic society and the winning of the 1995 Rugby World Cup. Abjectly poor men on the street of formerly white suburbia are not an important story. Only a mad editor would send a journalist to cover this one.

And the matter here is a good story, isn't it? But what in freedom's name is a good story?

Winnie Mandela, for what Desiree Lewis might call her "uncontainable excess", is always a good story. A gory crime story is always good, especially if it involves lots of blood. Or treachery, be it racial, familial, national. Something or other about race can be winner. A spectacular piece about racism can fill up the time nicely and get us audiences, particularly if it makes us feel good about ourselves and makes others feel bad. A scoop involving corrupt executives and public officials, that's also good and easy enough to put on a street pole. I can't see how you can beat these.

In other words, bad stuff makes good copy. Give me death, then we can give our readers something. Rape will do fine as well. Let it be something horribly sensational: a woman who murders her husband; a father who sodomises his stepdaughter.

True, the good stuff can be used to fill the inches sometimes, but we are not Oprah, or some women's magazine; we have to have a good angle. Elections

are okay too, but they have to be reported in an entertaining way. What about a president sitting on the floor in a shack somewhere? Otherwise sport. That is always a sure-fire winner; if all else fails you can count on sport.

What do these fat sensational stories make us, though? For it is out of these and other representations and images that identities are formed, reproduced, challenged. There is no evading it: a story on the gang-rape of Swiss tourists can't but say something about us. No, I am not saying the press should close its eyes to bad stories, but one must wonder what tragic story after tragic story, when put along a thousand possible other stories, signals about the collective identity we're trying to build here.

In addition, since it is commonplace that the media is a centrally influential grouping of social actors in making subjects, we can't but wonder what sorts of new subjects our media is making us into. What, a careful reader going through our papers, watching our television channels and listening to our radio might at some time think, is the sort of nation being fashioned or reinforced?

This, such a careful reader might think, is a nation of sensationalists. Now if it were always before the 1990s, then all the media are doing is simply holding up for us a mirror so we can see ourselves. If this is the case, then our media are among the best in the world. In other words, South African journalists, Felicia Mabuza-Suttle and disc jockeys can't be blamed if we are a nation that feeds on voyeurism. The words and images found us like this. All the media is doing by reserving depth and thought for the opinion or comment pages is giving the people what they want. What the people do not need is critical intellectual twaddle.

There was *South* and *New Nation* back then of course. There is John Matshikiza, and there was

the *Daily Mail* and *Weekly Mail*. There is something funny about David Bullard, but then there was Stephen Mulholland's other voice before his. There are the features of Bongani Madondo and there is Phyllicia Oppelt. And not too long ago we used to receive the beautiful and barely concealed love-letters from Justice Malala from London and then New York. There is the *Mail&Guardian* and *ThisDay*. The *Despatches* in the *Sunday Independent* are also a good way to pass a weekend morning, even when they report the horrors committed in the name of freedom. There are the documentaries on SABC1, of varying quality as they are. And there is Zola.

Notwithstanding these, let us not get carried away. Emotion, and a bit more easing up on the analytical bit, is what should be our nation's motto. Look at the sales figures of *Die Son* and *Daily Sun*; the readership of *You*. People love titillation, you can't change their nature.

But I could swear, I learned that there were once many serious revolutionaries around here, men and women dedicated to noble and other big and darkly causes. Some of them even went to jail for a long time rather than live unfree lives. And so if this latter is what is true about South Africa, then much of our media are busy making us into a people with a shallow inner life and little idealism, exactly at the moment when they could write us into authentic equality. From much of the media we learn that most of our lives is surface. To watch the news and read the dailies about the lives of South African subjects goes no deeper than their erogenous zones.

So what has a journalist to do?

How about thinking twice about killing a singer before she is dead. How about telling the only worthy story to tell when reporting on a psychically conflicted young man of mixed descent, a story of a life that's lived. And when one truly follows a story, one realises that reality always exceeds its representation. It can't be reduced to a sensational headline.

As anyone who has ever dared to put it into just the right words shall tell you, there is always more interview material than you can put into 800 words. There is usually more footage than we can use. There is more that's going on than we have senses. People say: it's hard to explain. Or they might say: you had to be there. It does not matter whether the story is about a master robber, a serial murderer, a freedom fighter who became president, People Against Gangsterism and Drugs, or Francois Pienaar: what is written or shown about an event, relations between people, or a person's action is always less than the event or action itself.

It is true that, at the same time that we are confronted with this excess, the modes we employ to represent social psychological life, a nation becoming free, or two men's relations with one another or with themselves, limits what we can say about it. The same holds for what we call identity.

An individual or nation's identity, like the life they emerge out of, are characterised by inessentials rather than essentials. Thus essence is a fake. At best, essence is, like stereotype, a bad attempt at trying to get a handle on society, not an attempt to understand it. Identities have more to them than we can capture in words or pictures, or any other sign.

Indeed the very attempt to put it down into words is an attempt to fix it. In writing about identity we cannot but be reductive. Yet since we can't do without identifying ourselves, trying to represent as fully and complexly as possible our community, neighbours, nation, who we really are, is an illusion which is absolutely necessary.

Knowing who we are, reading about ourselves, and talking to ourselves and to others, is something

we cannot live without.

In a way this is the major struggle of South African media today: to be aware that it is to the papers and radio and television that many people look to find out who we, or they, are. To put it differently: seeing there is always a deep sense of insecurity about our identities, since who we are is illusive, we

constantly have to rehearse and reinforce our sense of who we are. Thus, if there is one function that reporters, radio deejays and television news-anchors perform for their audiences, it is that we get it, if only for a Tuesday morning; it is a damn hard task, but they must assist South Africans to understand, not merely react, feel, rage.

SAASTA Ad

Bring da noise

Youth culture and freedom

Adam Haupt

I was asked to reflect on the extent to which freedom has changed the airwaves with regard to South African youth culture/s and local music. I would, instead, like to suggest that much of the reverse is true. It is true that the democratic transition opened up new possibilities for artists. But I contend that youth culture – specifically hip-hop – has played a significant role in facilitating the democratic transition: by smoothing the way for young black subjects' access to the public sphere.

Freedom became a political reality in April 1994, but a great deal needed to be done to make this a reality in terms of everyday experiences, especially with regard to socio-economic issues. The work of cultural and community activists played a significant role in claiming space in the public sphere – in performance and media spaces – previously unavailable to young black people, and thus needing to be claimed with vigour.

Nancy Fraser argues that “the proliferation of a multiplicity of competing publics is [not] necessarily a step away from [...] greater democracy”. She offers the term “subaltern counterpublics to signal that they [these media] are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs”. By extension, politically oppositional work by early hip-hop crews like Black Noise and Prophets of da City (POC) made it possible for “counterdiscourses” to be developed and thereby enrich our fledgling democracy. As I will suggest later, attempts at constructing

“parallel discursive arenas” continue in the work of some of the younger hip-hop artists.

Prior to the kwaito explosion in the mid '90s, hip-hop attempted to lay claim to the public sphere via the Black Consciousness (BC) inspired challenges to apartheid in the music of hip-hop crews like POC and Black Noise. Much of their work was supported by workshops and awareness programmes, such as Black Noise's *Heal the Hood*, 1998, and POC's voter education programme or anti-drug tour in 1993. POC's explicit wariness of attempts at reconciliation on their 1993 album *Age of Truth* placed the crew at odds with censors, political parties, as well as their music distributor, placing its future on shaky ground. A great deal of POC's provocative BC-aligned work on albums such as *Age of Truth*, *Phunk Phlow* and *Ghetto Code* set the scene for the newer generations of hip-hop heads. A number of heads were engaged in creative projects, but the most prominent crews at the time were Black Noise and POC.

On the whole, it seemed as if the hip-hop scene in South Africa was facing a cul de sac, particularly in the face of the growing popularity of gangsta rap. Ten years later, the scene seems to have turned itself around in Jo'burg and Cape Town. In the past, Jo'burg was seen to be decidedly less “conscious” than Cape Town's hip-hop heads. This perception no longer holds, particularly when considering the work of Tumi and the Volume, Cashless Society, H2O and the Hymphatic Thabs. Cape Town has seen a significant growth in range of artists, including female crew Godessa, Brasse vannie Kaap, Moodphase 5ive, Fifth Floor, Parliament, and

individual emcees such as the late Devious and Caco.

I distinguish between “conscious” hip-hop, gangsta rap and R&B/hip-hop pop music. In “conscious” hip-hop circles, the term “hip-hop heads” – or just “heads” – is often used by hip-hop communities to refer to those who embrace hip-hop subculture. The obvious appeal of the alliteration and metonym aside, the term alludes to the idea that hip-hop practitioners engage with the medium with a significant level of consciousness and critical awareness. The “conscious” hip-hop notion of “knowledge of self” is purported to drive all of the different elements of hip-hop (rapping, b-boying, aerosol art, and deejaying) as individual physical self-expressions. This alludes to the belief that you need to engage in serious critical introspection before you can make a meaningful contribution to your political and social context as an artist, intellectual or activist.

Gangsta rap, R&B and pop music in general operate in a largely mainstream context. Artists such as Warren G, Snoop Doggy Dog and Dr.Dré are commonly associated with the gangsta rap genre, which has often been accused of cementing stereotypes of black male subjects as violent, misogynist gangsters.

The concept “bling-bling” has often been used by these artists, alluding to their lyrical fascination with signifiers of wealth, such as gold jewels, flashy cars, as well as sexually available women. However, some gangsta rappers – like the late Tupac Shakur, with his *Dear Mama* – have managed to produce ‘conscious’ lyrics.



The tidy binary between “conscious” and gangsta rap has thus been blurred on a number of occasions. Artists such as Jay Z, Puff Daddy/P Diddy and Missy Elliot have also managed to fuse R&B and rap for the mainstream pop market. Boy bands like InSync, and solo pop artists like Justin Timberlake have managed to tap into this.

Much like POC and Black Noise, the new generation of emcees employ hip-hop as a means through which they make sense of life in post-apartheid South Africa. These emcees therefore tap into notions of knowledge of self, and some of them cite crews like POC as a key inspiration for their own work. Dick Hebdige contends that subcultures “represent ‘noise’ (as opposed to sound): interference in the orderly sequence which leads from real events and phenomena to their representation in the media”. Subculture interrupts the “process of ‘normalisation’” and contradicts “the myth of consensus” in its attempts to challenge hegemony. Hip-hop as a subculture is engaged in a struggle over the sign in its attempts to challenge mainstream representations of those on the margins. However, these attempts come at a price. Crews like POC have faced censorship and poor record sales with the release of albums like *Age of Truth*, specifically. These difficulties have been documented by the crew itself in songs such as *Cape Crusader*:

*My pockets are broken, cause the prophet is
outspoken
They say mindless topics only get the crowd open
They even said you’ve got to sound like this one or
that one
Silence is golden, even platinum
And drop the knowledge trip and politics
and holler shit to get the Rand and the Dollar quick
Life is kinda funny with the gospel it sends me
Money can test your morals if your tummy’s empty
Being desolate can tempt a kid for duckets
and say anything to benefit the pockets
I just hope I stay true for later and remain a Cape
crusader
(POC, 1997).*

Hebdige reminds us that subcultures speak through commodities and therefore work from within the operation of capitalist processes of retail, marketing and distribution. Hip-hop, much like punk subculture or reggae before it, thus walks a tightrope and it is “fairly difficult [...] to maintain any absolute distinction between commercial exploitation [...] and creativity/originality [...] even though these categories are emphatically opposed in the value systems of most subcultures”. The very means, then, that “conscious” hip-hop artists use to issue its challenges to hegemony are the very means by which their work can be co-opted by the conservative mainstream. It is arguable that much of the mainstream hip-hop, or kwaito, for that matter, available from mainstream media, has crossed this line, particularly with regard to its gender discourse.

While work by a number of artists continues to engage with debates about racial identity and the legacy of apartheid (for example, Black Noise, Tumi, and Emile Jansen’s solo work), hip-hop artists such as Godessa, Tumi and the Volume and Moodphase 5ive engage with topics such as AIDS, gender violence and globalisation. Some of these artists’ work has been supported by former POC emcee and producer Shaheen Ariefdien via workshops such as HIV HOP, Youth Against AIDS (YAA) and ALKEMY (Alternative Kerriculum [sic] for Mentoring Youth). Ariefdien and the Broadcast Training Initiative’s Nazli Abrahams have been key in facilitating education programmes employing hip-hop as a tool to engage

“While work by a number of artists continues to engage with debates about racial identity and the legacy of apartheid, other artists engage with topics such as AIDS, gender violence and globalisation.”



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individuals who might not necessarily have access to higher education. The programme includes teaching aspects of creative writing (rap lyrics, prose), as well as critical theory, drawing on anthropological and postcolonial texts. Students in the programme might typically engage with theorists like Noam Chomsky, Frantz Fanon, Michael Parenti, Edward Said, Michel Foucault or Ferdinand de Saussure. Established artists like Godessa and the late Devious have also benefited from these workshops and have continued to collaborate with Ariefdien and Abrahams on a number of projects.

Godessa’s collaboration with Moodphase 5ive offers a positive example of the kind of work younger heads produce, and points to the kind of contribution hip-hop continues to make to the public sphere via its discursive practices. The crews worked together on *Got to Give*, which received a significant amount of airplay on commercial radio stations like Metro FM and Cape community radio station Bush Radio. The song offers four narratives about heterosexual women’s relationships with men. In the last stanza Godessa’s EJ von Lyrik and Moodphase 5ive’s D.Form enact a boy-meets-girl scenario. D.Form’s stereotypical player persona sees a girl at a mall and decides to pursue her as he declares her the “princess of my ghetto body collection”. The player persona is not unlike a number of township youngsters, who make distinctions between the different women with whom they have sex. Here, a distinction is made between “spares and besties”. Condoms are only needed when having sex with “spare” women, as opposed to “besties”, who are steady partners and who, presumably, do not have multiple sexual partners themselves. The male conquest motif is established in the song, and the stanza reaches a climax when D.Form declares: “We nice and tipsy now, feeling frisky now / Wanna take it to the next level / We can play angel and devils.”

EJ responds: “So where your rubber at?”

The smooth talker replies: “But baby, you see, let me take you on a ride to the stars bareback, you see.”

This exchange hints at the sorts of compromises women are expected to make in heterosexual encounters that are meant to be consensual, making them vulnerable to HIV infection. Von Lyrik’s assertive reply hints at the idea that such scenarios are anything but consensual – a return to the notion of noise:

*Listen, I don’t want to engage in this communication
Let’s sit down, have a drink and a good conversation
[...]
You see, whenever we together, I’m the one always tripping
Before you slip in
and our bodies create a rhythm, this is for certain
I can make you understand sticking to the plan
Won’t make you less of man
(Moodphase 5ive & Godessa, 2002).*

The song speaks to a set of experiences not often articulated in the public sphere – at least not in ways that move beyond misogynist representations by gangsta rappers or some kwaito musicians. It also speaks to female artists’ attempts to access the public sphere on their own terms and articulate a set of issues that often do not get addressed positively in the mainstream media.

What is at stake here is a question of access to the means of production and self-representation.

Johannesburg-based crew Tumi and the Volume’s album *At the Baseline* offers another positive example. Their popular song 76 keeps South Africa’s history of youth struggle against apartheid in the



popular consciousness, whilst *Yvonne* keeps gender on the agenda, engaging with gendered violence in the country. It is performed as a playful seduction, in which Tumi’s persona charms/harasses a beautiful woman into giving him her number. The female character, Yvonne, is raped in the narrative by two thugs.

From her narrative it becomes apparent how difficult it is for women to negotiate their way through public spaces like the streets of Johannesburg:

*A five minute walk, through this place
Takes an hour in the city
See brothers act rude and throw gestures at you
Some will even try to grab like you in a petting zoo
You gotta get fully dressed and not summon suggestions
That will get you pressed to brothers
Thinking you show interest
I may be bugging but it’s like slavery or something
These cats mastered the art of space invasion but fuck it
I will deal with it tell them straight
How they make me feel and shit
It gets to a point where I feel conflict is imminent
(Tumi and the Volume, 2003).*

The serious end to a seemingly playful narrative raises questions about Tumi’s persona in the song, as well as what constitutes acceptable behaviour with



Neo Ntsoma



Neo Ntsoma

regard to gender practices. No easy consensus is immediately available here.

It is by placing marginal subjects' concerns on the agenda that youth culture is playing a significant role in making freedom a reality. Further evidence for this claim can be found in the fact that SABC1's hit edusoap *Yizo Yizo* has included kwaito and hip-hop artists – like Zola, H20, Skwatta Kamp and Kabelo – on its soundtracks. The challenges to these attempts include the increasing commodification of youth culture as well as the pervasiveness of US cultural imperialism. These challenges have been acknowledged via programmes like ALKEMY, as well as with songs like POC's *Wack MC's* – which offers a scathing attack on gangsta rap – and Godessa's *Social Ills*, a critique of US imperialism in the economic and cultural society.

It is in this sense that these “conscious” hip-hop heads continue to make noise in their attempts to raise critical consciousness and produce “counter-discourses” which challenge seemingly seamless processes through which consent is manufactured by dominant classes.

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Neo Ntsoma

Hanging out our own washing



South African soap operas bring their own interpretation of post-apartheid lifestyles onto our small screens, says Zingisa Mkhuma.

As we moved into the late '80s and the *Dynasty* generation lost interest and moved on, in came the most popular international-acclaimed soapie, *The Bold and the Beautiful*. It attracted an even younger and bigger following than *Dynasty* did. *The Bold*, as it is fondly known here, is a wealth of lessons in how money, youth, beauty and talent can take people to heights they never thought possible. Exposure to *The Bold* has given rise to a generation bent on emulating the lifestyles of the rich and famous.

Based on the success of *The Bold*, it was a matter of time before local producers came up with our own local version to keep us captivated. And so *Generations*, the oldest and the most popular home-brewed soapie, born almost 10 years ago, is watched by many races. *Generations* has certainly been ahead of the game in promoting the idea that black African people

could be captains of industry and power-players. From the outset, it introduced the central theme of the show: advertising agencies headed and largely staffed by black South Africans.

Although this sounded mythical – an advertising agency headed by a black family, as was the case with the Morokas – in the last 10 years we have had several successful and black-owned agencies such as Azaguys, The Agency and Herdbuoys (now Herdbuoys McCann Erickson South Africa). In the early days of *Generations*, there were many white faces with major roles. This has changed slowly; the white actors today are a much smaller percentage of the cast, which is a truer reflection of the demographics of the country.

As a sign of the times, *Generations* also brought to our screens a non-racial society which was beginning to shape itself along the same lines as a real post-



Ruth Seopedi Motau



Zingisa Mkhuma edits *Verve*, the lifestyle section of *The Star* newspaper. As a survivor of the 1976 turmoil, she is grateful to be alive and is currently thinking of writing a book of her experiences of June 16 to pay tribute not only to her school mates, dead and alive, but also to the ordinary men and women who supported South African youth as they marched against Bantu education and other oppressions.

apartheid South African society. We began to see how people of different races and cultures shared a house, and some even a bedroom, without the social structure crumbling. Initially, the scriptwriters trod carefully. We had white married to white and black African kissing black African.

But gradually, as we moved into the late '90s, the tempo shifted. We had our first dose of mixed relationships.

Another milestone for *Generations* is that over the past year in particular, the producers have shifted the language goalposts, moving away from the original, all English dialogue, to an almost "50/50-mix" (as Mandoza would say) of African languages. There are English subtitles when the actors speak in various African languages, from Xhosa to Sotho.

The script is often written to reflect major changes in our country, such as the first elections,

and the most recent ones. We have had local music stars come in and out at intervals.

Sexual and romantic relationships across the colour line, family and sexual abuse – all issues pertinent to our society also affect characters in the soapie. Storylines with HIV have been included. The issue they don't seem to have got right to date is homosexuality. There was a storyline some time ago about a bisexual character (Vivian), but the plot was turned into blood and gore. All the bad things that happened were blamed on her "deranged" bisexual female lover. We don't need scenes which are going to perpetuate stereotypes about gay people. The fact that they quickly made sure Vivian was heterosexual didn't help the matter and must have left a lot of gay viewers hanging.

Recently there has been a sub-plot with a straight guy pretending to be gay to be near the girl he loves (a storyline used endlessly in the movies over the years). Then the producers made their feelings on gays very clear by using derogatory terms, describing the so-called gay guy as a "moffie". But again, one can argue this is how some people still refer to gay men.

The popular series *Isidingo* has also shown how soapies are dealing with post-apartheid South African trends when it comes to relationships. There was the much talked-about relationship between Derek Nyathi and Phillipa de Villiers, the former mine manager's daughter. In the South Africa of old, the norm was that young, beautiful black women inadvertently fell in love with old white men. But De Villiers and Nyathi were both young, vivacious and have a great on-screen chemistry, which at times fooled the public into believing they were a real-life couple.

There is current mine manager, Jack van Onselen, a coloured man who married a white woman and adopted her teenage daughter as well. Then the inspirational story of Agnes Matabane who came from a rural area to join her husband in the mines. With her entrepreneurial spirit, prevalent among African women in real-life situations, Agnes sells chicken feet to increase her husband's salary. At the same time, she goes to adult literacy classes. At present she has made a name for herself and her family, and like many middle class South Africans, has invested a great deal in her children's education at private schools.

Agnes' battle against her husband's wish to take a second wife also reflects a dilemma many women, especially the black elite, are grappling with. It is an open secret that some of the new black millionaires have second wives or mistresses. In most instances, the older wife will resist, while young women are much more obliging.

Despite her gallant efforts, life hasn't been smooth sailing for Agnes. She had to fight a sad battle as her husband, disregarding her unhappiness, went ahead and impregnated young Refiloe, once the family helper. Tradition forced Agnes to swallow the bitter pill and stay in the marriage, which is still the case in our society today.

Female characters have shifted from the married, stay-at-home mum, trying to raise successful heirs to the throne, to the single, successful, entrepreneur or professional woman in her 20s or early 30s. This is the type of woman that every new magazine on our shelves is targeting with its glossy covers, selling sex, fashion and beauty stories. She is every man's dream, because of her youth. She has some brains and is not shy about the fact that she will not fall in love with just any man. It has to be someone with money, power and status.

These are the women, who unlike their mothers,

who sought freedom, are seeking "slavery – they want the Ring, the White Wedding, the Bugaboo Frog Stroller – and hey, let them have it," noted British author Erica Jong. They too will mature and eventually come out of this phase.

Generations has responded to local and international trends towards younger characters by the slow but sure removal of older characters. First it was Baba, the old boarding house owner (wife and then former wife of the barman Sonny), who we were told was given the boot gently, more because of her age (early 50s by the look of her) than her colour. Recently it was the character of Dr Mandla Sithole (Fana Mokoena) in his mid-40s by all accounts, who bit the bullet – literally in his case. In a recent interview, the producer would not be drawn into the matter choosing to say: "We have now settled into the new *Generations*." So does this mean other key characters like Mattie (Shaleen Surtie Richards) and Sonny (Cedwyn Joel) – both, we were told some time ago, would be given the boot from the show – will be on their way out soon or could already have been written out?

What all this means is that television producers are following many 21st century media trends, including the sidelining of maturity in favour of the up-and-coming youth. So, yes, in this too, *Generations* is staying within the new decade guidelines.

Back to *Isidingo*. Now going for about six years, it had started out (set on a mine outside Johannesburg) with a whiter-than-white cast except for the shots of the poor sods working down the mine. However, throughout its run it has gone to great pains to grow and change and the scripts clearly reflect that. Over the past two years, black Africans have been given far greater roles, central to the storylines.

Isidingo has also moved away from mine life and into a television studio scenario, which gives the show the chance to mix white and black characters – right now about a 60/40 share in favour of black Africans. The language is predominantly English although a few African language lines are thrown in here and there.

Isidingo is brilliant at bringing the script right up to date by shooting news of the day into the day's filming. On the day of the most recent elections, characters were talking about it and holding the day's newspaper with the appropriate headlines.

On the sexual side of things they too have gone through the whole shebang. Older woman, younger man, affairs, mixed race romances and the like.

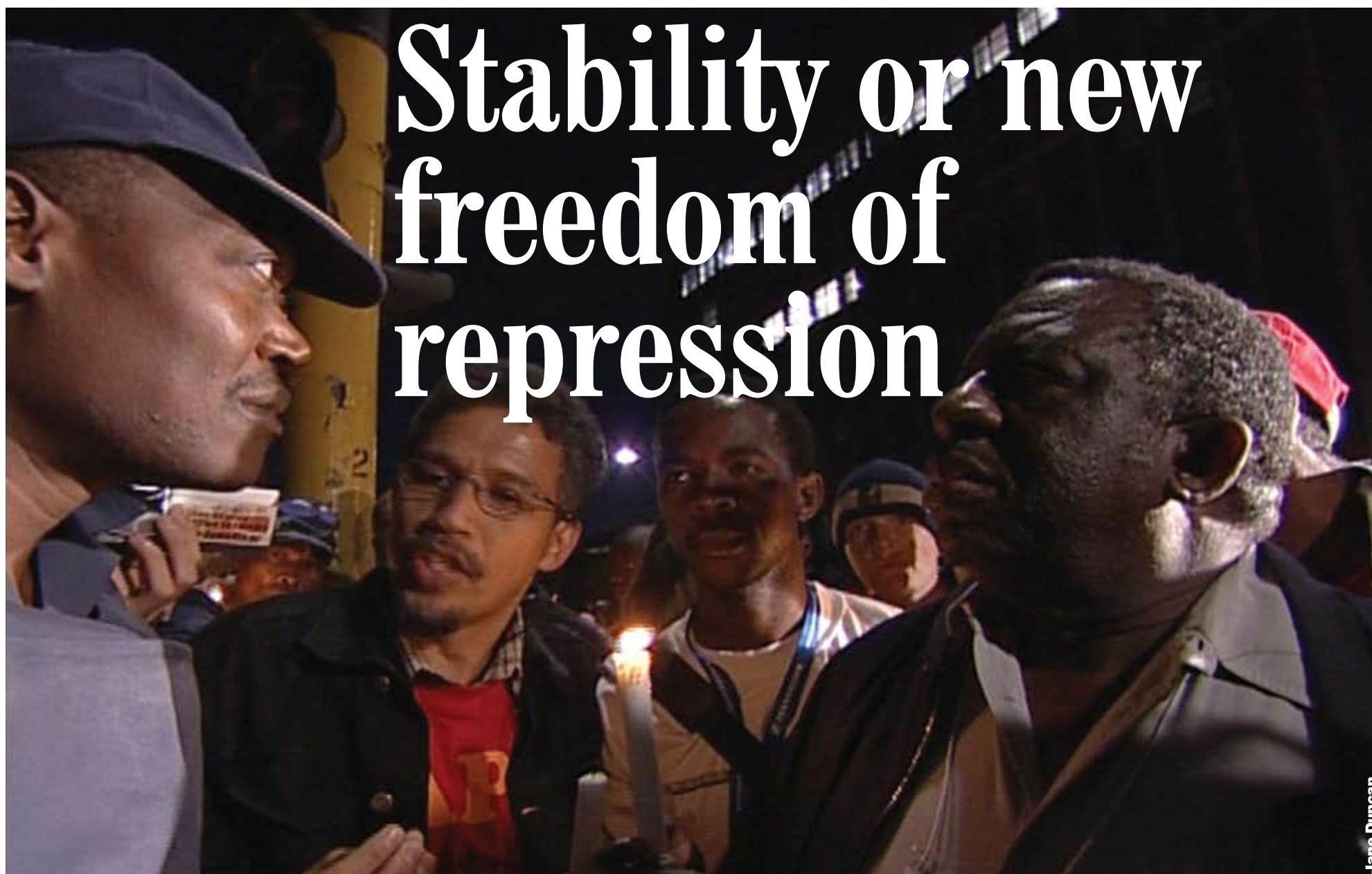
Perhaps the most captivating story has been the story of love and endurance between Parsons Matabane and Nandipha Sithole, who is HIV positive. The two have been through hell as young people who are in love and dealing with the stigma surrounding HIV/Aids. Viewers have been educated about challenges faced by people living with HIV/Aids and those who support them. For instance, once Matabane's family found out that Nandipha was HIV positive, they rejected her and went as far as refusing to eat food prepared by her because they feared being infected.

We have also been educated about the sacrifices women like Agnes have to make. The upside to Agnes's story is that her children will probably be those that we see on the youngest and latest entry in soapie stakes, *Backstage*.

This is the generation that wants to see itself on the big screen or on the stage. Young, talented and ambitious, this soapie is a reflection of where we are as a country. The pressures of being young – drugs, alcohol, crime and fame – are all reflected in this new soapie.



VENUS



Jane Duncan takes a critical look at 10 year's freedom of expression and finds a lot to worry about. South Africa, eager to demonstrate normalised relations with the world, takes old-style measures against internal conflicts and dissent.

In 1991, on the eve of the Gulf War, then-US-President, George Bush Senior, promised a "new world order" without dictatorships and wars. Since then, the opposite has happened, as the US have used military means to extend their economic influence on many parts of the world. The only potential competition for this global supremacy has emerged from the European Union (EU).

However, US and EU inter-imperialist rivalry has been at the expense of the African continent. By 1996, Africa accounted for 10% of the world population, yet enjoyed less than 1% of global trade and 2.4% of the global GDP, 40% of which was produced by South Africa and Nigeria. It was in this context of heightened continental marginalisation that South Africa, in 1994, held its first democratic elections.

The "new South Africa" had to address the legacy of apartheid in spite of mounting hostility to radical redistribution projects from the dominant players in the new world order. Its initial response was the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), superseded by the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Plan (Gear). It put redistribution on the backburner until the economy was stabilised through austere fiscal measures. The government adapted its notion of the "develop-

mental state" to what it considered an inevitable economic path. However, two events called this into question: The first was the rise of global resistance to neo-liberalism and US imperialism. The anti-globalisation demonstrations of 1999 in Seattle had led to the establishment of the World Social Forum, which brought together Northern anti-globalisation organisations and social movements in the South.

Since Seattle, it has become impossible for the captains of global order to meet unchallenged. The war in Iraq led to the largest demonstrations in recent memory, with over 30 million people marching against US intentions to invade Iraq.

The second event was the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, which the US used as an excuse to pursue its foreign policy objective of increasing (military) control over strategic oil supplies. It also used its global leverage to persuade more and more countries to promulgate anti-terrorist legislation, and enhance their surveillance capacities. So while resistance to imperialism and neo-liberalism have increased globally, so has repression.

Meanwhile South Africa embraced democracy with high hopes for freedom of expression. Many assumed that censorship was consigned to the dustbin of history. This was, however, not to be. Gear's

imposition succeeded in stabilising aspects of the economy, but at the expense of economic equality. Apart from massive unemployment (currently at approximately 42% of the population), recent statistics released by the Labour Research Services point to a widening wage gap; what the *Sunday Times*, on 9 May 2004 called the "club of the super rich" – people worth more than R200 million – has grown fourfold since 1994.

These wealth gaps placed freedom of expression under new pressure. Conflicts around economic policy emerged between the ruling African National Congress (ANC), the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu). They led to the expulsion of several members of the alliance for criticising Gear and its Igoli 2002 plan. Conflicts surfaced in Cosatu over whether the alliance with the ANC should continue, considering its labour-displacing policies like privatisation. For instance in 2003, the Wits region of the Chemical, Energy, Paper, Printing, Wood and Allied Workers Union (CEPPWAWU) called for a referendum on the alliance, following a dismal turnout at the Cosatu strike against privatisation. This call led to a lengthy struggle between the National Executive Committee and the region, eventually

"South Africa embraced democracy with high hopes for freedom of expression. Many assumed that censorship was consigned to the dustbin of history. This was, however, not to be."

suspending the regional office bearers of the union. In response, the entire Wits region broke away and joined an independent union.

On 26 July 2003, the chairman of the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF) and former head of the CEPP-WAWU Wits region, John Appolis, was assaulted by Cosatu members at a regional congress in Johannesburg, after it was announced from the podium that “there are reactionaries outside”. These incidents showed that the spaces for changing policy through debate within the alliance were closing up.

The government was eager to mask dissent as well, to bolster its international image. It pursued events that would demonstrate it had normalised its relations with the world, like the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) in Durban in 2000 and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002. These events intersected with the establishment of new social movements, which in fact, were local manifestations of the global movement against neo-liberalism, and led to the formation of the Anti-Privatisation Forum. Thousands of landless people converged on the WCAR for the Landless Peoples’ Assembly, which rapidly grew into the Landless Peoples’ Movement (LPM).

For the first time the government was under pressure from a left-wing force outside the control of the alliance. It reacted with increasing hostility, arguing that some of these movements engaged in illegal activities – such as electricity re-connections – as a reason to clamp down on civil liberties.

During the “Week of the Landless” preceding the WSSD, the entire leadership of the LPM were systematically harassed by the National Intelligence Agency (NIA). Activists were warned against participating in the week’s activities, and their movements were tracked. Some received visits from the NIA, whose operatives also attended LPM meetings to monitor discussions. Key activists were arrested during a series of actions against LPM demonstrations, as the state attempted to scupper the mobilisation against the WSSD.

The state also used excessive force against an impromptu but peaceful demonstration outside the University of the Witwatersrand, trying to ban all marches during the WSSD period, including a march planned by the Social Movements United (SMU), which was eventually allowed.

The WSSD also highlighted the growing divide between sections of the mainstream media and the social movements. *The Star* newspaper published an editorial claiming the aim of the SMU march was “thuggery, disorder and damage to property”. The *Sunday Times* quoted the NIA and caricatured the protestors as a potpourri of opportunistic tin-pot radicals, inspired by international anti-globalisation activists to close down the summit.

In total, of the 196 people arrested in the run up to, and during the WSSD period, all of them had the charges against them dropped. These newspapers and the government have still to answer the question why this was the case if these activists posed such a threat to the security of the WSSD.

State actions against social movements did not stop at these high profile events. The APF and its affiliate, the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee, are now routinely prohibited from marching on highly contestable grounds, on issues related to eviction notices, billing problems and disconnection of water and electricity in poor households. Arrested APF members have also been subjected to similar bail conditions to the ones imposed on members of the Khayelitsha Anti-Eviction Campaign, who were ordered to refrain from involving themselves in any public gathering relating to evictions, or

communicating with any person who has been evicted. In Phiri, arrested APF members are banned from participating in any meeting or gathering dealing with the controversial Soweto-wide Operation Gcin’amanzi. The plan involves the installation of pre-payment water meters to encourage water conservation, and is opposed by the APF on the grounds that it violates the right of poor residents to access sufficient water.

On 14 April 2004, when South Africa held its third democratic elections, 60 members of the LPM were arrested as they attempted to hold a demonstration. They were charged with contravening the Electoral Act, which outlaws any political activity on Election Day. That night, members of the LPM allege, police officers subjected them to acts of physical and psychological violence, including assaults, the lobbying of tear gas canisters into closed vans transporting them to police cells, and verbal abuse. According to a testimony by Samantha Hargreaves, at a press conference, members of the Crime Intelligence Unit singled out two white female members, and repeatedly tortured them using physical blows, strangulation and suffocation, on the basis that they were “instructing black people to struggle”. What makes these allegations particularly significant is that activists have recounted incidents of torture carried out on the basis of their political views and activities. This matter remains under-reported, and few journalists have reflected on its significance.

Apart from using methods of dealing with dissent such as pre-emptive arrests, the banning of demonstrations, restrictive bail conditions and allegedly, even torture, the state is also attempting to introduce new legislative instruments using international “best practice” as the reason. Recently, the anti-terrorism bill was shelved after widespread opposition to its restrictive provisions, but it should be expected that the bill would resurface shortly.

Government has also released a draft of a hate speech bill. This move builds on judgements made in the past two years by quasi-judicial tribunals such as the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA) and the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC).

These bodies have interpreted the right to freedom of expression clause narrowly, while giving a wider meaning to the hate speech provision, including a broadening of concepts such as harm beyond its physical parameters. Most tellingly, those who have found themselves facing accusations of hate-mongering are by and large black people voicing discontent with their worsening economic situation, while perpetrators of hate-motivated crimes have largely been white people.

For example, a white farmer in Limpopo was accused of feeding his black farm worker to lions kept in captivity on his ranch, which mauled the farm worker to death. During the farmer’s appearance in court, an angry crowd of black people demonstrated outside the courthouse, bearing a wide range of placards including some with the slogan “kill the boer, kill the farmer”. At almost the same time, a magistrate’s court in the same area fined a white farmer a paltry sum of money for killing his black farm worker by dragging him on the road behind his bakkie. Much media attention has been given to the use of the slogan rather than the underlying anger that gave rise to its use.

The latest hate speech judgement by the SAHRC was brought by the Freedom Front against the LPM’s National Organiser Mangaliso Kubheka. He was reported to have stated that, “if a farmer kills a farm worker, we will kill the farmer”, and that members of the LPM should make themselves

available to be trained as military cadres.

This case has exposed the developing link between hate speech and terrorism. The report led to British charities freezing their support to the LPM. They feared the risk of violating the country’s anti-terrorism legislation, which prohibits the funding of organisations that advocate violence or race hatred. If the hate speech bill were on the statute books, these individuals could be facing jail sentences for their utterances.

In conclusion, there is good reason to ask what South Africa’s future holds in its second decade of democracy, when it comes to freedom of expression. The achievement of relative economic stability has had perverse outcomes, exacerbating inequality, which in turn has fuelled censorship and even repression.

In this respect, two trends have emerged. Firstly, more popular and unmediated forms of expression are under particular threat, notably the right to assemble, demonstrate and picket. This is still regulated in terms of an apartheid-era law that gives the police the power to “give permission” to people to exercise this right.

Secondly, there is a mismatch, and sometimes outright hostility, emerging between sections of the mainstream media – who largely enjoy media freedom – and the poorest South Africans whose resistance to an increasingly desperate situation is being criminalised.

The state’s legal arsenal is being developed all the time, drawing on international instruments honed in the war against terror. The South African experience alerts us to the possibility, that if a country enjoys media freedom, it may not necessarily enjoy freedom of expression: a telling lesson given about media freedom, which is often taken as an international indicator of the extent to which countries are free.

Social movements deserve particular focus as they, more than any other social force (including the media), are at the coalface of the contradictions South Africa faces, flowing from its domestic and international policy choices. They therefore tell us volumes about the state’s understanding of the limits of dissent: after all, commitments to rights and freedoms become clear only once they have been tested.

Many have accepted lazily the state’s motivation for their actions (when it is given). This can be dangerous because a failure to interrogate the efficacy of these actions may have serious consequences.

There is no evidence that the South African state will question the efficacy of its own growth path, in spite of the emergence of global social forces that are rejecting its basic tenets. There is growing evidence however, that in practice, if not in theory, the state sees these forces increasingly as the enemy, as a threat to its hard-won stability.

The danger of this turn for the worse is that South Africa has much more potential than most other African countries to export repression, given its drive towards continental dominance after failing largely to penetrate the closed markets of the imperialist powers. South Africans must not make the mistake of complacency that US citizens have, and let South Africa become the US of the continent’s world order.

South Africans must take seriously the implications of the words uttered by Ronnie Kasrils following his appointment as the minister of intelligence: “We have achieved a remarkable degree of stability. Anyone stupid enough to try and upset that will be dealt with” (*ThisDay*, 30 April 2004). They already are, if recent events are anything to go by.



Jane Duncan is a passionate and outspoken voice for freedom of expression. She values artistic expressions of freedom, and this extends to her work against censorship, and the limitations of freedom. She is currently Executive Director of the Freedom of Expression Institute.

Small fish in the South African media industry have had a torrid 10 years says Mashilo Boloka.

Diversity goes global

Since apartheid's demise, the transformation of South African media has been complex and moving in a direction that was not predictable. Contrary to 1993, when the initial intention was to create a competitive and diverse media environment, the focus shifted to consolidation. It was an attempt to survive in the overarching market – a shift that was an outcome of globalisation.

A number of events serve as hallmarks of this shift. In the broadcasting sector, the formation of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), which later merged with the South African Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (SATRA) to form the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) in 2000, rates high on the list. In the 10 years of its existence, the organisation has succeeded in fostering liberalisation.

This was done through paving the way for more media role players, representing a diversity of interests, which was demonstrated by the licensing of South Africa's first free-to-air television channel, etv, and the issuing of over 100 licences to community and commercial radio stations. ICASA's birth to a significant degree also dismantled the power of apartheid monopolies in the broadcasting industry. The creation of stability, through the development of consistent regulatory procedures and laws to issue licences, monitor and administer frequencies, was another major achievement.

In the print media industry, the launch of new publications such as *Sunday World*, *ThisDay*, *Sunday Sun* and *Daily Sun* changed the face of the industry considerably. The sprouting of new titles in the magazine sector including *O Magazine* and *The Media*, has changed the landscape and operations of the magazine industry. The new titles became a challenge, which old players had to contend with.

Though minimal ownership changes in the media industry were also witnessed, the entrance of labour movements and people from historically disadvantaged groups, chiefly women, representing black economic empowerment, brought new owners. The licensing of etv signalled the entry of global media behemoths, particularly Time Warner, who

“Although joint partnerships have been forged with global companies, they are insignificant, compared with the post-apartheid promises and the growth in the SA media market in the past 10 years.”

initially bought a 20% stake in the channel's holding company, Midi.

Newspapers such as the *Mail&Guardian* were taken over by foreign owners. These processes have undoubtedly diversified the South African media industry on both ownership and consumer level.

The appearance of global players completely transformed the way the South African industry operates. While shifts in ownership patterns demonstrate changes within the South African media industry, they further show how companies, which were located in different geographic zones, are rapidly becoming rivals, signified by Irish media mogul Tony O'Reilly's Independent Group, Zimbabwean Trevor Ncube's *Mail&Guardian* Ltd and Time Warner's interest in etv.

Although the above developments reveal some achievements, the South African media industry has in general had a torrid 10 years. Irrespective of granting more radio licences in community and commercial sectors, the appearance of new titles in the print media sector, the success of telecommunication giants MTN and Vodacom, (seen through their expansion into the larger African continent), the industry has had a shake-up and has cast aside ailing products, exemplified by the death of *Pace* and *Tribute* magazines. Weaker products, which survived solely because of rich historical traditions, could no longer have their survival determined by that history alone, having to satisfy the information needs and interests of their consumers.

Difficulties in the broader media industry are further exemplified by the collapse of newly-found post-apartheid stables like Union Alliance Media (UAM); the revoking of Punt Geselsradio's licence by the regulator; etv's desperate request to have its licence amended in 2000, to accommodate tobacco giant Rembrandt in its ownership structure; the much-publicised unsuccessful attempts by New Africa Investment Limited (NAIL) to purchase Kagiso Media; the eventual dissolution of NAIL, resulting in the piecemeal acquisition of its assets by various media role-players including Johnnic; the disappearance of newspaper titles like *Sports Day*; the attempt by P4 radio to streamline its operations in



Durban and Cape Town; the lacklustre performance exhibited by greenfield licences, and the ongoing difficulties experienced by many community radio licensees.

The waning interest shown by global media players in the South African market is also a point for concern. Apart from Time Warner, Tony O'Reilly's Independent Newspapers and the purchase of *Mail&Guardian* Ltd by Zimbabwean Trevor Ncube, no huge investment was seen in mainstream media (excluding telecommunications). Time Warner has since significantly reduced its stake in Midi-etv. Although a few joint partnerships have been forged with global companies in the industry, they are relatively insignificant, compared with the early post-apartheid promises and the growth experienced in the South African media market in the last 10 years. Given the challenges posed by factors such as globalisation and technological developments, resulting in the compression of space and time and, more importantly, blurring market



Given the magnitude and inevitability of these problems, one question is: Can the future of the South African media industry be predicted or ascertained? The following factors, shaping the South African media industry, need to be considered:

- Unequal distribution of media access;
- Stiff competition which is intolerant to new entrants;
- Shrinking ad spend throughout the world, compelling companies to diversify in an attempt to draw revenue from a number of streams;
- The relative small size of the South African market;
- Escalating costs on media products vis-à-vis low profit margins and revenues. While it has become expensive for broadcast firms to sustain their survival, attract audiences and maintain their equipment, dwindling advertising revenue continues to pull down profit;
- Unlevelled playing fields in the media industry.

The factors above demonstrate that some of the perennial problems besieging the post-apartheid media industry can be attributed to a somewhat unfriendly regulatory environment. Legislation has been revised or introduced to deal with these issues. Important in this regard is legislation relating to media ownership and control, which saw the foreign media ownership quotas in South Africa increase from 20% to 35%. While this is an important step in attracting foreign direct investment, its effects remain to be seen, given the waning interest by foreign media investors.

Lessons elsewhere have shown that the increase of foreign media ownership caps does not guarantee investment, as is the case in Namibia. Despite the Namibian Communication Commission placing the foreign ownership figure at over 60%, it has not generated the desired interest among foreign investors.

Again, the fact that outside of the sharing of NAIL media assets by a number of companies, no major shakedown has occurred since the policy change, points to another worst-case scenario.

Apart from increasing foreign ownership caps, the legislation has set in process the issuing of commercial licences in secondary towns. While this can be hailed as a positive step to address access in under-served areas, the impact of this move on community radio stations is of concern. Secondary towns have been the happy hunting grounds for many community stations since 1994.

Considering the indifferent performance shown by greenfield licences in the last few years and the eventual collapse of former RadioBop and Radio Big T (the defunct commercial station in the former homeland of Venda), the ability of the South African market to accommodate these commercial licensees remains uncertain.

The belated formation of the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) to provide much-needed support in the community media sector, both print and electronic, is a significant positive step. Although the MDDA has already started disbursing funds, its survival is dependent on both the consolidation of media diversity in South Africa and the flow of foreign funding. Therefore, instead of viewing the MDDA as an infinite financier, community media should use relief funds as an opportunity to reposition themselves and adopt market models that work to attract advertisers. In this era of shrinking donor funds (both nationally and internationally), this is very important. However, the ability of community media (print and broadcast) to attract advertising depends on the advertisers changing their perception of this medium. Otherwise, all the

achievements made since 1993 will be undone in this once promising sector.

The scenarios described above demonstrate how globalisation has shaped the South African media market since the demise of apartheid. Even though access and diversity have improved, the past 10 years have highlighted a few lessons to be learnt about globalisation.

Firstly, globalisation embodies the “big is better” syndrome as demonstrated by the desperate mergers and acquisitions that characterised the last 10 years in South African media. While mergers and acquisitions have been taking place at an alarming rate, and have sacrificed new entrants that could not withstand acute economic pressures, but consolidation has continued to elude the industry.

This can be attributed mainly to the nature of companies operating in the broader media market, particularly those which emerged under the rubric of black economic empowerment. With the exception of a few, these companies are subsidiaries of vertically or multi-sectorally integrated conglomerates. As a result, apart from lacking focus, media assets are not their major revenue-generating streams. It means that the conglomerates are willing to dispose of their media assets at any time they want to raise capital. This has been demonstrated by Kagiso Trust Investment’s unsuccessful attempts to sell its media assets to NAIL, the reverse move by Johnnic Holdings to sell Johnnic Communications and the ultimate sale of NAIL’s media assets.

Secondly, markets built on ideological inclination or traditions are susceptible to economic pressures, and therefore likely to crash in the face of globalisation. This is important in view of black economic empowerment, which has not only shaped the post-apartheid media, but continues to influence policies governing the media industry as well. Globalisation makes no distinction between black economic empowerment and non-black economic empowerment.

Thirdly, although the globalisation-shaped transformation process in the South African media industry has helped in terms of creating and enhancing a competitive media environment, access and diversity, it has shed many non-performers and annihilated small media caps, creating an environment in which only conglomerates thrive.

Inasmuch as new titles have appeared on the scene, they do not bring a significant percentage of owners into the media market because the majority of new titles come out of conglomerates such as Naspers’ Media24, Caxton and Johnnic.

The shifting ownership patterns of South African media bear the inevitability of globalisation. While globalisation guarantees diversity through its open sesame paradigm and “the big is better” syndrome, it is inimical to the small and medium business model that the South African media market could be based on. Therefore, as new media companies emerge, they will be met with resistance and hostile market conditions, which can either lead to their death or absorption by conglomerates.

It is at this time that the protectionist role of organisations such as the Competition Commission and ICASA becomes important. However, their role should not be carried out in a blanket way that will attempt to thwart globalisation, but should integrate the South African media market within the frames of what can be termed “domesticated” globalisation.

As globalisation heightens under the disguise of regional integration, it will continue to affect media ownership patterns in South Africa as elsewhere in the world. As a result, South Africa can only be oblivious to this process at its peril.

distinctions, this shift is inevitable.

While the above demonstrates the difficult conditions characterising South Africa’s post-apartheid media, it is important to note that:

- they are not unique to South Africa, as the collapse of Europe’s Kirchmedia can attest;
- they cannot be understood outside the government’s neo-liberal policies to attract foreign direct investment;
- they are a result of the new global processes reflected in regional integration. Embodied within this process is the demythologising of core and periphery models, being replaced by the emergence of new centres within peripheries;
- they are also the aftermath of two world events – the Asian market crash in 1998 and the September 11, 2001 attacks in the US. These events declared world markets as risky environments. As a result, cautious approaches relating to investments are frequently adopted.



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Enthusiastic content regulation has achieved a great deal in supporting local music and production, says Lara Kantor.

Local made lekker

This year may be the 10th year of democracy and 10 years of free and independent broadcasting regulation, but it has been only seven years of local content regulation for South African broadcasters. The first local content regulations came into being in 1997. In this time, local content regulation has been extraordinarily vigorous; therefore, although there are not yet 10 birthday candles on the local content cake, a retrospective is already worthwhile.

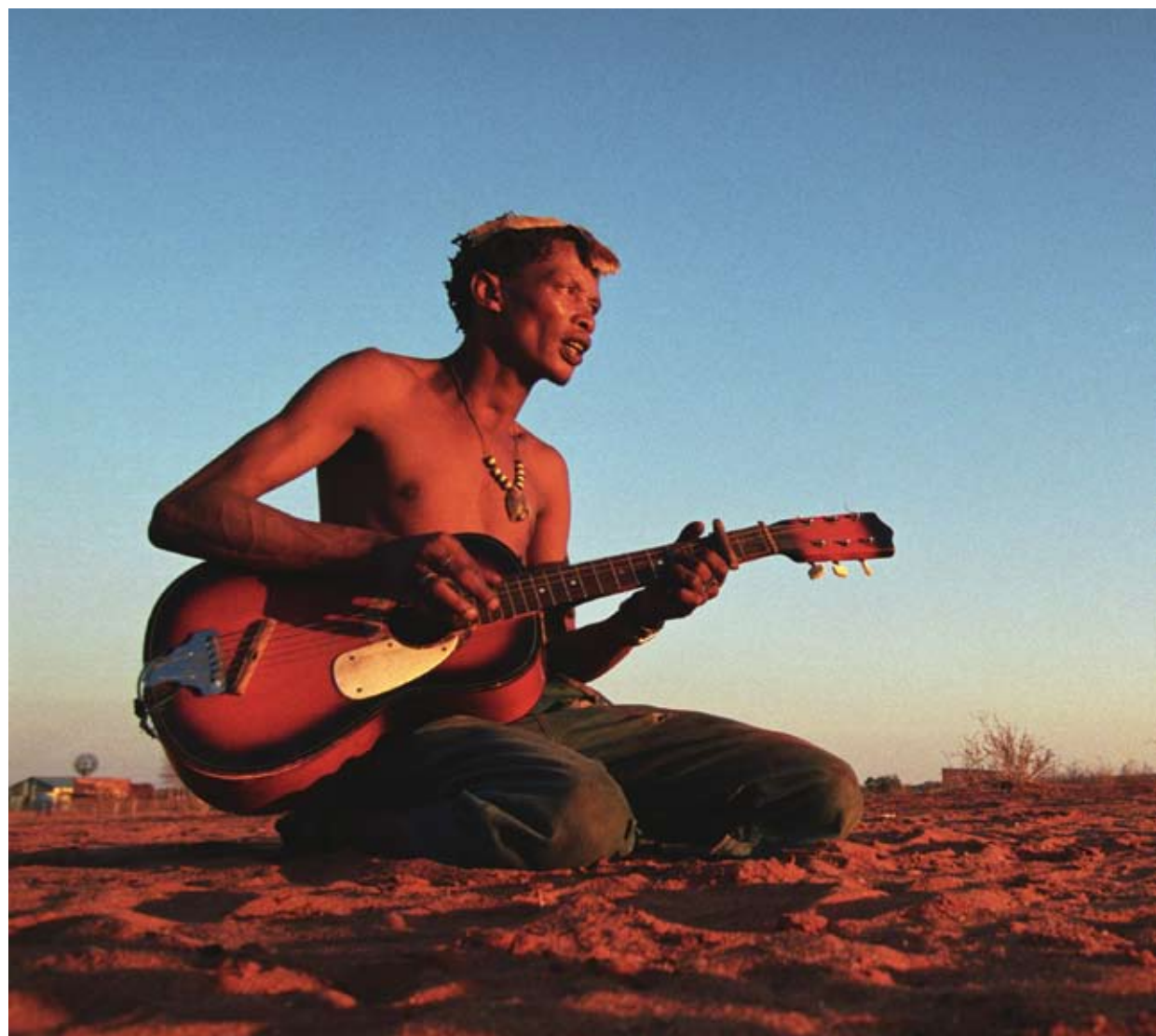
It was in the then not-so-shabby halls of Johannesburg's downtown hotels that local content quotas for radio and television stations were first mooted. These were the venues for the Independent Broadcasting Authority's (IBA) public hearings on local content, cross-media ownership and the SABC, held over many months during 1995 and finalised in a report to the Parliament in August of that year.

The hearings saw independent film makers, musicians and various public interest groups lobby loudly for the newly formed regulator to set minimum quotas on airtime for South African material. That this inquiry took place before any new commercial broadcasters were licensed, and long before "proudly South African" made local lekker, is an indication of the early importance attached to local content.

Dubbed the 'Triple Enquiry', the IBA hearings were perhaps predictable in their divisiveness. On the side of the angels stood the above mentioned cultural choir, singing a catchy tune about the economic and social benefits of enforcing local content on air. On the other side of the microphone were the decidedly un-cherubic broadcasters arguing costs and, well, costs.

The outcome was a set of local content quotas for all radio and television stations. Initially greeted with squeals of protest by broadcasters, the 20% quota for both commercial radio and television was soon quietly accepted. It wasn't long before applicants for new licences were promising to exceed the minimum quota. (The most notable of these was the generous promise by etv that it would offer 45%

“**International success stories such as in France and Australia were also cited, and here the evidence was clear – when governments come to the party, the local content cake grows.**”



local content, although this commitment is now cause for complaint by the free-to-air channel as its quota is higher than competitors who made no such rash assurances.)

Broadcasters didn't have long to get accustomed to the quotas before the IBA's successor, the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) made good on its promise to review and raise the quotas in an inquiry launched in November 2000.

This time broadcasters were more sophisticated in their response, supporting local content regulation and the setting of quotas, but also arguing for a broader approach by the regulator. They argued: the regulator should also seek commitments by the music industry, funding by government and should provide incentives for broadcasters to invest in more marginal types of local content, such as arts programming.

Much of the discussion focused on the impact the previous quotas had had on the local music and production industries. Evidence was mixed on whether the quotas had made any direct positive contribution to the growth of these industries.

Broadcasters said there was no evidence that quotas alone could achieve sustainable growth in the recording and production industries. This was supported by some recording and production industry representatives. Gallo, for instance, submitted that, "while there has been a noticeable increase in the sales of local kwaito product, there has been no discernable difference in the fortunes of South African pop and rock music. Local content quotas do not work for all genres".

International success stories such as in France and Australia were also cited, and here the evidence was clear – when governments come to the party, the local content cake grows. In these jurisdictions,

on-air quotas are only one part of local content regulation.

Governments invest heavily in subsidising production, developing and supporting industry training and international marketing efforts, and granting tax incentives, among others. Together with on-air quotas, such interventions have seen local cultural industries thrive in these jurisdictions.

Broadcasters suggested that ICASA should copy some of the more successful international ideas such as the well-regarded Australian Music Performance Committee (AMPC), where the broadcasting and recording industries report regularly on compliance with the quota and on recording and production of new local music. (This suggestion was one of those initially taken up by ICASA, but squabbling between the music and broadcasting industries on the terms of reference appears to have stalled progress.)

The reviewed local content quotas, which came into effect in August 2003, were significantly different from the previous ones, and incorporated some of the suggestions made by broadcasters.

Firstly, the quotas were raised substantially (see tables) and secondly, ICASA adopted some of the suggestions of broadcasters and introduced a points scheme whereby additional points towards the quota can be gained if minimum criteria are met.

In terms of this scheme, commissioning African language programming and sourcing programming from provinces other than Gauteng, KwaZulu Natal and the Western Cape can earn broadcasters additional points. In radio, the scheme works to capture the on-air promotions broadcasters undertake in support of South African music and allow these to count towards the quota. Alarming for television broadcasters was the new rule that limited the contribution of repeats to the quota. As of August 2003, with a few exceptions, only the first repeat of



Benny Gool

local material is allowed to count fully for the quota – from then on it counts as if it is foreign content.

Since its implementation, broadcasters have been perturbed about the repeat restrictions, particularly the impact on genres such as children’s and educational programming, which, by nature of their audiences, are designed to be repeated frequently.

The SABC has objected to ICASA stating that in making children’s programmes subject to the same repeat restrictions as other forms of South African programming, the authority “may do significant damage to the SABC’s ability to perform on its mandate to provide quality children’s educational programmes and to cater to the needs of the child audience”. At the time of writing, ICASA had not yet given any indication that it would adjust the repeat restrictions.

Perhaps most unpromising about the 2003 local content regulations is, that in the first eight months of their existence they had to be amended twice.

This is probably a consequence of their complexity. The quotas no longer simply measure air-time but also provide an intricate set of formulas through which repeats are penalised and additional points can be gained. The only thing trickier than implementing these quotas will surely be monitoring adherence to them, a task ICASA is charged with.

As the clock ticks towards the next review of local content quotas, which ICASA has promised will be in late 2006, what have we learnt about local content regulation?

Clearly local content is an area on which ICASA has chosen to regulate aggressively. This is not the case for all public mandate areas. An analysis of the approach the regulator has taken on language equitability shows, that this is, in contrast, a

Current overall television quotas	
Public Broadcasting Services	55%
Commercial Free-to-air Television	35%
Terrestrial Subscription Services	8%

Genre quotas for public television services			
	Previous quota	Increased by	Current quota
South African Drama	20%	15%	35%
Children’s Programming	50%	5%	55%
Documentary Programming	50%		50%
Informal Knowledge Building	50%		50%
Current Affairs Programming	80%		80%
Educational Programming	60%		60%

Genre quotas for public and private commercial free-to-air television service			
	Previous quota	Increased by	Current quota
South African Drama	10%	10%	20%
Documentary Programming	25%	5%	30%
Informal Knowledge Building	25%	5%	30%
Children’s Programming	20%	5%	25%
Current Affairs Programming	50%		50%

Current radio quotas			
	Previous quota	Increased by	Current quota
Public Service Radio Stations	20%	20%	40%
Community Radio Stations	20%	20%	40%
Commercial Radio Stations	20%	5%	25%



Lara Kantor is the SABC’s General Manager for Policy and Regulatory Affairs. During her career she has worked on different sides of the local content debate. She was previously Executive Director of the National Association of Broadcasters and before that headed policy for the Independent Broadcasting Authority.

surprisingly light-touch. The existing licensing frameworks for commercial radio and television make no specific requirements on language, but rather encourage stations to include languages other than English in their programming.

While in its decisions, the authority stated its intention to favour those applicants that propose to include indigenous languages, in practice most licences have been awarded to English language stations¹ and all current commercial radio licensees broadcast predominantly in English.

That local content has received more attention may be testimony to the greater lobbying power of musicians and filmmakers, or simply a consequence of the law mandating the regulator to conduct the Triple Inquiry – prioritising local content above other areas.

Parallel with its enthusiastic regulation of local content has been a refinement in ICASA’s approach. Instead of just counting minutes, the regulatory framework now seeks to encourage certain kinds of behaviour such as investment in local African language programming, and discourage other behaviour like repeating said local African language programming. This refinement – while not always completely logical (in the case of repeats) is necessary. As our local broadcasting market has matured there is a need for more sophisticated and nuanced

rules and regulations. So what might a 2006 review of local content hold? ICASA will probably want to raise the quotas again, driven by the elusive promise in the White Paper on Broadcasting Policy that foresees a majority of local content on all broadcasters within 10 years (of 1998).

The public broadcaster has already fulfilled that promise and it is therefore likely that the next review of quotas will put additional pressure on commercial operators to raise their output of South African content. Quotas of the future may also increasingly link local content to other public interest goals such as language and regional diversity – encouraging broadcasters not only to play local programmes but also to make contributions to other public interest goals.

Still three years shy of its 10th birthday, local content regulation has undoubtedly achieved a great deal. It will probably get another boost as ICASA looks at licensing new commercial radio operators in the next 18 months. Whatever the rules, the actual contribution to local content is finally made by broadcasters who have, so far, confounded the cynics and actively bought into the goal of supporting South African music and production. In that context the 50% goal for all broadcasters is perhaps not so elusive after all.

“Whatever the rules, the actual contribution to local content is made by broadcasters who have confounded the cynics and actively bought into the goal of supporting South African music and production.”

¹ Two licences were awarded to Afrikaans language commercial radio stations. They subsequently went insolvent and are no longer broadcasting.

The advertising pressure on news media is forcing a shift from 'serving the public' to targeting niche markets says Lesley Cowling.

The rising sense of unease

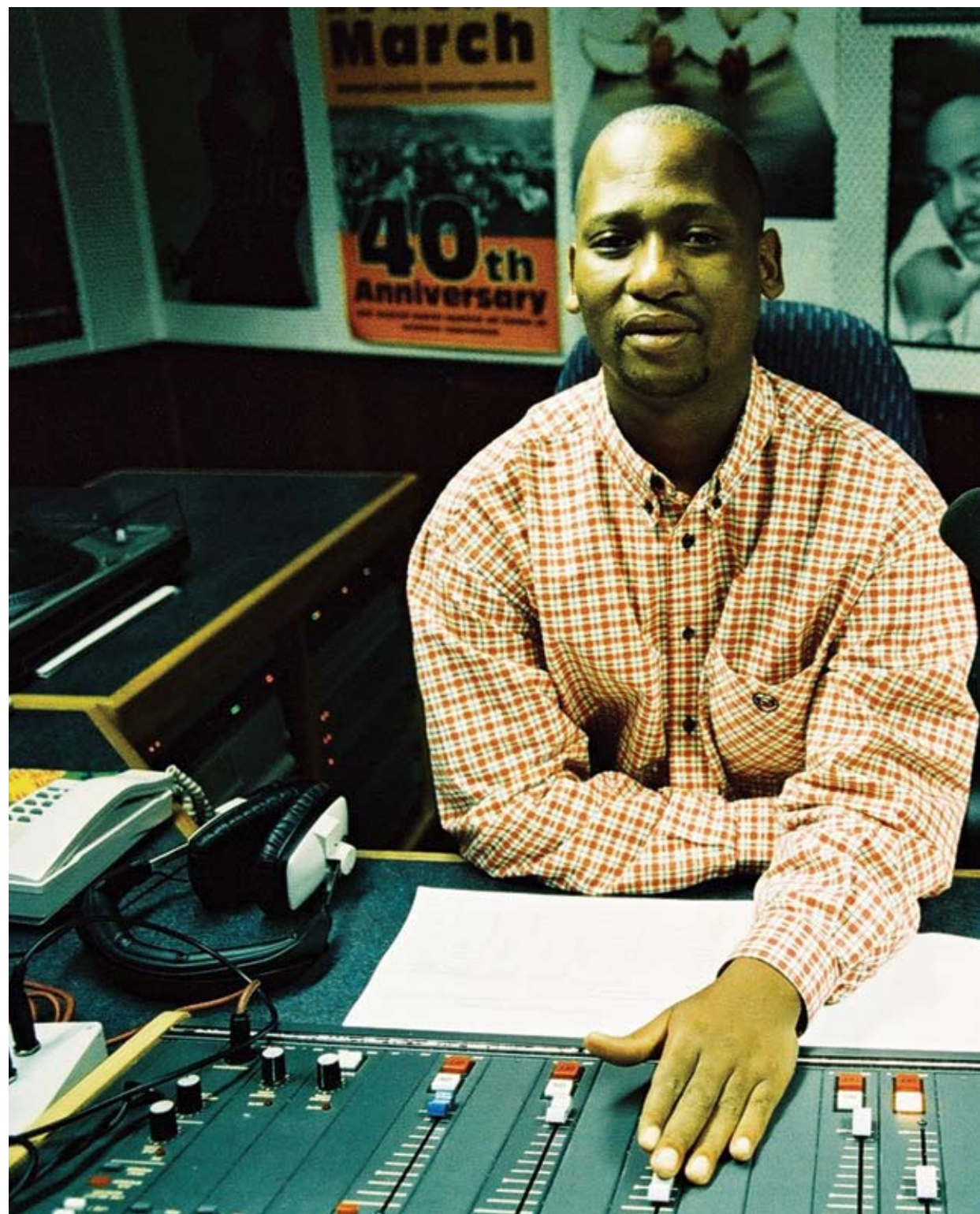
I was talking with some journalist friends recently about changes in the media business, wondering whether this meant a paradigm shift for journalism, when one of them said: "Please don't use that word 'paradigm'. It reminds us too much of when we were at university."

The comment, though meant as a joke, points to an unease that often surfaces when journalists reflect upon the commercial context of their work. In our seminars at Wits, working journalists express a similar discomfort when examining the effects of advertising on the media.

Although a disputatious bunch, nothing unites journalists faster than a threat to their perceived professionalism. This became evident last year, when *Sunday Times* reporters held a staff meeting and unanimously demanded an inquiry into the conduct of a fellow journalist. They believed she had broken one of journalism's most important codes, and this united them over and above all other differences.

But what is this professionalism? What are these changes in context, or (with apologies), the paradigm shift in media, if there has in fact been one? And is it all bad?

“The fact that most whites fall into the richer group, and the poorer group is black and coloured, means that no amount of transformation in the advertising industry will give the poor relations more resources.”



After a decade of more media freedoms, less state intervention and more diversity of media products, aren't we in a better position than we were 10 and 15 years ago?

To start with the first question: I would argue that news journalists regard themselves as professionals when they see their role as informing a broad public of matters of importance in society. "We, the journalists, tell you, the public, the most important news of the day." A corollary to this is the injunction on journalists to decide on what is news not according to their own opinions, but by a set of news values that everyone adheres to. And that they should not take sides between combatants in any of the news stories.

It is this stance that gives the news media its standing in society, as the so-called Fourth Estate, the watchdog of government, the place where, as certain theorists argue, people can find information to help them engage as citizens in society. It is what guides journalists in their daily routines, and, for many, gives a sense of pride in what they do.

Apartheid placed political restrictions on the fulfilment of this idealised role, and its end was

widely seen as allowing media to take its rightful place in society. But almost immediately, the media felt the force of other constraints, now mostly economic. There was increased competition from new radio and television stations, and the Internet, without a comparable growth in ad spend. Changes in ownership put pressure on media to deliver profits. There was the commercialisation of the SABC, which put their many stations into the market more aggressively as competitors for advertising. The advertising pie was suddenly being fought over by many more hungry media mouths, and survival was not guaranteed, even for media with big audiences.

Competition for audiences and the dependence on advertising for revenue is obviously not new, but a number of other factors in the last 10 years have changed (and are still changing) the relationship between advertisers and news producers. Two of these are particularly significant: first, a greater sophistication in marketing that targets specific consumers for particular products; and second, an intensive drive by many media organisations to develop strategies to attract advertising.

This change in marketing can be seen in the rise



“
Even media executives under pressure to produce profits often feel an uncomfortable conflict between the old idea of serving the public and the new, targeted approach.
”

only attract 32% of ad spend, skewing the market dramatically in favour of LSMs 6-10.

It is no longer enough for media products to have a big audience; that audience should also have a significant representation of LSMs 6-10. Thus the media products, whose audiences are largely LSMs 1-5, are the poor relations of the media world, like the SABC vernacular stations, which between them attract 65% of radio audiences – 19.5 million listeners in 2003. Classic FM (158 000 in 2003) and Cape Talk (106 000 in 2003), on the other hand, which have small but desirable audiences, receive the most ad spend in radio per listener. The skew in the media landscape, then, results in many media choices for the more affluent citizens of society and very few for the majority.

The fact that most whites fall into the richer group, and the poorer group is largely black and coloured means that no amount of transformation in the advertising industry, which has been accused of racism against so-called “black” media, is going to give the poor relations more resources.

More than any other organisation, the SABC picks up the shortfall in media for the poor. Apart from its radio stations, it also attempts to fulfil a public service mandate with SABC1 and 2. In recent years, the strategy has been to cross-subsidise these channels by making SABC3 commercial, but recently the pressure to function on a commercial basis has meant that 1 and 2 are also looking for ad spend. The broadcasters are expected by the government to be both self-sufficient and fulfil a public service function. How they juggle these requirements and what happens in the news departments will be crucial for the millions of people who get all or most of their news and information from here.

Marketers do not only target very specific audiences for their advertising – they are also nicheing their products more and more by associating them with particular kinds of content. This is not new. Supplements and special sections in print media have always had associated advertising. However, as newspapers compete for advertising by developing new supplements and products, these sections are constructed with the advertisers’ interests in mind, rather than by a process of imagining what readers might be interested in.

Travel sections, for example, exist because the travel industry needs to advertise its latest deals. Science sections, on the other hand, are practically non-existent, because there are no science advertisers. The *Mail&Guardian’s* regular books supplement disappeared some years ago, when booksellers found other ways to reach their customers.

The same is true for television programming. South Africans love local content; advertisers prefer the known quantity of imported programming. Investigative and documentary programming may draw big audiences, but advertisers don’t want to

see their luxury products appearing in between exposés of multi murders and eroding medical services.

It is at this stage of the discussion that journalists tend to get worried. What happened to: “We, the journalists give you, the public today’s news”? Are we now in the arena of: “We talk to our particular readers (hopefully LSMs 6-10) about subjects that may interest you and are supported by advertising revenue”? This is quite a shift for journalists and editors (perhaps even a paradigm shift?), and they’re unwilling to make it. Even media executives under pressure to produce profits often feel an uncomfortable conflict between the old idea of serving the public and the new, targeted approach. But media companies that have refused to make the shift, have lost share of ad spend to those that do, and some have even had to kill certain products. The alternative press, that didn’t make the transition from a donor-funded model to a commercial model, disappeared.

However, the pressure has also pushed certain print companies to develop other strategies, which consist in more than just giving advertisers what they want. One example is the development of the “value-added” product.

The thinking could, for example, go like this: What do our readers want to know about, and can we get advertising to finance this section/supplement?

Thus, the development of products is guided by editorial principles, and the advertising would follow. A related strategy is cross-subsidisation: sections and supplements are developed specifically to attract advertising, advertising ratios are kept high and so subsidise those areas that do not attract advertising, such as news, opinion, analysis and sport. (I say, let sport go to the wall, but millions would disagree.) The *Sunday Times* has been particularly innovative in the last decade in moving from a mass-based model to a collection of niches, thus serving a range of different audiences, while keeping them in the family.

However, these strategies do not extend to finding ways to serve the lower LSMs. Some print companies have cut back on distribution to country areas, because advertisers don’t want those readers. Others state explicitly in their mission statements that their targeted audience is LSMs 6-10. The print media, in particular, have moved away from the notion of a broad public. “Newspapers are a business,” says one media executive. “We have to survive, make profits for our shareholders. It’s not our job to serve everybody.” Ten years ago, I don’t believe we would have said that. But media companies have always been pragmatic about survival, both then and now. It’s a necessary function of commercial media.

But that leaves us with the question: “Whose job is it?”

of the living standards measure (LSM) as the pre-eminent tool for the measure of audiences. When the LSM appeared 14 years ago, it seemed to offer a development from purely geographic, race, gender and age measures of audience. The LSM divides South African households into 10 categories based on product use, and because of this, it is more than a simple measure of affluence, but also gives marketers a sense of who is likely to buy their products.

There has been some debate about how reliable the LSM is and what exactly it can predict about consumers. But, despite the cavilling from commentators, the reality is that media planners rely heavily upon the LSM, and broadcasters and newspapers fully understand how important it is to have the right LSM profile.

The conventional wisdom among marketers is that there is no point in advertising a wide range of products to LSM categories 1-5, the mostly black and rural poor, as they cannot afford them. The effects of this were seen in an analysis by Brenda Wortley and Sue Bolton done for the parliamentary hearings into the advertising industry in 2002. Although LSMs 1-5 form 65% of the population, they



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Muzi Kuzwayo paints a grim picture of media ethics in an era and an industry where profits prevail over values.

Leave sensation to the advertisers

“They kill journalists, you know.” This was my mother’s response when I told her that as a grown-up, I wanted to become a journalist. She said it in a tone which made clear she wasn’t asking for my opinion. She said it with feeling, and as someone said, “if we spoke with feeling we would say little, but mean more”. I could tell that my mother meant: “You won’t be a journalist for as long as you are my son.”

My view of the world was formed when John Vorster was prime minister of South Africa and Jimmy Kruger was minister of justice. It was an era of arbitrary arrest and banishment, especially of journalists and their newspapers.

When PW Botha declared the state of emergency, lawyers became the de facto editors of the newspapers, to ensure that the story complied with the laws that were designed to stifle press freedom. Ever defiant, Percy Qoboza ran an empty space in his editorial column rather than subject his opinion to the Bureau for Information, only to be told that doing so was subversive. Journalists were neither free to say what they wanted, nor to choose silence.

Journalism was no different from activism. Salaries were meagre because advertisers kept clear of left-wing publications and especially black publications.

Fast forward to 1994. I want to argue that when apartheid ended, South African media didn’t know what to do with their freedom. It was like a pigeon that was born in captivity only to be set free beyond its wildest dreams. But because a pigeon is a pigeon, it will always fly back to its old problems and ignore the new challenges it is facing. Times have changed, and worrying about state suppression of press freedom is now irrelevant, especially since in the last 10 years not a single journalist has been detained without trial, not a single publication has been gagged by the state, and the press is protected by the Constitution. Some point to the occasional conflicts between the ruling party and media, or the appointment of ANC members to the SABC, as evidence of a clear and real danger against press freedom. But that is looking at life through old lenses which are as tired as the line: “You’re saying this because the government is black.”

That someone is a member of a ruling party does not mean he or she cannot make independent decisions. (Nobody has ever complained about the independence of our Constitutional Court. Judge Albie Sachs was an ANC exile and Judge Arthur Chaskalson was in Nelson Mandela’s defence team

during the treason trial.)

To understand the role of the media in our new society requires us to swallow some unpalatable truths about the new media environment. Firstly, we must accept, that when private media companies listed on the stock exchange, they ceased to be guardians of society. Instead, they became businesses whose purpose was to increase value for their shareholders.

Profit is the only yardstick at the stock exchange. And where principle and profit clash, it is the former that loses – as we saw when the *Sunday Times* management and Mathatha Tsedu fought in the papers. Writing in *Business Day*, Anton Harber, Professor of Journalism and Media studies at Wits University, said: “When they chose him [Tsedu], they knew Africanisation was important to him. They knew he had a strong change agenda, including getting rid of the popular and lucrative, but controversial, ‘Extra’ [racially-based] editions.”

The focus on profit – though perfectly legitimate in a capitalist society – will be the media’s undoing. Will media owners buckle under pressure as advertising revenues dry up, or will they refuse to cross the ethical line? Just witness the increase in advertorials and media surveys.

The difference between an advertorial and an advertisement is honesty. By placing the advertiser’s logo – an equivalent of a signature – the advertiser is revealing that this is a paid-for commercial message, thereby giving the public the option to disbelieve the message. An advertorial on the other hand is designed to look like editorial and hide the fact that it is a paid-for commercial message.

The prize in editorial dishonesty goes to surveys because they depend on blackmail advertising. What happens in this case is, a media owner approaches a company or companies to feature in a survey. The surveyee pays a portion of the advertising cost and then passes on a list of its suppliers to the media owner, who will then approach them to buy space in the survey and sing the surveyee’s praises. How can they refuse? They need the surveyee’s business. A survey is also designed to look like an editorial, suggesting the company is making news.

The second truth journalists must swallow is: while the news media must report on the good, the bad and the ugly of government and society, they cannot play the role of the opposition, no matter how disorganised the latter may be. During apartheid it was perfectly legitimate for the media to speak for the silenced majority because their voice

was outlawed. But today that is no longer the case. All sectors of society are now allowed through a transparent and independently-controlled democratic process to voice their opinions in Parliament.

As a new business development director of an advertising agency, I spend a considerable amount of time contemplating the future of the advertising value chain from clients to suppliers, including media. I do this because the success or failure of any players within the value chain will have grave consequences on our industry. To that end I engage in strategic conversations with leaders in different industries to determine threats and opportunities in their industries, so that we can plan ahead.

Media continue to shoot themselves in the foot. Firstly the cost of inserting advertisements in the media has become prohibitive. Clients are now seeking cheaper alternatives to reach their audiences. Witness the increase in viral marketing – sending commercials through the Internet. This is the new word of mouth and is proving to be a cheaper way of distributing commercial messages around the world.

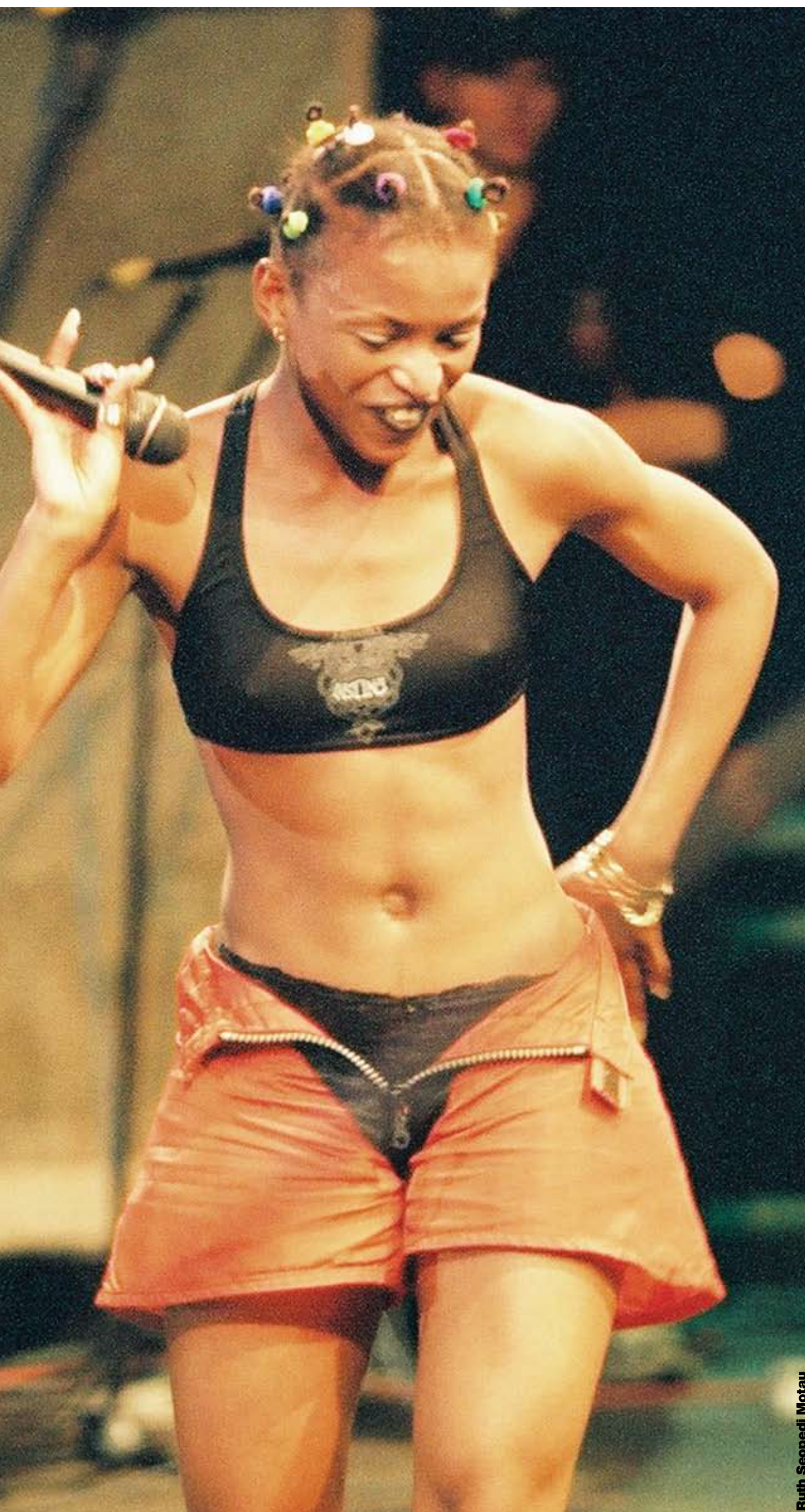
The media market is overtraded, and as the old car sticker used to say, “when the going gets tough, the tough go shopping”. Media owners are behaving predictably by buying the competition. And as if that is not enough, there are calls for the South African government to relax media ownership laws to allow for more consolidation and cross ownership. Although that may temporarily fix shareholders’ problems, it will hurt our democracy.

Too much media concentration in the hands of a few cannot be good for democracy. Even in the US, *Fortune* magazine accuses media mogul Rupert Murdoch of using his *New York Post*, “to reward friends and punish foes”. You can imagine what happens in a smaller country, such as ours, where fewer people have deep pockets. Once our democracy has been tampered with, the shareholders will find that gobbling up other organisations only leads to constipation. Then we’re back to square one.

The future does not look any brighter for media credibility. Profits in media are like water defying the laws of gravity. They trickle up, nourishing only senior management and shareholders. Compared with the past, very little money seems to be reinvested in training. Good journalists, tired of earning NGO salaries while management guzzles Moët&Chandon, are leaving the industry for better paying jobs as public relations officers in the government and the corporate world.

The ones who still prefer the calling are burying





Ruth Seopedi Motau



Muzi Kuzwayo is the author of *Marketing through Mud and Dust* and group director of King James advertising agency. Muzi spends a lot of his time studying how brands and industries remain relevant as consumers and their environments change. The media and its future relevance is an issue close to his heart.

themselves. Soon the industry will be full of ill-trained or self-taught analysts and journalists who have not learnt the sacred rules of the trade. Plagiarism problems will continue. Journalists will break embargoes and the confidence of their sources; they will aspire to the same lifestyle as the criminals and despots they oppose, and journalism will be synonymous with fiction. All in the name of creating shareholder value.

The worst is yet to come. I call it centralisation of the media; economists call it globalisation. To achieve economies of scale, global companies tend to concentrate certain operational functions. With centralisation, fewer and fewer editors (mostly in first world countries) will decide what is seen, heard or read about in different parts of the world. They will continue to decide whether Kosovo is more important than Rwanda. To quote former UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali: "We say we have 16 members in the Security Council. The 15 members plus CNN; out of 20 peacekeeping operations, you [CNN] are interested in one or two. Nobody was taking care of what was going on in Rwanda." Those journalists, placed more than 12 000 km away, will decide whether a conflict at Msinga in KwaZulu-Natal is tribal or political. In Zimbabwe they will decide who is victim and who is villain.

So what kind of media environment would I like to see in the future? Honestly, I think commercial, mainstream media has lost its original purpose. They have crossed the values threshold, and there is no turning back. What do you expect? We live in the Enron era. (News Corp cooked its books 10 years before Enron's collapse). To expect money idolaters in the stock market to change their nature because they bought shares in a media company would be expecting too much. In their defence, they buy shares to make money, not for love. If Jerry Springer or any of the crass reality-TV shows is a way to increase value in their investments, so be it. It is their democratic right, especially in a free-market economy.

Mainstream media can no longer claim to be guardians of society. They have gone too far down the other way. Guardians of society can only be the nascent public journalism movement which I would like to see thrive in South Africa. I would like to see more community radio stations and newspapers supported through public and private funding to achieve that goal. I would like to see a new theory of media business in South Africa, that puts society first, its readers second, journalists third and shareholders last.

I say these things not because I am an anti-capitalist bastard. I work in advertising, the fuel of competition. But I am mindful of what George W. Merck, son of the founder of Merck Pharmaceuticals, said: "We try never to forget that medicine [read journalism] is for the people. It is not for the profits. The profits follow and if we have remembered that they never fail to appear."

I ask you, as journalists, to please remain journalists, and leave hyperbole and sensation to us, the advertisers. We place advertisements in your media because you deliver the right audiences for our brands and your readers trust you. The day they lose their trust they will leave you, and we will follow them.

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New technologies promise a wealth of media and messages, says Guy Berger.

The new media maelstrom

South Africa's democracy decade coincided with the popularisation of the Internet on a global scale. New society, new media, it seemed.

Prior to 1994, email was the preserve of the computer-savvy at the elite universities. The power of the World Wide Web was but a tiny treasure tucked away behind arcane interfaces. Back then, the idea of journalists being a part of an interconnected global network of email and websites, all linked by a common Internet Protocol (IP), was undreamt of. Now it's here and indeed old hat.

From early on the main utility of the Internet for South Africa's mass media has been less as a new publishing platform than a resource for research. Thus, over the democracy decade, a new journalistic skill came into being: computer-assisted reporting and research – CARR. It entailed learning how to locate and assess relevant websites, and how to use search engines efficiently. Email became a powerful tool to receive information electronically, and to conduct interviews.

With these developments, however, have come several concerns. First, too many journalists nowadays do too little primary research, and rely on the Internet instead. Second, our online knowledge horizons are set by the specifically white, western and male origins of most information in cyberspace. Third, plagiarism – “cut-and-paste journalism” – is increasingly easy.

Another new media instrument, that over the past decade has become integral to journalism (for better and worse), is the mobile phone. Cellular telephony, nowadays taken so for granted, was expected back in 1994 to be a tool for top business people only. Ten years on, of course, South African journalists don't think twice about the convenience. And though we are not yet using the devices as tools to record audio or capture images, nor to manage address books, that will surely come.

Distinct from all of this, there has been less success in the use of the Internet and cellular phones as output platforms for journalism. At first glance, this is surprising, given the huge rate of both Internet and cellular growth over the period.

To start with the Internet: in 1994, according to Arthur Goldstuck, there were an estimated 100 000 South African users. His estimated figures for 2004 are 3.6 million.

This mega-growth, however, conceals that escalation tailed off over the period – suggesting that South Africa's elite markets (primarily white) have reached relative saturation (in low bandwidth at least).

Hopes were very high for the online publishing industry earlier in the decade. A small number of

“SA media companies pulled back their web-operations, cutting staff and services and relocating them back to home base. The democracy decade ends with SA websites still struggling to survive.”

South African publications went online in 1995 – notably the *Financial Mail* and *Business Day*, following in the footsteps of the veteran *Mail&Guardian*. Their online publishing back then seemed more a matter of prestige and experimentation than part of any clear business strategy. The country then saw a wave of online publishing emerge between 1995 and 2000 – and a crash, once it became apparent that the South African market could not sustain the level of investment. Vast illusions of success had emerged in the 1990s, fuelled by a range of new tactics in the search for viability.

Initially, mainstream media simply put content online, expecting that visitor traffic would attract advertisers. Most online content was “shovelware” – information simply re-purposed from a parent medium. A number of innovative publishers took advantage of the low costs of running a website to launch new operations. The *mg.co.za* was a daily, whereas its parent was a weekly; *iafrica.com* and *woza.co.za* were stand-alone sites. Most media sites were text-heavy, though a small quantity of audio and video was available on broadcast sites. When content in these forms proved insufficient for viability, new tactics evolved.

One tactic was to set up web destinations that aggregated information from several sources. For example, both *Business Day* and *Financial Mail* content became available under *www.netassets.co.za*; three Afrikaans newspapers' content (and later that of the *Natal Witness*) was grouped under *www.news24.co.za*. Belatedly much of Independent Newspapers content from around the country was brought together under *www.iol.co.za*.

It also became fashionable to create online communities as a means to cement audience allegiance to a website – and thereby offer a consistent prospect to potential advertisers. The “sticky” attractions offered to users were chat rooms, scheduled events and services like email newsletters.

None of these formulae, or others that were tried, brought in the necessary returns. The first site to fall was *www.metropolis.co.za*, followed soon by *www.woza.co.za*. Universally, South African media companies pulled back their web operations, cutting staff and services and relocating them back to home base. The democracy decade ended with South African websites still struggling to survive.

If there had been enormous growth in Internet use over the period, the expansion of cellular to some 16 million lines in the same time was simply humungous. Yet, as with the web, hopes that cellular phones could become platforms for distributing content, had to be tempered. Today only seven percent of cellular traffic consists of data transmission (as distinct from voice). However, there has

been some event-driven uptake of text-messaged headlines and of audio services provided by SABC's Newsbreak.

Several factors point to why publishing via new media proved to have limited prospects. The cost of Internet connectivity remains too high for market growth beyond the elite or for extended use by the existing users; slow download times under the majority of existing connections have meant a less-than-compelling media experience; advertisers were slow to recognise the value of Internet audiences, and it took until 2003 before the Online Publishers Association was formed, and another year before they installed “Red Sheriff” – a uniform and credible audience measurement system to present to advertisers.

Lastly, online media content has generally been the same as (or even less than) that offered on traditional platforms. The facility to search it electronically has been insufficient to turn these sites into must-visit and must-advertise places.

Likewise, content delivered by cellular phone has been disappointing in quality, not to mention being costly and clunky in terms of access. The much-hyped WAP never took off, severely setting back possibilities of cellular phones as mechanisms to consume media content.

Unsurprisingly, in the light of these limitations, audiences and advertisers for new media have been in relatively short supply.

However, things should improve over the next decade. Competition to Telkom will lead to cheaper connectivity, and there are signs – like the *www.mg.co.za* special feature on the elections – that content will become far more interactive and attractive. Advertisers will begin to see value in the growing audiences reached by new media. More online sites are likely to offer paid-for content. If the quality is good enough, visitors – who should become increasingly more e-commerce familiar – will pay. Online access will grow, and this is likely to increasingly include Internet links via mobile phone devices.

Cellular phone screens will improve. Special content will be customised for them and faster transmission speeds for data will emerge. Meantime, the traditional platforms – especially print – will become more expensive, making new media a more competitive option for the consumer. Most of all, there will be greater convergence between new and old media, with greater economies of scale and cross-promotion across myriad digital delivery channels. This will not supplant the existing divergent media forms, but it will spread content across them all and drive traffic from one to the other.

There will also be online information growth among non-mass media sources like local governments, NGOs and SMMEs – making the Internet more attractive to the public. We can expect web-logging, and increased content in African languages. The enlarged middle class, and indeed even the wider public, will deepen peer-to-peer content messaging. News images captured on individual cellular phones (or plagiarised from elsewhere!) will be sent from device to device, often bypassing the mainstream media – including its online contingent.

It will be a challenge for journalists to keep their visibility – and role – within this expanding maelstrom. The bottom line, however, is that society can look forward to more opportunities for more black and women's voices online and information diversity becoming much richer. Once Internet access becomes more mainstream in the next 10 years, there will be an unimagined wealth out there for South Africans to choose from, contribute to, and celebrate.



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Neo Ntsona

Zane Ibrahim pays tribute to the early grassroots activists who moved community radio out of apartheid control and into community vibrancy.

In the early 1990s, progressive South African communication activists didn't want the state broadcast propaganda machine to continue to fuel the airwaves and control information. They knew they had to look at other countries to develop the best environment for communication in South Africa. The Jabulani Freedom of the Airwaves Conference, held in Amsterdam in August 1991, laid a foundation for the recognition of three tiers of broadcasting in South Africa, community, commercial and public radio. The conference reinforced the call for an independent authority to regulate broadcasting, and eventually led to the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) Act of 1993.

In the live audience at a television broadcast about the Jabulani Conference, discussing the future of broadcasting in South Africa, sat a few activists who were to play an important role in the next decade of broadcasting in our country.

Lumko Mtimde was a student at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). He led the student activists at UWC in pressuring the still white-controlled government to commit itself to the development of community radio in the country. After years

“We need to trust that our own voices, our own thoughts and our own cultural approaches are the best for us, and not try to emulate sounds from other nations, not even from the city.”

of listening to “his Master’s voice” in a monopolised broadcast environment, the voiceless needed to begin expressing their opinions and having conversations, which had been suppressed under the “divide, rule and ignore” policies of apartheid-generated information. Community radio was seen as a means to provide alternative information for disadvantaged communities. To ensure a people-driven solution became more and more urgent in the times of negotiating a political settlement.

At first, it was hard going for Mtimde and his comrades – until they were approached by a small group of white liberals and conscientious objectors who were dabbling in guerrilla radio. Driven by the desire to circulate alternative opinions and ideas, these people, led by Edric Gorfinkel, Gabriel Urgoiti, Sandile Dikeni, Hein Marais and the indefatigable grassroots radio activist Tracey Naughton, were learning about how to access airwaves. They started by making programmes and circulating cassette tapes to taxis which transported the voiceless.

It’s important to note that at that time, UWC was one of the non-elite universities in the country without their own radio station. As they believed

in a “people’s university” being community-based, they encouraged students to set up their station at an off-campus location. It was the beginning of a new media model for South Africa – a radio station not owned by either the apartheid state or commercial barons. This concept was in line with the UWC’s transformation programme, intended to ensure community participation in university life.

The amalgamation resulted in what is now called Bush Radio, named after the UWC which was lovingly called “bush college” by students who first attended there in the early 1960s. Students from UWC were active participants in the project. Bush radio today still services the broad Cape Flats community, including UWC.

After he graduated from UWC, Mtimde, still at the forefront of the community media movement, was commissioned by the Bush Radio co-ordinating committee to establish an office of the National Community Radio Forum (NCRF), which was later officially launched in Soweto.

The NCRF was set up to mobilise communities for an enabling legislative environment for the community radio sector, and to provide a platform

for co-ordination and networking. It capacitated a number of communities to start community radio stations. The vision was a blooming of community radio stations all over the country and a lobbying mechanism to promote this. Today this has become a reality.

Under Mtimde's leadership, the NCRF won the AMARC International Community Radio Award in 1994. It was also a recognition of the contribution of South African activists to the development of community radio stations worldwide. After a few years of hard work and putting the NCRF on a solid foundation, setting up the AMARC Africa office, and serving as its first president, Mtimde was invited to join the newly formed Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), where he played an important part in the formulation of its community broadcasting policy. He got involved in the merging of the IBA with the telecommunications regulator (SATRA) and joined the Department of Communications (DoC).

His presence in the DoC brought infrastructure and programme production support to over 30 community radio stations in poor rural areas who, until then, had been excluded from the early rush for broadcasting licences from the IBA in 1995/96.

The establishment of the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) is another example of the results of successful advocacy work. Many special interest groups applied for geographic licences, because it was difficult to receive special interest licences at first. The NCRF argued that those who had been the most oppressed by apartheid, needed more time and support to take up the available frequencies. The then Minister of Communications Jay Naidoo was concerned that granting broadcasting licences to special interest groups would result in poor communities being, once more, marginalised. In fact today, the faith-based and other special interest stations have the most listeners in the country.

Will this growing trend affect the survival of geographic stations having no particular constituency to turn to for support?

The adage think globally and act locally is useful. But in South Africa we still need to think and talk locally before we can tackle the broader issues. We must remember, the majority of the population is black and historically marginalised. In rural areas they are still enslaved to the same farmer families as their grandparents were. There is much to do for a community communication system, providing real and necessary information. Geographic radio stations serve the majority of community members. The government support through DoC, MDDA and the Government Communications and Information Services (GCIS), is intended to empower these communities in order to encourage economic growth.

Joe Mjwara, who was also present at the TV interviews related to the Jabulani Conference 1991 in the Netherlands, was, and still is, a strong advocate for the rights of poor rural communities and the use of community radio for them. He comes from the ranks of Radio Freedom, the voice of the African National Congress in exile. He was invited by the then Department of Post and Telecommunications to establish the DoC and became its deputy director. Under his guidance, and with the support of Mtimde, the DoC has made it possible for poor communities to express themselves.

The law differentiates between community, commercial and public radio; as a result, for example, application fees and license fees vary between these categories. Community radio stations are subsidised by the government. Mjwara (under the leadership of Andile Ngcaba) made it possible that

community radio stations were allocated funding by the national treasury. Today the DoC supports infrastructure, programme production and capacity building through the National Electronic Media Institute of South Africa (NEMISA).

Edric Gorfinkel, a strong proponent of community radio, who saw the potential of low power FM as a tool for development, was also among the TV studio audience in the Netherlands and led the group around Mtimde and his students. Gorfinkel and Sandile Dikeni, a well-known poet and writer and now political editor of *ThisDay*, were making recordings of speeches by prominent anti-apartheid leaders and distributing the tapes in the townships. They convinced the students that it needed their co-operation and unity to pressure the government to free the airwaves.

John van Zyl, then a professor at the University of the Witwatersrand, was part of the delegation of South Africans who attended the Jabulani Conference in the Netherlands. He was a special guest at the TV broadcast. At the end of the interview, when asked if he had any dreams, he answered: "Yes, I would like to see the entire broadcasting system of the Netherlands transplanted to South Africa."

Many would have disagreed with this sentiment, then and now, because the contexts were too different to enable a grafting of one system on another. But we know that there were people looking for a shape for South Africa's future broadcasting environment. The Netherlands had everything South Africa did not have: an independent public service instead of a state-monopolised propaganda machine; a commercial sector that offered lifestyle choices and a vibrant independent community broadcasting sector. All this, overseen by an independent regulator.

Fast forwarding to the present day, we witness a much divided sector with those radio stations classified as geographical more likely to have to struggle for survival than those who are servicing an interest group. The broadcasting system, at all levels, relies on good commercial revenue, which broadcasters can only achieve through the wealthiest listeners.

It is also interesting to note that the geographically-based stations are managed by people of an average age of 27, while the average age of the management of the special interest, and mostly faith-based stations, is 40 years. The latter group is usually better educated and more likely to have previous experience in broadcasting, largely as a result of being previously advantaged.

The chasm between these two groups is known to be quite worrisome to many activists who had been fighting hard in the past to rid the country of petty divisions. One remarkable difference is that over 90% of the stations owned by special interest groups have membership in the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), while all the geographically-based stations are members of the NCRF. Sadly, this divide essentially represents a racial divide as well, with some elements of class division. Several attempts to have some co-operative relationship between these two umbrella organisations have not gone beyond unenthusiastic gestures and draft memoranda of understanding.

Change would mean discomfort, hard work on building tolerance, suspending judgement, and serious commitment to sociological bridge-building. People who are in positions of power and comfort have not historically been known to relinquish these.

A scandalous trend has developed in the sector over the past 10 years. Self-serving individuals and groups, some who have worked in and often have only a minimal understanding of the working of

community radios, have emerged as self-appointed saviours of the sector. As an example, we will see individuals, who are involved in environment, primary health care or gender issues, for instance, approach overseas donors or organisations with similar interests and solicit funding to establish a production facility. They will then produce programmes dealing with the respective issues and then distribute the programmes to the community radio stations in the country.

These opportunists convince the often unsuspecting contributor that the stations do not have the capacity or ability to produce programmes and that the community urgently needs the programmes they aim to produce. For obvious reasons, these programmes are seldom of good quality.

One popular way to get the poor rural stations to "buy in", is to transport young station managers to Johannesburg, Durban or Cape Town and put them up in a three-star hotel for a week of "workshop". Nothing excites a station manager from a poor rural area more than the prospect of spending a week in comparative luxury – one from a rural Northern Province station once spent six months of the year in Johannesburg, attending workshops.

This is exacerbated by the fact that many of the donors, who support the community radio sector in South Africa, in order to make their work easier, prefer to deal with the umbrella bodies and the many fly-by-night production houses that have sprouted up in the country during the last 10 years. As a result, there are now increasingly more people living off the community radio sector than in it.

The DoC's programme identified this problem and developed a plan to capacitate communities within their stations, drawing participation from surrounding NGOs and CBOs to produce such programmes on their own.

Community radio is 90% community and 10% radio. So why has it been so hard for the geographic stations to sustain themselves? One answer is that there is nothing "African" about the radio stations in question, which is to say, we've inadvertently allowed ourselves to be persuaded into accepting a Eurocentric broadcasting model. We need to trust that our own voices, our own thoughts and our own cultural approaches are the best for us, and not try to emulate sounds from other nations, not even from the city. It will take time to bring forward our own trainers, and to keep them away from what appear to be more attractive, lucrative jobs in the policy sector. While it is important that community radio has been a training ground, it has now to be seen as a place to make a career.

To our north, the Zambians are slowly and methodically establishing stations that are dynamic, relevant and delightfully "African". A small radio station in the rural town of Chipata, an eight-hour drive from Lusaka, has been able to ignite the imagination of the community like few others on the continent. In one of the daily programmes old Gogo Breeze and his granddaughter answer enquiries from listeners. Gogo Breeze receives about 200 letters a week, requesting advice on how to resolve marital problems, about best agricultural practices or problems with civic authorities. Gogo's research team includes community members from all walks of life, who volunteer during a certain time at the radio station. Mike Daka, one of the continent's most respected media veterans, runs Breeze FM, which is an interesting blend of a commercial station with public service values. Perhaps, finally, we are seeing here a station that our economy and donors are able to support, and which acts to support and develop the community it serves.



Zane Ibrahim entered an extensive programme in cross cultural conflict resolution after his studies in broadcast communications. From 1970 he has devoted his energies building the micro-broadcasting sector worldwide. After his return from exile in 1994 he's been playing 'midwife' to Bush Radio – "The Mother of Community Radio in Africa".

Sunday Times

Business Day

Financial Mail

Metro

Map Studio

Exclusive Books

Gallo Music

Daily Dispatch

Weekend Post

Summit

Struk

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The Herald

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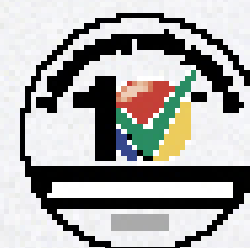
It's meaningful to look back as we celebrate our 10 years of democracy. But it's even more important to look forward — as the future brightly beckons our nation.

The Johnnic group — Johnnic Holdings Limited, the parent company, and Johnnic Communications Limited, the operating company — has a proud South African history dating back to the late 1980s. We've been part of South Africa for generations — in industries as diverse as mining and telecommunications, with our current and future focus on media and entertainment. Many of our products are part of the fabric of our society — brands like the Sunday Times, Business Day,

Financial Mail, Metro, Exclusive Books, Gallo and Struk have informed and continue to serve our democracy while entertaining millions of South Africans.

And the best is yet to come... South Africa has navigated rough seas to get to today, and undoubtedly there are storms ahead. But, with our democracy secure, the future is sure.

And when South Africa celebrates 20, 50 and 100 years of democracy, Johnnic will still be here — a truly proud part of our great nation.



Exciting affairs

Thandanani Dlamini relives a 10-year journey of producing current affairs programmes.

When South Africa successfully transformed into a democracy, the media lagged in many aspects. Predominantly remaining white-owned, they continued to reflect white views and white lives; all black lives only as perceived by white society. The public broadcaster was not immune to this, as it had been the mouthpiece of the apartheid machinery. In its attempt at transformation, more black journalists and radio producers were employed. So more of what was unfolding in the country, as it went through its birth pains, was reflected in the media.

As a young, black, inexperienced journalist in 1993, I remember a newsroom where the editor was a white male managing a predominantly white staff. The black reporters generally acted as translators of stories written by their white counterparts.

The only time one would get to have one's own story was when there was turmoil in the townships, hostels or taxi ranks, which was a daily occurrence during those days. Whether done consciously or unconsciously, this reality offered exciting learning opportunities for us black journalists.

As reporters for the public broadcaster, we had to file stories in several languages. White reporters filed mainly for SAfm (then Radio Today). We serviced the African language stations with our translations. As a black reporter, you could only file for Radio Today if you had the right accent. My most memorable moments on being accepted into the English medium reportage was when I covered stories like the Tembisa train crash, taxi violence and hostel clashes. During the 1994 election, I did live crossings for both English and African language stations from polling stations in Soweto.

It was after the 1994 election that I started producing current affairs. Pressure was mounting for transformation at the public broadcaster. Questions were being asked about the absence of black voices on the English flagship station. After a short stint there was additional pressure to uplift the traditional second cousins within radio, the African language stations. I was then transferred to Nelspruit as executive producer of Siswati current affairs. It was not such a pleasant experience. Most of the producers there had worked for the SABC for 10 years or more. They were male and elderly. Their routine was to use stories from Johannesburg and to ask no questions about content, quality or relevance to their audiences.

My challenge was to transform the current affairs production to be in tow with the transforming South Africa – to provide programmes that were



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accessible, relevant and informative to listeners of that particular radio station then in their language (Radio Swazi, now Ligwalagwala).

This was a daunting task for several reasons. The bosses, who thought it a good idea that I go there, did not take cultural considerations into account. Elderly men in my culture (Siswati) do not take kindly to taking instructions from a younger woman. The minute I got there, they were referring to me as *sidzandzane*, "little girl". As one can imagine, little girl and executive producer with a brief to transform current affairs – the work ethic would prove to be a tough endurance test.

It was a challenging, daunting and sometimes extremely frustrating time. Current affairs-wise, there were some blurry lines in terms of definitions. It was not clear whether we were a public broadcaster or a community radio station servicing the interests of a few who had access. There were situations where government officials would simply walk into the building and demand to be put on air. Before I arrived, that had been the culture. As can be expected, there was animosity and bitterness all round when that had to stop. I tried my best to turn the current affairs programmes into credible and informative news programmes.

However there were set habits and audience loyalty – African language stations listeners have been shown to be extremely loyal for various reasons: cultural, language, and simply limited choice. This led to sub-standard service from editors and producers who knew they had a guaranteed audience, no matter how bad the service.

I am not proud to say, when the founder of YFM approached me with a project we had been discussing for several years, I jumped at the idea of leaving my old men to their old ways back in Nelspruit.

YFM was a whole new world, where I was tasked to start a newsroom. This newsroom, it was envisaged, would deliver news to the youth in a way that would make them want to listen and take note of what was happening in the country and the world. Needless to say, studies at the time showed us that the youth used the time during bulletins to go to the bathroom before the next song. The challenge was how to get the young to combine the song and dance with their listening and talking.

After numerous debates, mini current affairs programmes of about 15 minutes each were intro-

duced: one in the morning and one in drive time. The day's top stories would be discussed together with an issue of the day for young people. This proved to be very popular and successful.

Three years later, the fascinating, youthful world of Y-FM radio was not enough for me any more. I was craving involvement with something more intellectual. As is common with most of my radio-crazy colleagues, it was time for me to trek back to the national broadcaster.

I was back at SAfm, working as a current affairs producer again. The place had changed since my last days there. My executive producer was a young woman of Cape Malay descent. Besides BBC producers, with whom we had a collaboration programme, the whole team was black, young and sharp!

Things have been transformed remarkably, although the presence of the BBC meant that more often than not we had to succumb to what they thought was the most important story of the day. I recall having a big argument when they suggested, a coup in some obscure country was a better story than a massacre at an army base in Tempe. Not long after I arrived, the BBC collaboration ended.

Shortly after that I was appointed senior producer. The responsibilities included planning the programme, setting up newsmakers and producing on-air presenters. I simply loved it! Radio being radio, and the world being what it has become, we would sit in our two planning sessions debating what to put on the programme, and how.

The best moments are when the line-up for the programme is finalised, and a dramatic story breaks. What we had spent the day crafting together as a team falls away to make way for something entirely different. 9/11, 2001 was one of those times: as we were about to go on air, the show finalised and guests lined up, everything fell off, including the planning. The beauty of radio is its immediacy; sometimes so immediate, one is allowed to break the rules. On 9/11 we were on air for an hour longer than we were supposed to be.

Now as executive producer of SAfm *PM Live* current affairs, I still find it so challenging. I have been in the radio industry for 10 years now. And these have been fascinating and fruitful years during which I learnt more than I did in the previous 30 years of my life.



Thandanani Dlamini

is the Executive Producer of SAfm Radio Current Affairs. She studied at the Universities of Swaziland, Trent and the London School of Economics. In the early 80s she was an English teacher at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College in Tanzania. In the early 90s she moved to South Africa permanently and started working at the SABC and Y-FM.

Desiree Lewis examines the necessity for an alternative media as a voice against pretended democracy and manufactured consent.

Encouraging the subversive spirit

What is exactly meant by the term “alternative media” is enormously contentious. Thirteen years ago, Keyan Tomaselli offered an analytical explanation, which transcends the loose self-definitions of media productions themselves. He uses the term “progressive-alternative” to describe media, which “offers a dialectical alternative to the dominant values of the capitalist press and provides a different agenda for news values”. Tomaselli shows how, from the early 1980s, the alternative media functioned as part of a robust critical information system. Its promotion of social dialogue and participatory ideas about producing and distributing information reinforced its critical content in contesting hierarchical media institutions, as well as oppressive values and relationships. Although Tomaselli makes it clear that the alternative press had a particular role to play under apartheid, he encourages us to consider far-reaching ways in which the alternative press transcends and challenges: it is “alternative” not only because it contests overt authoritarianism, but because it can advocate and exemplify a vision of democratic goals, of community and interaction, that are radically different from the hegemonic mainstream one.

The enduring liberatory role of an alternative press seems to be missed in the emphatically conjunctural perception of South Africa’s alternative press. This understanding is manifested in the book: *South Africa’s Resistance Press: Alternative Voices in the Last Generation under Apartheid*, published four years ago by L. Switzer and M. Adhikari. Examining the range of print media that emerged in the struggle against apartheid, contributions focus on the politics which shaped the fate of media productions, at the same time assuming the specifically context-bound role of the energy, courage, subversiveness and determination these demonstrated. The implicit claim is that the unique dynamism and energy of the dissident media voices does not really play a role today.

It is indisputable that the vitality of the alternative press was fuelled by contingencies associated with apartheid repression. But in what follows, I want to revisit the question of why these voices so rapidly disappeared, and what this disappearance means.

South Africa’s current public information system is one in which purveyors of information across the political spectrum energetically work to cement the new nation. Largely supporting Thabo Mbeki’s recent claim that “a primary aim of government

“**South Africa’s current public information system is one in which purveyors of information across the political spectrum energetically work to cement the new nation.**”

must continue to be reconciliation, nation-building and democratisation”, the perception of the strategic importance of linking reconciliatory nation-building to democracy has generated a distinctively South African momentum around “manufacturing consent”. In South Africa, the new nation is premised insistently on the “imperatives” of alliance, compromise and accommodation. From the left-wing orthodoxy of the SACP to the right-wing’s opportunistic moderation and moves towards inclusiveness, many collude in the writing of a national identity that smoothes over contradictions and blurs rifts.

The consensus about nation-building is manifested in the media. Whether or not purveyors of information share the same goals regarding, for example, the desirability of neo-liberalism, an extraordinary unanimity persists in the assumption that the building of a unified national identity is still an inevitable and reasonable priority long after the fall of the apartheid government. This is why, 10 years after the first democratic election, the perception of South Africa’s democracy as a “transitional” one persists. The idea of needing to defer real transformation and thinking about the radical and popular struggles generated before 1994 endures in the context of “tactical” commitment to healing, reconciliation and alliance-building now, in the interests of democracy later. Much of the seductive power of current national myth-making is therefore manifested not in the fact that most South Africans accept reconciliatory rhetoric, but in the fact that the national myths have come to be seen as strategically reasonable and necessary. A decade of democracy brokered through negotiation and compromise has led a range of opinion makers, information systems and the like to carry – albeit often with resentment or resignation – the burden of accountability to the unified nation, so that democracy is often projected into the remote future. We remain locked into an eternal “transition”. From this perspective, apartheid is used as a yardstick for measuring freedom and democracy. And according to this logic, we must be free today because we were so unfree before.

When it comes to weighing up what 10 years of freedom have really meant, there is a grim record. Adam Habib describes it in the following way: The commission for the Department of Social Welfare estimated in their statistics in May 2004, the country’s poverty rate at a staggering 45 to 55%. It suggested that 10% of African people are malnourished. And 25% of African children are born stunted.

Most independent studies suggest that, while the inequality level between white and black has been decreasing, the gap is widening within the African population and the country as a whole. These statistics are horrifying. If they had occurred in any country of the industrialised world, a state of economic emergency would have been declared and governments would have fallen. In South Africa, however, not only has this not happened, but it has been difficult to get public institutions to recognise the enormity of the problem.

It is not only public institutions that refuse to recognise the “enormity of the problem”. We all somehow remain reluctant to acknowledge the grim scenario, to move to a point at which we push back the boundaries around measuring and valuing democracy in the new South Africa.

The tendency to defer critical evaluation of democracy seriously undermines what Habib has called “substantive uncertainty”, a climate in which social movements, political parties and a vigorous non-commercial critical media “loosen up the existing configuration of power in South African society”, and increase citizens’ leverage over state elites to further democracy. In such a climate, the open conflict, explicit criticism of government and thriving debate in the public sphere put pressure on ruling elites to become more accountable to their constituencies, and generate radical and substantively democratic change.

Whether fuelled by a belief that there should be consensus to resist the threat of the rightwing; or by loyalty to liberation parties, individuals and organs that previously spearheaded anti-apartheid resistance; or by the accommodating claim that 10 years is a very short time, there has been a persistent censoring of critical talk about the achievements and gains of democracy. Even the language for describing democracy is revealing: less and less do we find in “progressive” spaces and forums talk about freedom, justice or liberation as benchmarks of democracy. More and more the talk is riddled with references to success, achievement and progress.

A transformation of social values both reflects and buttresses the change in discourse. On this level, materialism and pragmatism overtake visionary, radical and liberatory thought. This results in a heavily technocratic definition of democracy. Our current ways of measuring democracy shut down on the radicalism and possibility associated with terms such as freedom, liberation and struggle, extolling the procedural, technical and material signs of



Benny Gool

“development” associated with neo-liberalism.

The ominous nature of all this is masked by procedural mechanisms for democratic choice and process. Democratic procedures for endorsing limited elitist options prevail, and many choose to ignore this because the argument is that “now is not the right time because our democracy is too precarious”, or “it is tactical and necessary to join forces given the danger of a unified rightwing opposition”; or the belief in South African exceptionalism, which fosters the view that, unlike Zimbabwe and the rest of Africa, South Africa will never have “those problems”.

Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman took the title of their book (*Manufacturing Consent*) from the words of an American journalist who knew exactly what the consensus-making process was all about. Walter Lippman, recognising the doctrinal role of the media in liberal democracies after the Second World War, spoke about the new “art” of persuading people that they are free.

The manufacture of consent reflected a situation in which the public information system swayed a population with millions of unemployed and poor citizens into believing they were free, because formally, everybody had legal rights and the right to vote.

In South Africa’s current democracy, the manufacture of consent often hides the fact that democracy is “real” primarily at a formal and procedural level. It mystifies the extent to which democracy amounts to freedoms that privilege particular classes at the expense of others. It masks a situation in which democracy revolves around the elite’s manufacture of “collective” messages in the national interest, and in which neo-liberalism paves the way for foreign investment and domestic

capitalism alongside the growing impoverishment of the majority.

The complicity of the media with this situation is evident in the way ostensibly progressive platforms participate, implicitly or explicitly, in celebrating neo-liberalism, consumerist values, the success stories of the black middle class. They are generally functioning within a commercial framework. In turning to some of the new “alternative” publications, which seem to be taking the place of publications formerly devoted to democratic expression – magazines for youth or magazines devoted to culture – it is alarming how completely these accept the icons, codes and modus operandi of a dominant consumerist society. Whether we consider the overwhelming advertorials in a magazine like *Roots*, or the distinctively American hype around moneyed image and brand names in *Y Magazine*, what we see is worlds away from the subversive values that drove magazines like *Staffrider* or *Speak*.

My argument here is not motivated by a sentimental belief that we re-embrace the agendas and forms of previous “struggle” media. In fact, there is much about democratic transformation and free thinking, the “struggle” media did not address. My point is: we have strayed frighteningly far away from conceiving of a desirable role and visionary meaning for an alternative media in our current socio-political climate. Consensus-making agendas and reconciliatory rhetoric have so engulfed the collective unconscious, and information systems in particular, that we seem unable even to think about the feasibility of a role for what Tomaselli defined as the progressive-alternative media.

Habib identifies the strategic task facing South African society as the reintroduction of substantive uncertainty, and a situation where dissident and

oppositional thought and action seriously unsettle the status quo. Habib explicitly separates consensus-making from democracy, and urges challenges to the hegemony of myths about a seamless nation, the narrativising of a nation by those who continuously speak on behalf of others.

He argues that unpredictable dissent and uncertainty should take precedence over coerced consensus, so that democracy can be imagined outside of confining narratives that rationalise the goals of powerful minorities. In this projected context of dissent, those social movements currently driving real democratic changes, such as the Landless People’s Movement and the Treatment Action Campaign, would work in concert with an information system that truly transcends the status quo. And a substantively alternative media would have a role to play – no less urgent 10 years after the first democratically-elected government than it was before.



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Passing on the baton

A big challenge for the media is to attract younger audiences; but how do the youngsters in the profession feel about the newsrooms they are working in?
Nontyatyambo Petros, asked four of them for their views.

After a decade of press freedom, the state of South Africa's media is still an intense debate which rouses conflicting emotions equally among consumers of media and journalists. In recent times though, the debates are no longer about banning orders, killings or gag-gings. They have been about recent violations, by senior journalists, of what are perceived as the sacrosanct rules of the profession about the so-called juniorisation of newsrooms across print, radio and television; and about ownership patterns.

The media are grappling with declining standards and accusing fingers are often pointed at young journalists. However, a counter argument has been that declining standards are a direct result of the relentless pursuit of profits for shareholders and the move to sensational coverage.

The recycling of senior journalists, particularly black editors, is also a point of discussion. The feeling among black journalists is that there is a lack of

training and support structures for them. Some have often said that they have to work twice as hard as their white counterparts to get a modicum of respect within the newsroom.

A big challenge facing newspapers in particular is the age of their readers. Many are old and, let's face it, will soon cease to be a viable market. And, in this day of intensely diversified news sources, the battle to attract and keep a younger generation of readers promises to be gruelling. What many editors have not come to realise is that the old generation of journalists does not understand what young people want; and to get into that market, young people need to be given platforms in newsrooms. Despite all the problems and challenges, young people have clearly not lost faith in the profession. The journalism schools at Rhodes University and Wits University are still over-subscribed by young and eager students raring to go. The challenge is how to train them and how to get older journalists to pass on the



“**Young people need to be given platforms in newsrooms. The challenge is how to train them and how to get older journalists to pass on the baton without feeling insecure about their own jobs.**”

“Having young journalists guided by those who are in their 40s and 50s, and have been through the mill.”

Le Roux might have a point, but the newsrooms of *Sunday Times*, *Mail&Guardian*, *ThisDay* and *Sowetan* are being run by people who are not in their 40s and 50s. Editorially, these publications have done remarkably well to increase the level of journalistic standards.

Vukani Mde, a political journalist at *ThisDay*, has a somewhat different take on the matter, which he first of all describes as “an interesting problem”. He seems a touch sceptical of conclusions that younger journalists equal a drop in standards. “I have always listened to people who are concerned with juniorisation in newsrooms. I have always felt that the issue is viewed from the wrong angle,” he says.

For him the issue is not so much about young and inexperienced journalists flooding newsrooms, but more about “older journalists not staying”. He says, part of the reason why older journalists have left newsrooms has to do with the crisis journalism found itself in under apartheid.

“Under apartheid, the media were split into two camps; one in the pocket of government and the other opposing government. It could be that many of the people, who have since left the profession, were fatigued because of what they went through,” he says. Mde notes that in many media establishments these days, senior journalists are those who have been around for five years, something which until recently would have been unheard of. He says: “This has a positive vibe, but also a sense of naivety.”

Nasreen Seria, an economics editor at *Business Day*, thinks the large numbers of young journalists is “not a bad thing”. Her explanation is that many senior black journalists were promoted to managerial positions because of the drive to reform the media industry; a move however, which took them out of writing roles. Seria has adopted a mercenary view on the departure of senior journalists from newsrooms. She believes that, although their editorial skills may have been lost, the vacancies they left have enabled younger journalists to move quickly up the ranks in the profession. “Ten years ago this would not have been possible; there would be a lot more barriers.”

Interestingly, the flipside of those voices criticising young journalists, is illustrated by the case of a journalist who works for an Eastern Cape-based SABC radio station. This journalist, who did not want to be named, admits quite candidly that she does not have all the necessary skills required for her job as a journalist and newsreader.

She explains that the older journalists in her newsroom have themselves not had any formal journalism education either, and are often resistant to change and new methods of operation. “Most of the journalists, I work with, are over 40 and have no interest in breaking stories. Their main concern is filing three stories a day, but the quality and originality of those stories are not something they prioritise,” she says.

Press release-driven journalism, the source of worry for any self-respecting editor, seems to have been firmly entrenched in the operation of this station. “They don’t bother to scratch beneath the surface, and when we young journalists go beyond press releases, we are seen as wanting to outshine our older colleagues.”

Her case shows that the profession often creates pitfalls for young journalists by not giving them training opportunities.

“Once you start working as a journalist, everyone expects you to know the tricks of the trade, how to interview people, dealing with difficult sources, yet no training is provided,” she points out. She says expectations are even higher when one comes from a university environment.

“When you are young, sources try to exploit you; others resent your mere presence as a journalist. But we are not taught how to handle these situations.” In her experience, staff have been sent on courses to teach them writing skills and accuracy. “The editors focus on accuracy but little emphasis is placed on producing balanced and objective stories.”

This, in her opinion, has a negative effect on a profession which is battling to cure its historical “pale and male” syndrome.

Mde says racial integration remains a challenge in many newsrooms. “I would be surprised if it was anything else. Even in a new medium like *ThisDay* it is difficult. The politics of our history can’t be avoided,” he says.

According to the East Cape radio reporter, racial harmony at her newsroom is still a long way off. “There are difficulties in accepting and working with each other. There is still a ‘them and us’ attitude.” She says often it feels that striking up conversation with a white colleague is interpreted by her other black colleagues as tantamount to selling out.

Le Roux points out that there is little integration within *Beeld*, but she attributes this to the fact that the newspaper is published in Afrikaans, making it less attractive to black journalists. Interestingly, she notes, most of its correspondents outside the newsroom are black.

Seria feels that journalism is a microcosm of society. “It is not unusually racist or sexist. The industry cannot be divorced from the broader society. The reality is that we live in a patriarchal society which is struggling with racism.”

Mde feels that as a black man he brings into his work a particular way of viewing the world. “One’s identity affects how you approach your profession, how you view the world. The challenge is to recognise one’s bias and have the humility to ask other people how they see the same thing you are viewing,” he says.

The radio journalist agrees that her female identity sometimes interferes with her work. If for example she is asked to cover a story on violence against a woman, she automatically takes the side of the woman. “I tend to put myself in the woman’s shoes, and as a result this sometimes clouds my judgement,” she explains.

Le Roux says there is an unwritten rule which results in men often being given better stories. Although she does not say this directly, one gets the sense that she feels that men generally progress faster than their women counterparts within newsrooms. “There is a preference for male journalists, and their opinion is valued as better. And that is irritating,” Le Roux adds.

All the journalists feel that English will remain the language of choice in media for the foreseeable future. “The entrenchment of English took centuries, even the National Party could not overthrow the dominance of the language. We are increasingly becoming an English-speaking country with other languages,” says Mde.

“I don’t think there’s a demand for publications published in other languages,” says Le Roux.

Adding her voice, the radio reporter says that for as long as black people feel that English is a superior language, African languages won’t get equal treatment in the media.

baton without feeling insecure about their own jobs.

I spoke to four journalists about their views on the alleged juniorisation of the newsroom, and about racial interaction. I also asked them how their identities influenced their journalism and the dominance of English in the media.

Mathabo le Roux is a confident young journalist working for *Sake Beeld*, the business supplement of *Beeld* newspaper. One almost expects her to feverishly leap to the defence of her peers in the face of harsh criticism about their inexperience, and that being the cause of declining journalistic standards. On the contrary, she strongly feels that the influx of young journalists compromises editorial quality. “The problem with newsrooms is that there’s no balance between young and older journalists,” Le Roux says.

In her two years working at *Beeld*, and previously at News24, she talks about witnessing “a proliferation of young journalists, who don’t read up on developments within their beats and consequently don’t write informed stories”.

Admittedly, they bring “new blood and fresh perspectives”, but she feels publications tend to make more mistakes when there are too many young people. And that “could be dangerous”, Le Roux adds.

In her opinion, the answer to the problem is:



Nontyatyambo Petros is the editor of the *Grocott’s Mail*, Grahamstown’s community newspaper. She previously worked at *Business Day* in various positions. Editing *Grocott’s Mail* has been an extremely challenging but exciting experience, and she spends her time thinking of how to make *Grocott’s Mail* the best community newspaper.



Ruth Seopedi Motau

studied at the Market Theatre Photography Workshop. After this she worked her way up to pictures editor of the *Mail&Guardian*. She is currently a freelance photojournalist, who has been involved in numerous special projects, and has exhibited and published her work extensively, locally and internationally.



Sonnyboy's story

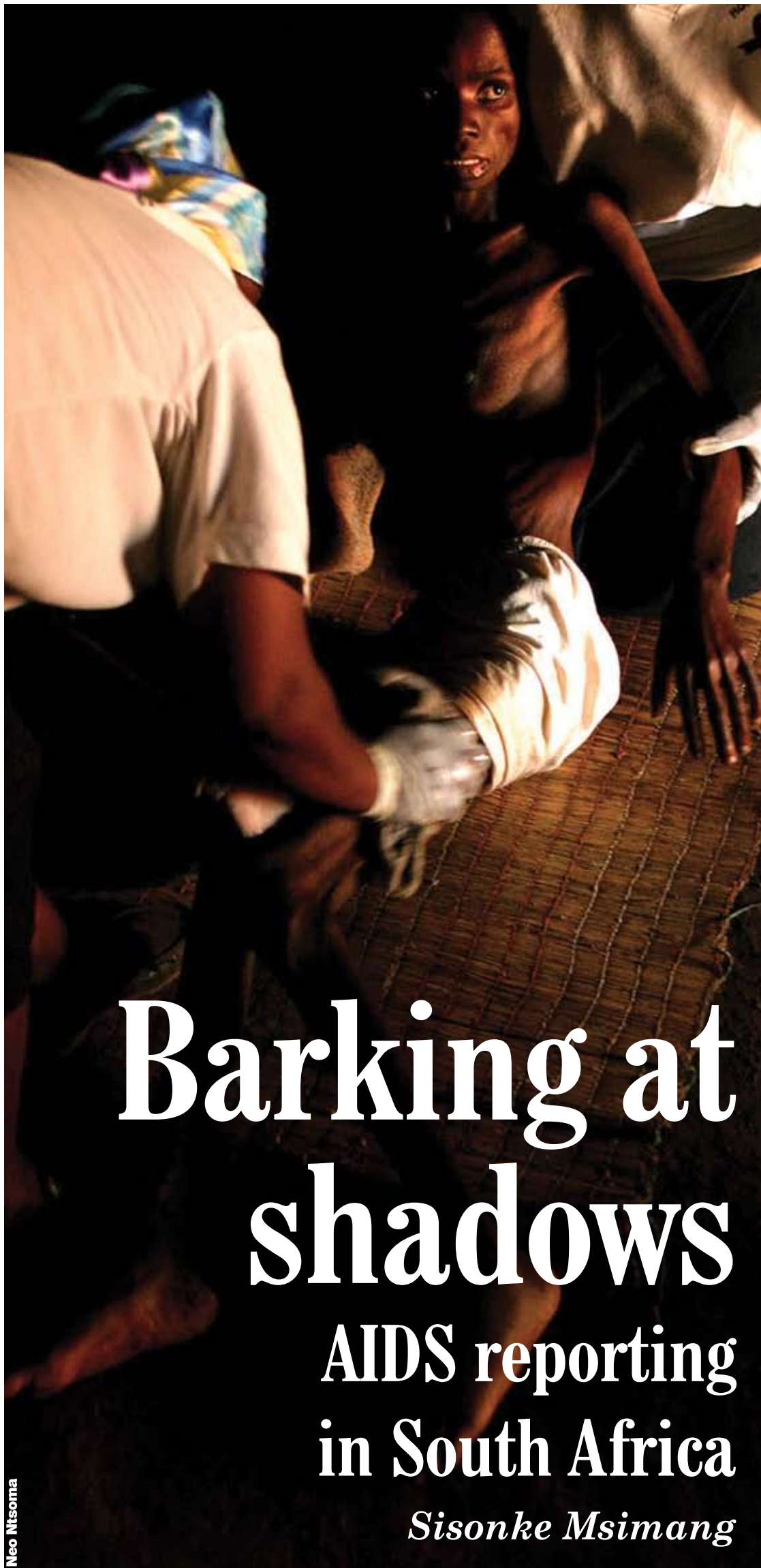
Sonnyboy (13) and his nine-year-old sister are some of the AIDS orphans who have to look after themselves.

Sonnyboy does all the household chores – from washing clothes to cooking, and helping his sister with homework almost every day. The day starts at 5am. He makes a fire and starts to cook porridge, warm the milk or fry eggs. Then he boils water for his sister to wash and go to school.

Both Sonnyboy and his sister, with some of the local children, go to the bush to fetch water and firewood. They cannot afford to pay the fee for use of the local communal tap to get a monthly supply of water. These children miss out on playing and end up being parents while they are still children.







Barking at shadows

AIDS reporting in South Africa

Sisonke Msimang

Neo Ntsoma

“In the eyes of many HIV-positive South Africans, media ethics around privacy are sorely lacking.”

Over the last 10 years, the media have had a complicated relationship with the new government. Media institutions that were left-leaning in the apartheid era, and therefore sympathetic to the liberation movement, have had to carve out a new role for themselves – playing a balancing act between impartiality, critique and support. Those that were sympathetic to the views of the old establishment have also grappled with their role in a changing society. To what extent do their loyalties lie with the interests of their audiences, and who really constitutes “the public” – their readers, or society at large?

The big media houses have frequently come under fire in the last decade for continuing to embody the ideologies, hiring practices and journalistic ethics of the past. Indeed, changing the ownership structure of the media industry has been a priority among some in government, and a number of black private sector interests, aligned with the ANC, have made significant investments in media – New Africa Publications and Johnnic being prime examples.

Given the confluence of so many schisms under the banner of AIDS – sexuality, morality, disease, racism – those writing (and reading) stories about AIDS have had to navigate a minefield of subjects: sexuality, gender, African tradition and culture, masculinity, and of course, race (which South Africans are both obsessed by and have little capacity to speak about rationally). In that sense, AIDS reporting has been no different from reporting on crime, elections, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, corruption or any of the other big stories of the decade. South Africans see the world in a manner that is deeply defined by the faultlines of class, gender and, most importantly, race.

When the party, whose face Nelson Mandela had come to symbolise, swept into power in 1994, AIDS figures were relatively low by current standards: 7.2% of antenatal clinic attendants were testing HIV positive. AIDS was not yet a significant story in the eyes of the media, or society at large, for that matter.

The first major AIDS story broke in the media in 1996, when it was found that then health minister Nkosasana Zuma had awarded a contract to Mbonjeni Ngema to stage *Sarafina II* as an AIDS prevention play. It was charged – and eventually found by the public prosecutor – that irregular tender procedures had been used in the awarding of the R14.7 million contract. The state forked out R10 million of this money although the play was never staged.

Correctly, media reporting was not so much about AIDS in this instance, as it was about allegations of corruption and cronyism. Sources quoted in stories wondered why community education groups were not provided with similar financial support, given the broad reach of their work. Editors blasted the minister for assuming that a single play could result in behaviour change required to turn the epidemic around. A number suggested that the minister had a penchant for ignoring government procedures and bypassing official channels. By the end of the saga, Zuma was increasingly lampooned for defending herself by claiming a “mystery donor” had offered to pay for the play.

Two years later, the notion that Zuma often acted in a unilateral manner was reinforced by the scandal surrounding the potential AIDS drug Virodene. Minister Zuma and Deputy President Mbeki were convinced by Olga and Zigi Visser – scientists of questionable credibility – that Virodene might offer a cure for HIV/AIDS. Again, the media uproar was about Zuma’s propensity for bypassing official structures. In this case, the inventors went directly

to Cabinet instead of through the Medicine Controls Council (MCC). The minister and this time the deputy president took well intentioned, but ill-advised decisions outside regular channels.

The tone of many Virodene articles was derisive on two counts. Firstly, the cabinet was described as naïve and amateurish for believing the two scientists could have come up with a cure despite the fact that millions of dollars had been pumped into the global search for a number of years. Secondly, the Cabinet was criticised again for attempting to dispense with the usual MCC research protocols. As a number of reports pointed out, senior government officials treated the protocols, which exist to safeguard the health of South Africans, as though they were designed to impede scientific progress.

Although the Virodene scandal consumed a significant number of headlines in 1998, it was also becoming increasingly clear that the deputy president was concerned about and interested in the AIDS crisis. That year, Mbeki launched the Partnership against AIDS.

In launching the partnership in October, the deputy president said: “For too long we have closed our eyes as a nation, hoping the truth was not so real. For many years, we have allowed the HI Virus to spread, and at a rate in our country which is one of the fastest in the world.”

The nation paused to listen. At work, we turned on the television and watched our future president speak. There he sat, well-starched in a suit, with an active group of children affected by HIV crawling on the floor around him. There was a little boy on his lap; a writhing little bundle who seemed utterly unconcerned about the presence of the camera. His fingers were interested only in exploring the face of the stiff, but nice, man on whom he was perched.

That day, I was proud of my deputy president. It was clear that he was uncomfortable, but he had listened to his advisors and forged ahead anyway, speaking about the centrality of AIDS for South Africa’s development. That day, I felt we were on track.

The camera was firmly fixed on him, his vulnerability and courage, his elderly uncle-ness on display for the nation. It was a tender and endearing moment, sweet with hope. It was not early, but we still had time. It was 1998 and 1 500 people were getting infected every day.

Two months later, the nation was stunned by the brutal and very public murder of Gugu Dlamini. On 1 December – World AIDS Day – hours after she had disclosed her HIV status, a group of young men killed her. They said she was bringing shame upon their community.

At the time, Minister Zuma was well on her way to finalising a policy which would have made HIV/AIDS a notifiable condition. The murder forced the health ministry to rethink this approach. Dlamini’s death taught people working in the AIDS arena that stigma could be deadly. It demonstrated to the ministry that a policy to make AIDS notifiable would almost certainly result in the victimisation of a great deal of people, most of them women.

The following year marked the end of our first five years of democracy. As South Africa said goodbye to Madiba, President Thabo Mbeki ushered in a new era, that many suggested would be the era of the African. President Mbeki’s new cabinet included Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, who was widely respected in her previous post as deputy minister of justice. Her appointment came as a relief to many who had felt that Zuma’s style was abrasive and non-consultative. The honeymoon was brief. By the end of that year, media reporting was increasingly focused on the confrontational nature of the minis-

ter’s relationships with various civil society groups.

The headlines in 1999 were dominated by the Department of Health’s refusal to provide Nevirapine to pregnant women to prevent the transmission of HIV during pregnancy and childbirth.

The newly-formed Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) embarked upon a campaign to convince the government to extend the provision of Nevirapine to HIV-positive, pregnant women. By 2000, the minister had agreed to provide Nevirapine in 18 clinics across the country – two in each province. The TAC felt this was insufficient; Nevirapine had proven its efficacy, and could potentially prevent HIV in 35 000 newborns each year. Arguing that the coverage of the programme was too small and that the restrictions on the programme were “unreasonable” in view of the state’s constitutional obligations to provide access to health, the TAC took the government to court.

The case reached the Constitutional Court in 2002, which found in the TAC’s favour, paving the way for the provision of anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs) to all pregnant women attending health facilities across the country.

2000 also marked the year President Mbeki began seriously questioning the science of HIV/AIDS. He established a presidential advisory panel to look into the matter and invited Peter Duesburg and David Resnick to join it. Both men are “AIDS dissidents” who question the existence of the HI virus. Mbeki’s questions covered a number of specific areas. Firstly, he wondered aloud whether poverty, not simply HIV, was the underlying problem driving AIDS. Underneath his question was a clear line of thought that he alluded to on a number of occasions. If AIDS was disproportionately affecting Africans, why was this the case? Was there something genetic about Africans that predisposed them to this vulnerability? If the answer was no, then the problem had to be poverty. If this was true, it led to another series of questions about the nature of the virus itself. Therein lay the desire to clarify the link between HIV and AIDS. On one level, the President’s questions were not those of an innocent. They were drenched in scepticism about the accuracy of the numbers of people infected by HIV and the verity of claims that the same virus could be infecting so many Africans heterosexually, while in the west it had skipped the mainstream and gone straight to gay men. It was obvious that the link with “sexual deviance” was not one he appreciated.

On another level, the President’s questions, and the manner in which he publicly posed them, were extremely naïve. Advisors and briefings should have sorted him out quickly. There were endless column lines dedicated to the autocratic tendencies he displayed in ignoring advice and choosing to publicly question conventional wisdom in a manner that was so spectacularly lacking in political acumen.

Like dogs with a tasty, meaty bone, the media repeatedly put pressure on the President and the increasingly belligerent new health minister to make pronouncements clarifying their views on the link between the virus and the syndrome.

The controversy reached boiling point during the international AIDS conference in Durban. The conference provided the President an opportunity to make a statement about the controversy surrounding his views. Some had speculated he would put rumours to rest in front of an international audience. Instead, he stoked the fire.

Mbeki’s address at the opening of the conference raised the hackles of many AIDS activists. He affirmed his position on poverty as the primary factor driving the AIDS pandemic, and questioned

those who criticised the government for seeking to know more about HIV by putting together the presidential AIDS panel.

In stark contrast, Nkosi Johnson, the 11-year-old boy born with HIV told a very different story. His address at the conference highlighted the differences between Mbeki’s views and the human reality of AIDS. A little boy was dying because he got treatment too late. His mother was dead for the same reason. The president’s preoccupation with race did little to change these facts. Nor could the media spotlight stop the inexorable progression of AIDS in his body: less than a year later, Nkosi died.

Months after his death, a lengthy document was released by a few members of the ANC. Peter Mokaba was one of the chief authors. The paper, entitled “HIV/AIDS and the Struggle for the Humanisation of the African” was circulated as a discussion document of the ANC. It claimed that Nkosi had died, “vanquished by the anti-retroviral drugs he was forced to consume (by the white woman who adopted him)”.

The document also commented on presidential spokesperson, Parks Mankahlana, who died a few months after Nkosi in 2001. It claimed that Mankahlana had also been killed by anti-retrovirals. Eighteen months later, in 2002, Mokaba himself died at the age of 44.

Activists took strong exception to statements about the toxicity of AIDS drugs. They used the media to point out that ARVs were proven to work and had been used in the global North with demonstrable success. They argued that treatment provided hope to those living with HIV and offered a workable solution to the problems that would be experienced by high prevalence countries in which AIDS deaths were already negatively affecting economies.

This public sniping between the government and civil society organisations must be seen in the context of a global debate – spearheaded in this country – about the affordability and suitability of anti-retrovirals in low-cost settings. It may have been politically expedient within this country to question the side effects of ARVs, because the government did not want to pay large sums to procure the drugs, but the bigger picture was that the ability of African people to tell time and take pills consistently was being questioned by USAID’s global director. He used our perceived backwardness as an excuse to argue that ARVs would not work in low resource settings.

The battle for treatment has been partially won, but the net effect of the toxicity debates has yet to be measured.

When looked at crudely, AIDS reporting – whether it is about the president and his questions, or Nkosi Johnson, or Virodene – boils down to a few critical facts: much of the media is still white-owned, the new government black-run. At times, the government is portrayed as bungling and corrupt by the media and in turn, the media are depicted by the government as racist and unpatriotic. Between these polarised positions lie the facts: between 1994 and 2004, millions of South Africans have died of AIDS-related diseases, and prevalence has risen by 150%.

The media have also had a hand in constructing a number of discourses around AIDS. Firstly, there has been the “incompetent government bungles AIDS response” discourse.

At the height of the Virodene debate, and the President’s questioning of the link, there was a strong thread of this argument. Suddenly there was a black government in place that seemed to have a penchant for ignoring procedures, firing ministerial



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advisors and bypassing structures.

The second discourse has been around the notion that “blacks get AIDS and whites help them to deal with it”. The reality is that in a primarily black country, the majority of people with AIDS are bound to be black. In addition, in a country in which most whites are better educated than most black people, there are bound to be a number of very articulate white people around. The few white people who have publicly disclosed their status have received nothing short of public adulation. Most prominent of these is Judge Edwin Cameron. Stories profiling him are dramatically different from those profiling poor women living in townships.

Some members of the ANC, including the minister of health herself, have implied that whites drive the agenda of TAC. In her infamous shouting match with Mark Heywood, who was chair of TAC at the time, the minister said: “They come with two buses and go to the commissions where they wait for the white man to tell them what to do... Our Africans say: ‘Let us wait for a white man to deploy us... to say to us... you must toyi toyi here.’”

In the early years, before there was training and sensitivity seminars, reports often focused on the individual behaviour of people rather than the broader social inequities that brought about risky behaviours. There were moralistic arguments made about the need for people not to be promiscuous, columns dedicated to blaming people living with AIDS for willingly spreading the infection, repeated use of the words “victim” and “sufferer”. While these words and ideas still sometimes creep into articles, for the most part journalists have come a long way towards recognising that blame is not particularly constructive or relevant to the collective story of AIDS in South Africa.

Thirdly, there has been a “guess who’s got it now?” discourse around HIV/AIDS, particularly among high profile people. This has meant sensationalised stories. When Khabzela, a DJ on the Gauteng radio station YFM disclosed his HIV status, the *Saturday Star* responded with conservatism and blame. The editorial suggested, DJ Khabzela “himself did not believe in what he was preaching”, noting “the clarion call to destigmatise the disease through public shows is chic, but unfortunately seems to be ineffective”. It went on to ask that South Africans “reintroduce traditional values in our societies”.

In the eyes of many HIV-positive South Africans, media ethics around privacy are sorely lacking. The high profile cases of Peter Mokaba and Parks Mankahlana have been well documented. In both cases, the men denied being HIV-positive when they were alive, but media speculation persisted. High-level officials correctly intervened in both cases to assert the rights of both men and their families to privacy on the matter of their HIV status. However, while their rights to privacy are certainly important, the media argued that their role in promoting AIDS denialism made their HIV status a matter of public interest.

Yet, as Kerry Cullinan points out, public concern and outrage has seldom been expressed when ordinary South Africans’ right to privacy has been violated. Cullinan cites the example of an HIV positive woman who allowed a photographer to take pictures of her, on condition that they were not used within this country. The photographs were used in a national Sunday paper, and as a result, she was expelled from her home.

Clearly, the media are not the root of all evil. Its practitioners do not invent conversations, or create opinions alone, nor are they monolithic. There are



Neo Ntsona



Neo Ntsona

“
At times, the government is portrayed as bungling and corrupt by the media and in turn, the media are depicted by the government as racist and unpatriotic.
”

a great number of media players with contrasting ideologies and competing agendas. But it is also true that the media as a bloc are a powerful shaper of ideas. This ability to shape ideas does not preclude it from being influenced by the ideas of policy-makers and important members of civil society.

Although journalists and editors are constantly in the process of constructing reality, the media are also largely reflective of social realities. When members of the ruling party circulate a document suggesting that anti-retrovirals are part of a conspiracy to kill black people, the media have a responsibility to report this. Yet the naming of this fear – that 10 years into democracy, members of the black elite

are still threatened by the covert use of power by white people – feeds into ongoing racial battles that continue to define this nation.

So the sensitivities of the President and his men around the perception of AIDS, caused by stereotypical notions of Africans as a race of hyper-sexed individuals, must be taken seriously on some level. The media response – which has either been denial or derision – does not allow for a proper discussion of the issues which continue to preoccupy the people of the new South African. Indeed, recognising what lies at the root of anxieties about talking about AIDS in particular ways, would allow AIDS reporting itself to improve.

Beyond the margins

Warren Parker analyses the role the media should play in relation to HIV/Aids and other sensitive social issues.

Speaking to anyone working in the field of HIV/AIDS about the media in relation to the epidemic, the response is generally one of dissatisfaction. Pressed for details, complaints centre around sensationalism, factual inaccuracies and biases in coverage. Journalists and editors are equally unclear about how to conceptualise media perspectives on the disease, wavering between the need to play an educational, social and/or political role, or more simply, to report about the epidemic “as it happens”, in much the same way as car accidents or crime or political posturing happens.

Analysis of HIV/AIDS in relation to the media provides opportunities to reflect on how social issues should be engaged by the media, and that such analyses may well have broader application.

There are three main areas in which HIV/AIDS should be engaged: firstly, at the level of media institutions as employers of a very diverse range of people; secondly, at the level of the media as a mechanism for disseminating information; and thirdly, of the media as a system that has the socio-political function of highlighting issues of social consequence, with a focus on issues of transparency and accountability in relation to other social institutions.

It is recognised that HIV/AIDS has an impact on economic life, and that the growing epidemic affects costs of doing business, with regard to productivity and changes in the consumer market. It has also been recognised that employers can mitigate the impacts of HIV/AIDS, from the point of view of both profit and humanitarian considerations, to diminish the impacts of the disease on their particular enterprise. Strategies include internal educational programmes; interventions supporting health directly or indirectly (for example condom distribution, membership of health schemes that incorporate HIV/AIDS components, support to employees who are HIV positive or ill), and the development of frameworks that include addressing policies, strategies and rights.

In general, most of the larger media institutions in this country have taken the necessary first steps in addressing the disease in the workplace, and many have implemented comprehensive strategies – although it is unclear whether benefits extend equally to all strata of employees. In the longer term, the disease continues to pose challenges in terms of provision of support in relation to life-extending anti-retroviral drugs, addressing illness and absenteeism or the needs of HIV-affected families of employees, and these challenges do need to be consciously addressed by media institutions.

One of the early measures of media response to the disease

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was to consider whether they were giving it sufficient and frequent attention. There is no doubt that there has been increasing focus over the past decade; and the current situation is that HIV/AIDS issues are raised daily in virtually every medium. Most newspapers carry one or more articles referencing the disease, radio and television news broadcasts have references at least on a weekly basis, and most magazines address the issue in one way or another. Over and above news, feature or documentary information, the disease is raised through educational programmes and drama series in broadcast media, educational supplements or referral information to telephone help lines and other services in print media. Community media have also included HIV/AIDS news and educational content.

Media institutions and organisations working in the HIV/AIDS sector have engaged in a number of formal partnerships. Soul City has linked themes from its television series to editorial content and the distribution of thematic HIV/AIDS supplements and booklets in print media. The Department of Health's Beyond Awareness Campaign promoted the work of community-based, non-governmental and governmental responses to HIV/AIDS through free provision of articles and photographs; Health-e has similarly provided radio and print material; ABC Ukwazi have provided material for the community radio sector; LoveLife has engaged in contractual relationships for production and dissemination of newspaper supplements and have also had other public-private partnership arrangements with the broader media sector. Training and support for HIV/AIDS reporting has been provided by the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism (IAJ), Soul City, Health-e, and the Centre for AIDS Development Research and Evaluation's (CADRE's) Journ-AIDS project. The issue is also incorporated into tertiary level journalism programmes.

There have been a number of important shifts that have diminished the potential impacts the media might have on HIV/AIDS at a socio-political level. When contrasting reporting of HIV/AIDS with reporting on apartheid, there was a deeper level response in apartheid reporting, which included editorial commitment to pursue the issue, and the availability of budgets to do so. Responses were also framed by higher numbers of senior journalists in newsrooms, and photographers who were committed to visually portraying the diversity of impacts and responses. Apartheid media legislation also forced journalists to be acutely aware of the limits to reporting, and this went hand in hand with deeper political understanding and commitment. The alternative press of the late 1980s also provided benchmarks for how far one might go in reporting on apartheid – in spite of the legislative limits and related risks of arrest or banning.

In contrast, there is very little to be found of the day-to-day experience of HIV/AIDS in South African media reporting. While there has been some critical and analytic reporting in relation to government policy, the vast body of HIV/AIDS reporting has devolved to the running of single-sourced press releases churned out by the public relations arms of research institutes, international organisations, local HIV/AIDS campaigns and interest groups. Critical analysis, it appears, is understood only in terms of the notion of the media as a Fourth Estate – a system for fostering accountability in governmental matters – and there is little critical reflection on the broader sphere of HIV/AIDS intervention or response.

This is not to say that there should not be a critical approach to government policy, but it is surprising how little critical reflection is applied to other



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aspects of the epidemic. Millions of South Africans have died of AIDS, yet there is little understanding of the humanitarian dimensions of this to be found anywhere in media reporting. Equally, thousands of South Africans are part of small community-based and non-governmental organisations that have formed in response to the epidemic, and who labour with few resources and little recognition at the coalface of the disease. Instead, our understanding of response is centred on the activities of various international- and national-level organisations and government.

Why should this be so? Partly this has to do with shifts in the economic arrangements of media institutions, and stronger emphasis on bottom-line profits. Senior journalists have been phased out in favour of junior reporters, budgets and expertise are not readily available for in-depth and investigative reporting, a proactive stance towards addressing HIV/AIDS is mitigated by the ready availability of low-cost copy, press conferences and junkets offered by cash-flush elite organisations and government. The day-to-day complexity of living in communities severely impacted by the epidemic are far removed from the lived experiences of journalists, editors and corporate owners.

In becoming viable as business entities, media institutions have lost their edge in terms of social responsibility, and the latter concept has also been questionably expressed. For example, some newspaper groups, keenly endorsed the high-budget LoveLife campaign and contributed to the dissemination of the organisation's youth magazines *S'camto* and *ThethaNathi*, but caused concern when it was discovered that contractual arrangements attempted to ensure that there was no critical coverage of the LoveLife programme. One paper was also contractually obliged to discontinue its previous no-cost social responsibility practice of including the national tollfree AIDS helpline number alongside HIV/AIDS articles, in favour of LoveLife's youth focused helpline, ThethaJunction.

The LoveLife programme has been viewed

critically by various publications – such as *NoseWeek*, *Fair Lady*, *The Citizen*, *Business Day* and *ThisDay* – notably in relation to its high budgets, the claims to halving HIV prevalence and the resulting massive impacts on youth prevention, and the poor conceptualisation of its billboard campaigns.

International HIV/AIDS organisations including UNAIDS and the Global Business Coalition have keenly championed the idea of partnerships between the corporate and HIV/AIDS sectors, including media corporates. Doing so might well be an indication of commitment to addressing the epidemic, but it introduces potentials for bias and fosters an environment of limited critique. It would certainly raise questions if the media were to be partners of the government in response to HIV/AIDS by virtue of limiting accountability. It follows that such limitations should be considered in relation to any partnership between media institutions and other organisations working in the sector (unless the issues of potential bias are formally addressed within terms of reference).

Media focus and the fostering of critical debate has a strong influence on public policy. Championing the experiences of the marginalised, or proactively exploring marginalised aspects of the epidemic may well make important and tangible differences to people's lives. However, the South African media have struggled to feel their way into the margins. There are obvious tensions between approaches to journalism that emphasise proactive advocacy on social issues, versus reactive responses to news "as it happens".

There are obvious commercial benefits to uncritically running press release copies, juniorising newsrooms and relegating proactive involvement in HIV/AIDS to partnerships with HIV/AIDS organisations. This approach however appears to come at considerable cost – the cost of abrogating the media's role as key players in bringing to light the direct human consequences of HIV/AIDS, and of fostering a climate of critical, potentially transformative engagement in relation to HIV/AIDS.



Warren Parker

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Women have always had a somewhat ambivalent relationship with the media. The media can be both crucial agent for change in highlighting the concerns and perspectives of women, but have also the power to render women invisible by shutting out issues which affect us, rendering us silent and thus maintaining the dominant status quo.

Historically, women tend to be either symbolically trivialised in the media, by linking them to a narrow circle of topics, concentrating on their private life or appearance, or they are annihilated. Evidence of this is the number of silent and decorative young women present in the media. Women are also “symbolically annihilated”¹, by not writing about them, or not depicting them as real women.

Ten years after apartheid we view our lives through the constitutional prism of freedom, dignity, equality and democracy. But how has this translated for women in the media? Has freedom of speech simply translated into freedom of the powerful white or black male elite to dominate and control the press, or have the voices of the most vulnerable and exploited been heard?

In 1998 Rape Crisis launched an advertisement that was labelled “offensive”, “anti-men” and “dis-

criminatory”. It featured Charlize Theron saying: “People often ask me what the men are like in South Africa. Well, if you consider that more women are raped in South Africa than in any country in the world; that one out of three women will be raped in their lifetime in South Africa; that every 26 seconds a woman is raped in South Africa. And perhaps worst of all that the rest of the men in South Africa seem to think that rape isn’t their problem. It’s not that easy to say what the men in South Africa are like. Because there seem to be so few of them out there.”

A group of men calling themselves “beswaarde manne” (offended men) lodged a complaint with the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) calling for the immediate ban of the advertisement. They complained that the advertisement insinuated that all South African men were rapists, which amounted to “a gross generalisation” and “created an impression about other normal men”. They argued the advertisement was “bad taste” and “derogatory to the extreme”. The ASA found that the advertisement seemed to imply that half of South African men were rapists and the other half simply condoned rape. On this basis the advertisement was found to discriminate against men. As a result it was banned. Rape Crisis and the Commission on Gender Equal-

“
It is about the automatic assumption that the low-income, alcohol-consuming, uneducated man is more of a potential rapist than a judge.”
”

ity appealed the decision. In the build-up to the appeal the matter received wide media coverage with people expressing their views on whether the advertisement was indeed offensive. What was striking was the extent of the uproar in relation to this “offensive” advertisement; yet there is no similar uproar when a woman is raped in South Africa.

Rape Crisis argued that the advertisement was important as it raised awareness around rape. It asked men to account socially and broke the silence around rape, removing it from the realm of being a “women’s issue” to a broader public interest issue. Rape, the argument went, was society’s problem and apathy was tantamount to condonation.

Just as the “Arrive Alive” traffic campaign made viewers feel uncomfortable, the “Real Men Don’t Rape” advertisements did the same. It forced people to take notice of a broader social problem and then asked viewers to position themselves along a spectrum, in terms of whether they saw rape as their problem or not. Legal arguments around the importance of freedom of expression, artistic creativity and equality were also raised.

The result was a resounding victory in that the appeals committee at the ASA over-ruled the previous ban, and the advertisement was on air again

the same evening. However, the apparent victory for equality and freedom needs to be criticised at another level.

What concerned me then and still concerns me now, is the time and energy Rape Crisis had to invest in fighting to have the advertisement aired. The South African public did not want to hear what Charlize Theron had to say about rape. However, there are a number of offensive advertisements on television, in which women are displayed as objects, through the focus on their physical attributes, yet they remain on our screens year after year. No uproar, no call for bans, just silence.

Does this mean that the display of women as objects, focusing on their breasts and appearance, is what people want to see, and the media continue to oblige this desire? The Charlize Theron advertisement has since been taken off air and is no longer seen on television screens. Thus, what appeared to be a victory for freedom, equality and dignity should be viewed as a limited one in the broader scheme of things. While it brought the issue of rape into the public domain and creatively forced people to take note, the notion that all South African men are potential rapists appeared to be too radical for the public to grapple with.

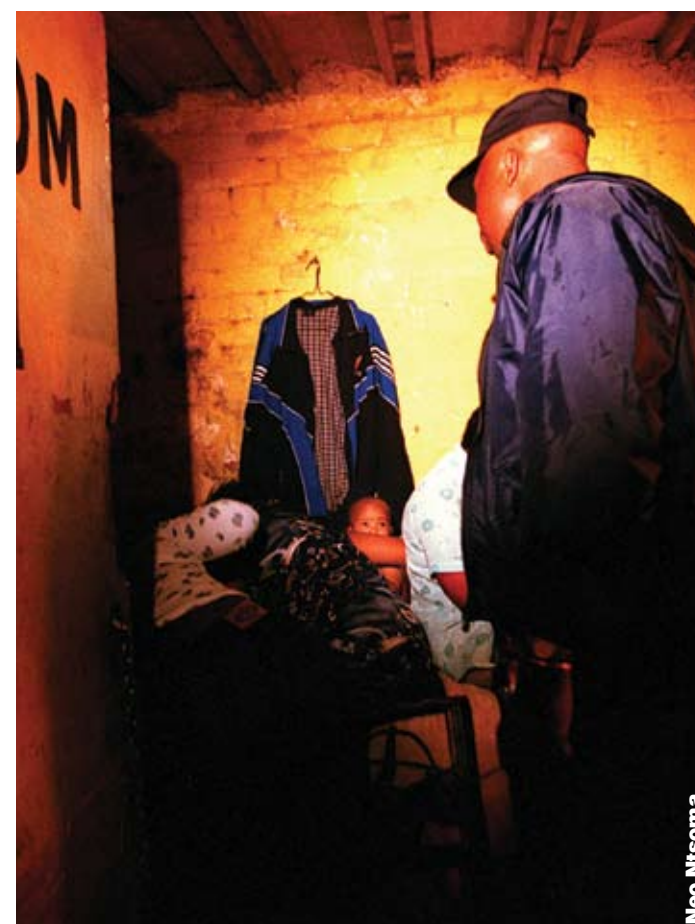
On 26 October 2001, a nine-month-old girl was raped in her home in the town of Louisvale, Upington. Her 16-year-old mother was reported to have been drunk at the time, and had left her alone while she went in search of either food or alcohol. The child, nicknamed "Baby Tshepang", suffered serious injuries. Almost immediately six men from the community, including the great-grandfather of the child, were arrested and charged with the rape. In 2002 the charges were dropped after DNA tests failed to establish that any of the men had raped the girl.

On 19 January 2004 Judge Siraj Desai was arrested in Mumbai, India while attending the World Social Forum. He was accused of raping Salomé Isaacs, a fellow South African delegate at the conference, who reportedly was in his room after a night of clubbing and post-midnight drinks. In May 2004, after she had withdrawn the charges, the judge was acquitted in India of all charges.

The manner in which the media dealt with these two seemingly different cases sheds light on perceptions and stereotypes which abound in the South African media and public.

Soon after the arrest of the six men in the Baby Tshepang case, the newspapers were flooded with headlines in which the men were referred to as "ill-educated, barbaric drunks" (*The Star*, 30 October 2001). Monsters were depicted, with newspapers even commenting on their "shabby clothing" (*Pretoria News*, 14 November 2001). They were all assumed to be evil, and more critically, guilty, long before the start of any trial. The words "sex perverts" and "sadists" (*City Press*, 4 November 2001) were used contextualising rape as a sexual act and not one of power and violence. These men were depicted as the dark monsters every South African would like to believe rapists are. Just like the "beswaarde manne" who wanted to paint a picture of decent, upstanding South African men as being distinct from rapists, the media did the same with the depiction of the alleged rapists in the Tshepang case.

Conversely, in the Salomé Isaacs' case, the words used to describe the judge were "educated", "respectable", "high moral standing" and "dignified". The immediate, instinctive response by the media perpetuated a number of rape myths. Men who rape are drunk, of low social standing, unemployed, uneducated and barbaric by their very nature. The monster is not a judge, is not educated,



not respected, does not wear suits, speak eloquently or come from a good home.

What makes these cases interesting is the fact that all the accused have been acquitted, or charges have been dropped. All names have been cleared. So this is not about the guilt or otherwise of the men, rather it is about the automatic assumption that the low-income, alcohol-consuming, uneducated man is more of a potential rapist than a judge. The potential harm this causes for women who are raped by high-profile men is very real and does nothing more than silence women further.

Perhaps the media should have placed more emphasis on what it means to be raped in South Africa for a young girl or woman, rather than try to deal with "who the monsters are". We also need to question why these two cases made headline news, and not other rape cases? Dramatic effect. Drama, that is what people want!

Some may argue that, since rape made the headlines and child abuse was highlighted, this cannot be viewed negatively, as we want the silence to be broken. My earlier comments about the quality rather than the quantity of exposure is important in this regard. It is not about bringing rape into the headlines, but rather about the quality of the report, once a rape case makes it to the headline.

So, what has freedom meant for gender equality in the South African media? I would argue that all we have done in South Africa is allow for Barbie to be more visible, and for a different type of Barbie to be manufactured. We have made Barbie more accessible to the black community. We have made Barbie non-racial without recognising all her other classist, capitalist flaws. We have made Barbie talk about rape and violence, without questioning the very myths upon which she bases her statements. We call this equality.

I am criticising the advertising of Barbie, as

well as our advertising industry, our TV and film industry, our portrayal of women in every sphere of South African life and, of course, our very own beauty pageants. It means that, where black women were previously excluded from the Miss South Africa pageant, and a black Miss South Africa was unheard of – we now have black Barbies and make-up for darker skins. South Africa still prides itself on the notion of a Miss South Africa pageant – widely publicised and covered by the media. Only that now, we cover the event under the auspices of raising money for AIDS orphans and projects about violence against women.

So it's all different, not the way it used to be? We do not objectify women anymore? We have a powerful black woman controlling the show and calling the shots. It's not about beauty anymore, it's about intelligence, social commitment and responsibility? But look at her, notice her and her bodily dimensions – then ask yourself how far we have really come. Then quickly go to the back page of the *Sunday Times*, look at her, notice her and her bodily dimensions, and then ask yourself again, how far have we really come? Flick on the television – Baywatch, the online shopping channel, the diet pill advertisements, the make-up, the news, the murders, the violence, the rapes, can you see all the beautiful faces... Be proud because we are non-racial, we are equal, we are beautiful, we are free, we are all one rainbow nation...

Now look at the real women around you in the street, the flower vendor, the sales woman, the receptionist, your mother, your sister..., see us, hear us and hear the words...

"Newspapers are only a poor shadow of reality; their information is important... not because it reveals the truth, but because it discloses the biases and perceptions of both those who produce the paper and those who read it."²



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¹ This term is borrowed from the early work of Gaye Tuchman. 1978. *Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media*. New York: Oxford University Press.

² Nelson Mandela. 1994. *Long Walk to Freedom*. London: Little, Brown and Company.

Learning from our mistakes

The way to regain credibility is for media to hold themselves accountable to the same standards they apply to others, says William Bird.

Various media commentators have referred to 2003 as the media's worst year, and judging by the number of high profile incidents knocking media credibility, this certainly may be the case. In particular, 2003 was rounded off with the humiliation and fall of Vusi Mona and the discrediting of Ranjeni Munusamy in the Hefer Commission. The various cases of plagiarism, locally and internationally, further undermined media credibility. 2004 to date has been equally damaging. Coverage of Judge Siraj Desai, who was accused of raping Salomé Isaacs in India, saw various media ignoring basic ethical principles and being guilty of staggeringly poor gender reporting. There can be little doubt that the media face clear challenges to their credibility, but to focus only on these is to ignore the incredibly positive strides the media have made in the last 10 years.

Some of the most positive strides are structural. Prior to 1994, there were no community radio stations. Now, there are over 80, adding considerably to people's right to receive and impart information. Prior to 1994 the SABC offered the only free-to-air national television channel. Now we have etv and the promise of regional channels. Media ownership has also changed in the last 10 years, from largely white-owned and controlled to some black ownership and control. The Media Monitoring Project's (MMP) monitoring has also revealed positive changes in content.

In the early 1990s it was still commonplace for media, when reporting crime stories, to refer to the race of victims and perpetrators. Such reporting was often skewed, with white people most often being the reported victims of crimes and black people identified as criminals. It was also commonplace in the early 1990s for media to refer to gender-based violence, even if it ended in severe injury and sometimes death, as "lover's tiffs". Some media also delighted in providing graphic detail of what a rape victim had been wearing, both at the time she was raped and in court, often directly suggesting, the rape was partly due to the clothes the woman was wearing. References to people with disabilities as "retarded", "dumb" and "burdens" were also

“One of the most worrying current trends in media reporting is the violation of people's rights to dignity and privacy, which often occurs in times of trauma and grief.”

commonplace. While there are still instances where similar references are made or inferences drawn about race, gender and disability, these are now the exception. To have moved away from racial identifiers as key elements in criminal stories, and where women were frequently blamed for being abused, should indeed be celebrated.

Perhaps one of the most positive changes in the media is in the area of gender. The MMP has monitored media coverage of all the democratic elections in South Africa. In 1999, the monitoring showed that female sources constituted a mere 9.8% of all sources in election items. During the 2000 local government elections this went up to 10%. MMP's monitoring of the 2004 national elections shows that the number of female sources in election items has gone up to 23% – a clearly remarkable achievement, but there is still a long way to go.

Some areas are not quite as positive and are still dominated by unbalanced and unfair reporting. In the last three years, some media have taken a variety of steps to improve reporting on Africa. As a result of these efforts, coverage is starting to be more diverse and not limited to death, disease, war and disaster. The African Union, Nepad, peacekeeping, as well as stories on economics, health and development across Africa appear regularly.

ThisDay, the *Mail&Guardian* and SABC radio frequently provide fascinating and different African stories. In spite of the positive moves made by editors to link up with other African editors, many media still marginalise Africa, offering few stories in favour of European-, UK- or US-based items. Many of the problems in reporting on Africa relate to resources and capacity, but these cannot be used as excuses for continued unbalanced reporting.

Nowhere is the imbalance in reporting on Africa clearer than in the coverage of disasters. A mid-2002 plane crash over Switzerland, in which 70 people were killed, was afforded prominent, extensive and detailed coverage in the media. The incident was treated as a tragedy, and numerous explanations for the disaster were provided. At almost the same time, there was a train crash in Tanzania, in which 200 people were killed. It was given far less prominence,



few explanations were provided, and there was no follow-up coverage. In January 2003, a space shuttle exploded on re-entry to the atmosphere. Seven people were killed. Again, there was detailed analytical coverage provided as well as follow-up stories. At the same time, 300 people were killed in a train crash in Zimbabwe. Coverage was graphic, but offered little or no explanation, and there was minimal follow up. This year, 400 people were killed in two weeks in Nigeria, in what some media referred to as clashes between Christians and Muslims. While some media made clear efforts to cover the killings, they still received significantly less prominence, explanation and analysis than for example minor incidents in Iraq.

One of the most worrying current trends in media reporting is the violation of people's rights to dignity and privacy, which often occurs in times of trauma and grief. This trend was highlighted most recently by the coverage of the collapse of Brenda Fassie who was reported dead, while she was still alive in an intensive care unit. The poor



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and inaccurate reporting of Fassie's condition was highlighted by President Mbeki, who called for the media to cover her illness with respect and sensitivity. The nature of the coverage was the subject of various media debates and talk shows. Sadly, other people and tragedies have experienced similar coverage. Following the Ellis Park soccer disaster, families were shown going to the morgue to identify their loved ones. In many instances family members made clear attempts to hide their grief from the media, and some members of the media in turn made clear efforts to invade their grief and privacy anyway.

Children, in spite of the special protection accorded to them in the Constitution and various pieces of legislation, frequently have seen their rights violated by the media. The MMP's Empowering Children and Media project, run with Save the Children Sweden and UNICEF, found that one in 10 stories on child abuse named and identified the child concerned – which is not only unethical but also illegal. Section 154 (3) of the Criminal Proce-

dures Act states that it is an offence to name and identify a child as a victim or witness in criminal proceedings. But it is not only through identification of children who have been abused, that their rights are violated by the media. In some cases, the language used may also rob the children of their dignity.

The case of a young boy who fell down a drain and drowned, was covered extensively in the media, and the story was followed through. While generally sensitive to the family of the child, one newspaper chose to name him "Drain boy". In another story, a girl was reportedly forced by her employers to have sex with a dog (the story has subsequently been shown to be false). Some media dehumanised the girl and referred to her as "Dog-sex girl". In addition to this, the accused were named by some media and subsequently victimised; as a result, they are taking legal action.

One of the most concerning aspects of the media's lapses, be they in terms of violating rights to dignity and privacy, or poor ethical choices, is

that few lessons seem to be learned. The first major credibility lapse in the *City Press* wasn't the Bulelani Ngcuka spy story. There was another high-profile incident just prior to that, about an alleged racist incident involving rugby players Geo Cronje and Quentin Davids. *City Press* had to publish a front-page apology for an editorial on the incident.

Invasion of people's rights during times of grieving has been highlighted by coverage of Fassie's death. However, less prominent people regularly experience such invasions by the media. Children, who have been abused, continue to be named and identified in the media. This year a young boy, who had been sodomised, was named and identified in a prime time television programme. Again, this was not the first time such a violation occurred. In 2002, in reporting on the abduction of a young boy, who was later found by the police, the boy's parents first learned their child had been abused when they heard it on a radio news bulletin. In addition to the errors made by the media, there is the problem that errors are frequently repeated.

Getting it wrong doesn't always mean that the media's credibility will suffer as a result. There have been some cases where the media have erred and have regained their credibility in the way they addressed the complaint. In one of the incidents referred to above where an abused child was identified, a member of the public lodged a complaint against the media. The broadcaster took immediate steps to remove the clip from the programme and apologised to the child, parents and the public. Not satisfied, the member of the public requested the broadcaster to take further steps to ensure the child's rights were protected. The broadcaster again immediately contacted the boy and his mother and arranged for counselling for the child. The manner in which the broadcaster addressed the problem was credible and suggests there is some cause for optimism.

One of the key elements in preventing future errors in judgment and poor ethical decisions lies in improving the accountability and responsibility of the media. At a South African National Editor's Forum (SANEF) workshop in May aimed at addressing ethics in the media, one of the issues raised as a way to regain credibility, was for editors to be more accountable and transparent. Journalists at the conference called for editors to explain why they had reappointed certain discredited journalists. In one of the work groups journalists called for media houses to adhere to ethical codes of conduct and to implement methods of ensuring accountability to the codes – particularly for editors.

It was noted how few media actually had their own ethical codes of conduct. The SABC editorial policies are a positive step in the right direction in terms of creating accountability. Critical to regaining credibility and developing accountability is the need for media to apologise for what they get wrong, and to explain why. These suggestions need to be expanded and debated, but they do at least offer constructive and positive ways forward.

The media are often praised for the role they play in holding government and various other parties accountable for their actions, and for exposing corruption and bad practice. It seems only fair to suggest, that in the same way as democratic institutions like the government are expected to be open and transparent, media should be as well.

Given the media's public service roles and responsibilities and their importance to the functioning of a democratic society, they can be expected to hold themselves to the same standards that they measure others against.



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Monitoring Project.

The dour rhetoric and the don'ts of nation-building and the hungry eye of the poet revolutionaries

By Ntone Edjabe

"The impossible attracts me because everything possible has been done and the world didn't change" – Sun Ra, 1970.

We have been told all growth is a result of freedom. The story of Fela Anikulapo Kuti's shift from a populist Afro-funk master to a revolutionary artist – in the Fanonian sense – has been told so many times in writing, documentary filmmaking and cultural studies courses across the global afrobeat community, that it has become a kind of common sense. It usually begins with Fela's boycott of Festac¹ in 1977, quickly followed by the Kalakuta Massacre a few months later – General Obasanjo's apocalyptic attack at Fela's Lagos compound – and the subsequent defection of key band members, including keeper of rhythm, drummer Tony Allen, during the Berlin tour of 1979. The anger, the weapon in the music, is generally traced back to Fela's months as a migrant worker in the US a decade earlier and his introduction, there, to Black Power politics.

This tidy narrative consistently skips the role of the Nigerian moral police, chiefly the mainstream media, in demonising the artist, incarcerating him in the post-independence jail of unpatriotism reserved for voices of dissent. From such prisons, there is but one escape: the refusal to be *relevant*, to play by the rules of those who guard the gates of the nation's "best interest".

Much like Nigeria two decades after independence (part of which was exhausted in a bitter civil war), South Africa is a very "new country". In a 1963 essay titled "Do Magazine Culture", Rajat Neogy, founder of the pioneering pan-African magazine *Transition*, describes the puritanism in some of Africa's newly independent countries as a culture of *don'ts*, "where the *don'ts* are spelled out in large capitals and where a government or a society is vigorously insistent on the things that cannot or must not be done." In such a society, the dull enterprise of nation-building takes on a mystical inevitability, with its dour rhetoric saturating the arts and culture.

The stakes here, we are told, are too high; artists and creators must be given direction and shown how to mobilise their activity to social good – to the country's good, that is, or, better still, the party's good. There are a number of things you should not

"In such a society, the dull enterprise of nation-building takes on a mystical inevitability, with its dour rhetoric saturating the arts and culture."

and often cannot do – perform a song titled "Not Yet Uhuru" say, or stage a play critical of your country's bid to host the world cup. Failure to play by the rules, crossing the long line of unwritten but nonetheless stringent *don'ts*, is punishable by official disapproval or withdrawal of resources.

Such cultures are of course distinct from other *don't* cultures, generally found in older countries, England or even the US, more intent on preserving national "tradition". Both varieties, however, stem from a sense of insecurity on the part of the powers that be. During what poet and sociologist Ari Sitas terms the "Mandela Decade" in South Africa, both were present and, at times, reared their ugly heads in chorus. Let there be no mistake, mind: these words are not motivated by nostalgia for "good times" past. What is meant, here, is a critique of past and present both.

"When the clouds clear/we shall know the colour of the sky" – Keorapetse Kgotsisile.

A *don't* culture is not a permanent state of affairs, but one indicating in which the last term of reference has been exhausted: a new vocabulary has to be invented and the boundaries of meaning extended. Knowing the colour of the sky is far more important than counting clouds: the most radical art (whatever the medium) isn't "protest art" but work that envisions a different way of seeing, of feeling, of being. Of *fighting*. What historian Robin DG Kelley calls "freedom dreams". In his book of the same title, Kelley argues that "the map to a new world is in the imagination, in what we see in our third eyes rather than in the desolation that surrounds us".² Saturn's child, Sun Ra, concurs: *Space is the Place*. Yet there is little space – daily oppressions, temporary pleasures, putting fires out and keeping the home fires burning – for the necessary radicalism to *imagine* the colour of the sky, to dream freedom dreams. It is bleeding to death at the altar of pragmatic "development". Be pragmatic. Be practical. Be realistic. Build the Nation.

This is not new. Before the nation, there was the struggle. Still... I *never* thought Mzwakhe Mbuli was a great poet. I *always* thought Brenda Fassie was a great singer. Before *and* after.





Ntone Edjabe

is a writer and DJ. He is the founder and editor of *Chimurenga*, a Pan African space for writing and ideas. His writing, mostly on arts and culture, has been widely published in newspapers and magazines in South Africa and abroad. He hosts Soul Makossa on Bush Radio, a progressive community radio station in Cape Town, and is a founding member of the Fong Kong Bantu Soundsystem, a collective of DJs. He is also co-founder of the Pan African Market, a trade and cultural centre in Cape Town.



"Ten years ago, I'd write serious books that were like weapons – one dimensional books about people wanting to be free. Now I'm just telling stories" – poet and novelist Chris van Wyk.

Should culture be a weapon, an AK trained on the downpressors? There is little doubt about which of the many (recorded) views on this question has reached dominant status in South Africa today. When history finally does wake from its slumber, a tree shall be planted in the names of Albie Sachs and Njabulo Ndebele (no more monuments please!), whose ever-so-fine critiques of art-that-counts-the-clouds, in the new dispensation's retelling, have been reduced to mere advocacy of an "everyday" stripped of political content; de-fanged, their words have been appropriated by the free market, cretin-creature ever on the prowl, to advertise "new subjectivities for the new nation".

Under such weather conditions, radicalism is dismissed as mere "struggle art" – "one dimensional", "passé"; trivia is popularised ostensibly on the grounds of its being imaginative and liberatory, whereas the kind of searching for the "everyday" that is political, revolutionary, gets sidelined. Radical creators who turn to foreign support risk facing accusations of producing "Euro-assimilationist-junk".³ Many buy in, to stay *relevant*.

Predictably, academia, commerce and the media collide to mainstream the newly-legitimised ideology, defining who gets funded and who not, who reviewed and who not: academic *seeks* the voice of the "youth"; cellphone company *gives* voice to the "youth" in ad; newspaper *finds* the voice of the "youth" in cellphone company's ad; academic writes book about the new found voice; newspaper carries ad and book review and a silent photograph of the "youth"; voiceless "youth" consumes ad, cellphone prepaid package, book review and sometimes the book; academic wonders (out loud, at a conference on voices, say) whether *all* youth have found a voice, and declares findings: "youth" have voices (plural), not a singular voice; cellphone company sponsors

newspaper's nationwide search for previously unheard "youth" with a voice; academic, now a voice expert, sits on panel to judge the loudest previously voiceless "youth" – results to be announced on June 16...

Poetry, under these clouds, and whatever the medium – not merely what we recognise as the "poem", but in Aimé Césaire's words, "a scream in the night, an emancipation of language and old ways of thinking" – continues to remind us the eye must always be hungrier than the stomach.

In the realm of literature, while prose attracts the most commentary in academia and the media, it is poetry, increasingly marginalised, generally, that carries the "burden of an intellectually questioning, emotionally dense and formally experimental impetus". As Kelwyn Sole argues in his essay "The Witness of Poetry": "[I]t is the poets who have continued to stress most insistently the roles of social responsibility, of political commentary, and to demonstrate these in practice. Among many poets there is a refusal to downplay their political role in a post-liberation scenario. They are less forgiving of the vagaries of the political and business establishment (both old and new) and less reconciled with the anodyne discourses and superficial promises emanating from official quarters."

This continued isolation of poetry as space that is free – some would say "carefree" – independent and alternative, incidentally, is what makes the place attractive to radical people. It is in their attempts to speak, to say, in the words of others like-minded, and without succumbing to the charm of dissident careerism, that we witness the birth, the growth of what, for want of a better term, we call an alternative voice – and alternative media – in post-liberation South Africa.

Thelonious Monk, one of the last century's greatest poets in the jazz medium, said: "It is always night, otherwise we wouldn't need light." We, along with other alternative spaces, hope to contribute to the light. To strike a match.

¹ Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture, an opportunistic move by the Obasanjo regime (initiated by his predecessor, General Murtala Mohammed) to assert Nigeria's economic and cultural leadership of black Africa. Fela staged an alternative Festac and released "Zombie", an anti-military song. The army responded by destroying the Kalakuta Republic as Fela's commune was known, after beating and raping some band members. Three (including Fela's mother) died as a result of their injuries.

² In Kelley's view, progressive social movements are more than producers of statistics and narratives of oppression; rather, the best ones, he argues, do what great poetry always does: transport us to another place, compel us to relive horrors and, most importantly, enable us to imagine a new society.

³ Many postcolonial critics and so-called "individualists", from Bessie Head and Yambo Ouologuem to Dambudzo Marechera and Ayi Kwei Armah suffered the insult. Chinweizu, who coined the term, describes it as "the equivalent [in African literature] of the phenomenon in Afro-American music where black artists cross over to white audiences by adjusting their musical style, style and stage manners to suit the prejudices of white audiences."

Sanlam Ad

Magazine muscle

It is a popular misconception that the power of print is on the decline. Commercially, the demand for paper for magazines, books and a variety of commercial applications has doubled over the last decade.

Print is a resilient medium. Over the last century, it has survived attacks on its supremacy as a communication medium from a number of directions. The first assault came from the development of broadcasting – the popularisation of radio as a news medium from the late 1920s and the rapid spread of television from the 1950s – finding its peak in the mid 20th century. Analysts back then were predicting the demise of print.

But it hung in there, only to be confronted in the '80s and '90s by the rise of the Internet – from a mere 213 computers connected in 1981 to an estimated 800 million users worldwide by 2002. This, combined with the continued popularity of the cinema, videos and DVDs, and more recently computer gaming, once again prompted forecasters to predict the end of print. But it is a delightful irony that during the last decade (the period of most rapid growth of the Internet which is considered the most significant of the latest threats to print) the demand for paper used in magazines, books and a variety of other print media has doubled – partly because of online media's requirement for print to advertise itself.

So where does print get its stamina to not only hold its own, but to actually grow in an environment saturated with other media?

One source is the fact that magazines, for example, have the ability to stimulate the brain more than any other medium. In studies of brain activity, neuroscientists have discovered that the amount of neural activity involved in reading print media is second to none. This research has shown that still images represent the most significant input for the brain, activating it and provoking response. Reading activates and moves the eye muscles, while watching TV leaves the eye muscles almost passive. Reading takes effort. And the more effort you make, the more you learn and the more you remember. In short, little effort means little long-term memory, greater effort means greater long-term memory.

This is vitally important to communicators, because it relates directly to the development of learning, judgement and discernment – which directly affects your ability to make decisions.

Electronic messages are passively imbibed and require no learning skills. Television communicates at a level that does not arouse the brain: you get the gist but not a really meaningful picture.

But understanding the power of print also requires an understanding of how people consume media. TV remains the most popular medium for relaxation – it allows people to disengage their minds and switch off from everyday life. People simply let the box entertain them and in many cases, TV sets

“It is pretty unlikely that people will become knowledgeable without being excellent readers... I make a point to read at least one weekly from cover to cover because it broadens my interests. If I only read what intrigues me, I finish the publication the same person I was before I started out. So I read it all. Bill Gates”

are on continuously – providing an ambience, but not often watched with a purpose. Radio is similar in that it is often a complimentary medium, used to accompany other activities like driving.

The Internet is most commonly used either as a communication channel (email or chat rooms) or an information channel. Individuals find it hard to develop a relationship with a medium that is often perceived as quite lonely, anti-social and intense.

With magazines (and to a lesser extent newspapers) people choose what they want to read and when they want to read it – thus making a deliberate decision. This means that they become involved in a publication to a far greater extent than with any other medium. Also, because of the proliferation of magazines, this is a medium that is able to satisfy the varied information and cultural needs of a wide variety of people.

More than any other medium (with the possible exception of the Internet), magazines

offer a voice to niche and minority interests, which are often overlooked by the broad-spectrum approach to audiences that TV, radio and newspapers are required to take. Magazines can satisfy the entertainment, information and aspirational needs of interests as varied as extreme sports to crochet; high finance to DIY.

And of course this all offers unprecedented marketing access to audiences. The penetration of magazines into so many sectors of the community means that advertisers can reach their target audience at least as well as – and in many cases better than – through television, but at a fraction of the cost. Understanding this, has led organisations to produce magazines specifically for their customers – so-called customer publishing. This has developed into a US\$5 billion industry worldwide, that is growing at a remarkable rate. Companies have discovered that customer magazines increase sales and customer loyalty, generate new business and have positive effects on their customers' relationship with their brand.

Industry magazines or B2B magazines are an extension of this idea, and have remarkable success in the business community. Many business people believe that B2B magazines provide the most authoritative, up-to-date and relevant editorial coverage of their industries. Some business leaders estimate that they get about 80% of their knowledge of their industry (product awareness, sales leads, competitor information, independent points of view) from B2B magazines.

So, is print under threat? Certainly. Is it dying? Evidence supports that the opposite is in fact the case. Print still remains the most effective and compelling story-telling medium available. Whether that story be the story of a brand or product or of the latest breakdown of a celebrity marriage, the research tells us that print retains the power to tell it best.

Information for this article was taken from the first issue of Sappi's Power of Print magazine. For more information, please contact: Megan Larter, Marketing Communications Manager: Publishers on +27 (0)11 407 8169, email megan.larter@sappi.com or visit www.sappi.com

Among the many unsung heroes of the democratic South Africa are the “struggle printers”. Ronnie Morris spoke to three of them.

It was my duty to print

Locked up in prisons and police cells, harassed by security police, attending secret meetings in churches in the early hours of the morning to take instructions from political activists, often never paid by cash-strapped organisations, they defied the apartheid government by printing newspapers, pamphlets and posters.

Allie Parker, 61, started printing “struggle material” in 1968. He ran a grocery shop in Athlone and traded under his wife’s name because of the Group Areas Act.

“The Group Areas inspectors gave us a lot of hassles and because I saw the injustice of the system up close I decided to go into printing with Richard Peters, a friend. I had no prior experience but decided to print against the system.”

Parker said one of his first printing jobs was to advertise a meeting to be addressed by Mangosuthu Buthelezi and Fatima Meer to protest the expulsion of several University of the Western Cape (UWC) students.

Thereafter most of his printing work was for anti-apartheid organisations including trade unions and churches.

“Ebrahim Rasool (now Western Cape premier) used to come to me at 2 or 3am in the morning because pamphlets had to be out in the morning. Willie Hofmeyr (now head of the Asset Forfeiture Unit) used to give me hell because something had to go out in the mornings on the train stations. We had to work through the night.

“I never printed for the (coloured) Federal Party or any organisation which had any dealings with the system even when asked to do so.”

Parker said in 1972 they printed a pamphlet listing the names of all the activists who had been killed in police detention. During his first brush with the law, security police visited his business and told him no one was ever killed in detention, they just died.

During the bus boycott in Cape Town in 1980 he was detained because he printed all the pamphlets of the community-based political organisations.

At that stage he was asked by the Bureau for State Security (BOSS) to spy for them and was offered R20 000.

“I told them I could not give them an answer

“**During his first brush with the law, security police visited his business and told him no one was ever killed in detention – they just died.**”

and would do so the next day. I told my lawyer Dullah Omar (the first Minister of Justice in democratic South Africa) who wrote them a letter to tell them to leave me alone.”

Two days after that he was arrested by security police and interrogated about the bus boycott but refused to say anything. He was taken to Pollsmoor Prison.

“I started to count the number of people in the cell and knew everyone of them. I decided to keep quiet. After 14 days they took me to Victor Verster Prison where I met some of the guys who brought printing jobs to me. All asked me the same question: “What did you tell the police?” I told them I did not make a statement. I could see the relief on their faces.

“Dullah came to visit me as my lawyer and asked me if I had made a statement. When I said I did not, he got up, took my hand and with tears rolling down his face said: ‘Allie you did well.’ I was never charged.”

Spells in detention followed in 1972, 1974, 1976, 1978, 1980 and 1982.

Parker said he was always aware of his opposition to apartheid and decided to fight the system of government. “I felt I could contribute to our freedom. It took a bit longer than I thought”.

He was never afraid of detention and sometime even prayed to be detained because it was so nerve-wracking not knowing when police would next raid his business.

He was paid sporadically for work done while others could not afford to pay him.

“It was my duty to see that we gain freedom or that the apartheid laws be abolished for everybody. It was my duty to print. I have lost thousands of rands because some organisations could not afford to pay. I was always looking for money. I am not sorry that I did this.”

Parker retired in 1995 when he decided he had achieved what he had wanted, a non-racial South Africa.

“I’m very disappointed at the way business is being conducted with everybody grabbing. The democratic South Africa has lived up to my expectations but I would have thought the upliftment of the African people would have been quicker. It makes me very heartsore to see so many people begging on

the streets”.

Prakash Patel, now 44, was 21 when he took over Esquire Press, the family printing business from his ailing father in 1982.

The company printed the community newspapers *Grassroots* of Cape Town, *Saamstaan* of Oudtshoorn, *New Era*, *Living Roots* and *Varsity*, the University of Cape Town student newspaper.

“There were no set hours to the day, we worked from 6am to 6am because certain copies came at 10 and 11 at night. We had meetings at places you could never imagine. Trevor Manuel (now finance minister) used to meet with us in a church in Surrey Estate to give us instructions on what to print for the United Democratic Front (UDF).

“It was very risky and we had everything to lose. We had to print our name on every publication that was registered with the minister of the interior.

Security police harassment happened four to five times a week and the firm had more than 2 000 printing plates seized and more than 100 criminal cases were laid against the company.

“I felt there was a need to expose the criminal element in government and the police. I was very politicised because of my father and his links with the Indian Congress. My father always raised money for the African National Congress from the time he left Durban for Cape Town in 1952”.

Patel said the firm lost a lot of money, as much as R3 million, because there was never a structured way to handle finances to pay the printers.

“It was about the struggle, money was not the important thing. We believed in one thing and that was we had a little bit and we must share it. As printers we were in a position of power at the time to educate the masses.”

Patel said he was arrested and detained a few times for interrogation but never held for long periods.

“I’m not bitter and will never be. I felt at the time we had a role to play in the democratisation of society yet I think the higher authorities should have looked after us for the role we played.”





Patel said his company had printed more than 3 000 publications for the ANC, including the first picture of Nelson Mandela published in South Africa.

They outwitted the security police who thought they worked regular 8am to 5pm days. He would black out the windows of the printing room and staff would park their cars inside the factory. When police raided the next day numerous publications would be gone.

"Those were bad times, they came through our offices with machine guns, 50 of them at a time. They harassed my staff and held my building hostage when they conducted a raid."

Martin Dannheisser of the *Springs Advertiser*, said in the mid 1980's they printed a number of publications, including the *Weekly Mail*, the publication of the South Africa Student Press Union (Saspu), *The National* newspaper, *The Kairos Document* for the Roman Catholic Church and *New Nation* newspaper.

With 15 workers they operated during normal business hours except for Thursdays when the *Weekly Mail* had to be printed that evening.

"We had the odd times when the police arrived and said there was a bomb on our premises and that they had to search the building. This meant that we had to clear the building. This happened four or five times.

"We did not take too much notice of them but it did stop production. We always tried to get the



Unsung Heroes:

Allie Parker (far left), Prakash Patel (left) and Peter and Martin Dannheisser (below) are among those whose courage and determination to simply do their duty helped to make scenes like that above possible.

Weekly Mail out by midnight but because of this we only managed to get it out at 3am."

Their building was also defaced with graffiti which accused them of being members of the South African Communist Party.

The security police also conducted regular raids saying that they wanted to scrutinise the *Weekly Mail*. They however never had a publication seized. A couple of editions of the *Weekly Mail* was banned but only after they had already been printed, he said.

Dannheisser said the security police had offices near their premises and his brother Peter had to assist the *Weekly Mail* staff in getting their newspapers back from the security police.

"We were not radically political nor were we particularly defiant. There were lots of commercial printers who would not publish these newspapers. We were not heroes, we had a press and they needed a job done and we were prepared to do it," he said.



Sharper pens



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Stories on Karima Brown, Sophie Tema, Ferial Haffajee and Joyce Sikhakhane by **Sarita Ranchod**.



HERSTORIES CELEBRATING PIONEERING WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNALISM

Trevor Crighton

Karima Brown

On the day of our interview, Karima Brown, (Executive Producer of SABC radio's flagship current affairs programme AMLive), is in her ninth year at the SABC where she has spent the bulk of her career producing AMLive and Middy Live.

Her first interaction with the SABC was as a studio guest on Afrikaans radio station Radio Sonder Grense (RSG). After the interview Kenneth Makatees suggested she try her hand at being a radio producer, and so began her love affair, almost by chance.

Prior to joining the SABC Brown had been working in local government and urban policy research. Much of her work focused on faith-based communities and their responses to democratisation and change. "In some cases the constitutional changes sweeping the country did not speak to the conservative values of some of our faith-based communities. I worked on addressing these changes within these communities," she said.

As an anti-apartheid activist in the Cape Youth Congress (CAYCO) during the turbulent 1980s she was involved in community and underground media initiatives on the Cape Flats. Through these activities Brown met journalists like Zubeida Jaffer, Rehana Rossouw and Mansoor Jaffer, who all showed her that media could be used as a strategic site of struggle. "At that point I could never have imagined one day working at the SABC, which was anathema at that time."

She joined the SABC as a radio producer in 1995 to assist with coverage of the first democratic local government elections. When Brown began her journalistic career at Radio Sonder Grense, the station was trying to recreate itself from being widely perceived as an instrument of apartheid government policy to one that proactively sought to "include the voices and perspectives of Afrikaans-language speakers who had been excluded from the airwaves".

"I joined the SABC at an exciting time," says Brown. "They were prepared to take on the contradictions of change. There was a great deal of debate and disagreement between the older people and the newer people. Part of the SABC was open and prepared to be a platform for debates in the country," she recalls.

She moved from RSG to AMLive on May Day 1997, "when John Maytham, Charles Leonard, Ferial Haffajee and Hein Marais were the super-producers of the time. Saffm was the flagship for changing things around at the SABC," she says.

"This was an opportunity for me to work as a producer in English, my first language." Brown credits John Maytham for giving her her "first break as an on-air producer" by asking her to stand in for a colleague for two weeks. "I took to it with a passion and found out that this is what I really like doing. I love the adrenaline of live programming."

Brown says most people lack an understanding of what goes into live producing. There is always a team of extremely hard-working people behind a presenter. "As executive producer I've always known the responsibility to lead was mine. It's no joke phoning a cabinet minister at 6am saying not only do I want to interview you this morning, but I want to interview you about what is in today's paper." Brown says her area of journalism is often rendered invisible since it cannot be seen. "It is heard and it is mediated through a presenter. If a presenter rattles off a number of impressive statistics, know that there was a team behind that," she says.

Of her recent experiences Brown says, "John Perlman has been incredible to work with. He is one of the best in the business." At Sue Valentine's departure, Brown was promoted from senior

producer to executive producer of AMLive. As executive producer of the SABC's premier current affairs programme it has been part of her responsibility to "hold on to old audiences and build a black audience, more reflective of our country".

One of Brown's proudest personal achievements at AMLive is the introduction of a regular HIV/AIDS slot. "We are the only national current affairs programme with a dedicated, weekly AIDS slot. This slot makes HIV/AIDS a national issue and goes beyond the sensationalism of reporting AIDS, by looking at all the ramifications of this pandemic, whether it be the politics of HIV/AIDS, matters of treatment, testing or research."

Another programming achievement she notes is the inception of the After Eight Debate – a concept she developed together with John Perlman. It is through this programme that the SABC has an innovative partnership with the *Mail&Guardian* to enable the continuation of the day's debates online. "This programme allows for people from all walks of life to engage in all aspects of life on this continent," says Brown.

The increasing "dumbing down" of South African media is a threat to the future of quality in South African media, Brown says. "Refusing to dumb down and insisting on quality programming is an ongoing challenge. Quality programming costs money because there are research costs; there are costs of conducting interviews. We want our journalists to be in the field – not conducting all their interviews by telephone. And we have to fight to retain quality in broadcasting," she states emphatically.

Like other media, the public broadcaster is under increasing pressure to make ends meet

A simple solution is "to open the lines". While this approach can increase ratings, it impacts negatively on the quality of programming output. "Even though the SABC is not an entirely commercial entity, there is constant pressure from advertisers to get presenters to read their advertisements, for example," she says. Brown commends the public broadcaster's commitment to ensuring that control "cannot be bought" by ensuring editorial independence and editorial values consistent with the Constitution.

Brown is particularly proud of the strong team she has helped build at AMLive. "We have a diverse team with producers from all nine provinces. Our diversity informs our programme output which I consider to be a feat," she says. "Our unit has been transformed from a predominantly white, male one to a much more representative team without compromising standards or programming suffering," Brown states firmly.

Asked for her evaluation of South African media 10 years into democracy: "Our media is battered," she says referring to the many instances of South African media being caught in ethically compromising positions in the last year. The increasing juniorisation of newsrooms and the concomitant lack of skills in newsrooms leave our media vulnerable to powerful interest groups pressuring journalists be biased "Because so many journalists are passionate about our democracy we have to guard against taking sides and aligning with certain interest groups. Journalists, because of their powerful position in our democracy are prone to being labelled as patriotic or unpatriotic, as left or ultra-left, or as forwarding a DA agenda," she says.

"What our media need are editors with backbone, professional journalists who stand by their stories, and a media that

acknowledges the big gaps in training, in better writing, in checking facts better." An inevitable effect of the ongoing juniorisation of newsrooms is that "we find there are stories lacking context, lacking a sense of history and understanding. There is value in wisdom and insight, and sadly this is often. In the race to break stories, many younger, less experienced journalists display an absence of understanding and context," says Brown.

Why journalism as a career? "I found my passion in it. It's exciting to be a journalist. It provides an opportunity to pursue your curiosity, and to satisfy that curiosity. It allows me to enter worlds I would not ordinarily have access to. It enables me to enlarge my own world, and to make our world a better place." Brown says she has come to love "the pressure of a deadline, the creative process involved in making good media and the adrenalin of it all".

Asked about the position of women in newsrooms and being a senior woman in a newsroom, she says the notion of women having a common agenda in the newsroom is a false one premised on the general notion of women having a united agenda. While Brown supports the principle of women's advancement, she notes "women are not automatic allies. As a feminist I do not presuppose that other women have the same agenda. I have seen women aping men in the newsroom – being bossy and throwing authority around. That kind of behaviour displays neither leadership nor strength. To assume that because we are of the same gender we have the same positions or agendas is naïve," says Brown.

Our understandings of transformation and change needs interrogation: "These are not static, and to think of transformation and change as referring to race and gender only, is a limiting approach. At the SABC I work with people from rural areas, of different sexual orientations, from different class and linguistic backgrounds. All of these things define who we are."

She highlights labelling and boxing as one of her challenges of working in media. "While I am not religious, the fact that I have a Muslim name makes people assume I have a particular position on Palestine or the US," she says, as an example of how narrow and limiting unfounded assumptions are.

After nine years at the public broadcaster, Brown is preparing to take up a new challenge: moving to the Independent Newspapers group as political correspondent responsible for the presidency, government and the civil service. "I felt it was time to move. When I came here I knew very little about radio. I understood the political changes in the country and the kinds of stories that needed telling. Now I want to be able to write better, to interact more with my own thoughts. I am excited about moving to the written medium."

Brown has a 13-year-old son, who she says does not enjoy reading. "Perhaps through working with the written form I will find the magic formula to get my son excited about reading. In the context of all the technology surrounding us, I feel it is important to emphasise the importance of reading and writing, and there's nothing like a good old newspaper."

At the conclusion of our interview I feel inspired. I have met a mind that is alive and thinking. I think about her move to the written word and the writing that this mind in interaction with itself could produce. I am reminded of Brown's words: "There is value in wisdom and insight," and think that today I have met a wise and insightful woman, whom I look forward to reading.

Born and raised in Soweto, Joyce Sikhakhane attended the renowned English-medium Inanda Seminary School in KwaZulu Natal. Her English teacher, who noted her special writing and listening abilities, encouraged her to pursue journalism as a career.

After completing matric in 1963 she applied to work at the then *Bantu World* newspaper as a cub reporter. "At that point there were no schools for black people to train in journalism, and so training was by necessity on the job," Sikhakhane recalls.

"What also informed my career choice was that I didn't want to attend one of the tribal universities open to African people at that time." By the time she was accepted as a cub reporter the *Bantu World* newspaper was renamed *The World*.

"The editor at the time agreed to give me a six-month chance to prove myself," she recalls, telling me about typing up stories with one finger. "There was competition for access to typewriters. Only senior journalists had dedicated access to them," she says.

When Sikhakhane joined *The World* she had the opportunity to work with men like Aggrey Klaaste, Casey Motsitsi and Joe Tholoe who went on to become celebrated journalists. "I was the only woman journalist at *The World* and the newspaper had not employed a woman journalist before. Sophie Tema joined me later and other publications like *Drum* and *The Post* employed women like Jubie Mayete."

Asked why she thinks she was given a chance to enter the all-male domain of *The World*, Sikhakhane says her English language skills undoubtedly gave her an edge. Still she refused to attend university. "My parents were angry with me for not going to university, but I had made the political decision to boycott the tribal universities. My mother also had the impression that journalists were drunkards, and that I would land up being a prostitute. My mother cried about my decision to become a journalist," she says. "I was very assertive and assured my parents I would not become a drunkard or a prostitute." This said, she tells of her most useful journalistic training ground: the magistrate's courts. "In the courtrooms I really learnt to listen, take notes and report."

After her six-month trial period she was made a permanent member of staff. Her male colleagues arranged an "initiation or graduation" for her at a shebeen in Alexandra where she was "baptised with beer and brandy. I got home reeking of alcohol that night and my mother thought her worst fears had been confirmed," she laughs.

At that time working in journalism was a great challenge for a woman: "Patriarchy dominated in the newsrooms and it was certainly hard work for women," noting the late hours of the job as a particular challenge. "I would often get home at 2am after waiting for the sub-editor to approve a story, and then waiting for transport to get home. The company did provide us with transport for the late nights. It wasn't an option to go home by train at those hours. The trains were rough. Sometimes walking to the train in the morning, one would have to jump over corpses. Crime was very bad at that time and murder rates were high," she recalls. And now? I ask. "When people say crime in South Africa is high now, I think it has always been that way. I grew up in such an environment."

Alcohol was indeed the downfall of many journalists at that time, and Sikhakhane recalls how on Fridays the male journalists would take a portion of their pay packets for the weekend drinking spree and hand her the rest of their wages. "The wives would collect the money from me on a Monday morning. The husbands would often not make it home on the weekends."

I ask her what was happening in the country then. "It was the 1960s. The Rivonia Trial was happening and my male colleagues were not very interested." It was the disinterest of her colleagues that provided Sikhakhane with the space to cover the political realities of the country.

By this stage some of South Africa's best journalists had left the country while others were banned or restricted. And the ones who were left seemed to be going through a period of decadence. "They didn't care about themselves or their lives. They were very irresponsible," Sikhakhane says.

While her male colleagues were self-destructive, she says: "They treated me with respect. They were like brothers to me. I was never harassed or abused by any of my colleagues. Instead they were protective of me. But at the same time they did not look after their families."

When the *Rand Daily Mail* opened a township office, Sikhakhane was offered an opportunity to move on from *The World*. "I worked as a junior reporter under the likes of Benjamin Pogrand, Allister Sparks and Peter Wellman. The editor of the time, Lawrence Gander, had an independent, enquiring mind and was interested in the *Rand Daily Mail* exposing the effects of apartheid on the black community. I wrote about the mass removals of people, the dumping of people in the open veld, women left in tents and churches for shelter. I wrote about the families of political prisoners,

and what it meant to live under apartheid restrictions. I wrote about the lives of Winnie Mandela and Albertina Sisulu."

For the courage of her writing Sikhakhane was detained under the Protection Against Communism Act spending 18 months in solitary confinement. "I nearly went mad. I attempted suicide but didn't have access to the necessary materials. I was in total isolation at Pretoria Central, then Nylstroom prison. At 6am we would be given a bucket of water. Another bucket was provided for urinating and defecating. I slept on a mat on the cold cement floor of a narrow cell with a light on all the time. All that I could think of was getting out. I was interrogated about what I had been writing about. The security police wanted to know who I thought I was, writing what I did," her voice resounding with pain and a quiet dignity.

Sikhakhane was arrested along with 22 others including her colleague, photographer Peter Magubane. "Fortunately we had good lawyers like George Bizos and Arthur Chaskalson. We won our case but were redetained immediately, this time under the Terrorism Act. We won again but were now faced with banning orders and restrictions." Upon her release from prison Sikhakhane met up with Steve Biko and Barney Pitjana and became part of an underground nucleus providing leadership to the soon to be banned South African Students' Organisation (SASO).

In the context of an increasingly repressive state, she fled South Africa in 1973 in an escape planned by the ANC. Her escape route took her through Mozambique, Swaziland, Germany, Tanzania, Britain, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

"Later on I wrote a book called *Window on Soweto* recounting my experiences of growing up in Soweto, working in newspapers and my experiences of prison and exile." The book, published by British Defence and Aid, was banned in South Africa and the proceeds went to pay the legal fees of political prisoners.

"I was in exile for nearly 20 years and mostly worked for the ANC doing environmental scanning in the Frontline states." In between her ANC work she held media positions in various Frontline states working for the English service of Radio Mozambique, writing radio plays and learning the skills of broadcasting, and as senior journalist for *The Chronicle* newspaper in Zimbabwe. In 1987 however, her job at *The Chronicle* came to an end because of her involvement in the ANC.

Of her experiences in exile, Sikhakhane says she found Zimbabwe most fascinating because of its "cultural and linguistic similarity to South Africa and its history of colonial rule". While in exile she had the opportunity to make documentary films, something she continues to do still. She has made a documentary on Samora Machel with a Canadian filmmaker and a documentary about Zimbabwe on the occasion of 10 years of independence, called *Zimbabwe – The New Struggle*. During this time she also completed an Honours degree in political economy with the Open University, United Kingdom.

Sikhakhane returned to South Africa in 1995 and was deployed to the Department of Intelligence; but still she was drawn back to the media, and spent some time at the SABC as a bi-media (TV and radio) news editor.

She recently took a two-year break from the Department of Intelligence to work with Elinor Sisulu doing research and conducting interviews for Sisulu's award-winning biography, *A South African Love Story*, on the lives of Walter and Albertina Sisulu. Sikhakhane also had an opportunity to put her documentary filmmaking skills to use when she worked as executive producer of the film version of the Sisulu book. This busy woman is currently wrapping up a manuscript for a book about the life of Albertina Sisulu.

Commenting on the state of South African media 10 years into democracy, Sikhakhane says: "We don't realise the amount of freedom we have in terms of free speech."

And the matter of women's advancement in South African media? "While there are many women in the South African media now, still only a handful are editors. The media is still dominated by men."

Things like balancing the responsibilities of home, family and child-rearing, mitigate against women's advancement in newsrooms. "And the long hours and late nights do not help," she adds.

Sikhakhane says South African media have a long way to go before they can claim to being representative of the country's demography. "We have only just started," she says.

Concerned about the future of African language media, Sikhakhane sees potential for Internet-based news to be presented in African languages.

In concluding my interview with Sikhakhane, I remember Ruth First who also combined activism and journalism in the search for truth. I am left feeling grateful that apartheid's monsters spared this pioneering woman journalist's life, and that she has lived to continue telling her multiple stories.

Joyce Sikhakhane



Nadine Hutton

Ferial Haffajee

Ferial Haffajee, editor of the *Mail&Guardian*, says she has never wanted to be anything other than a journalist. “At primary school when we would be asked what we wanted to become, my answer was always ‘journalist.’”

Haffajee says her choice of career was inspired by her love of reading and writing. While at Christian Botha High School in Bosmont, Johannesburg, which she describes as “a poor school, with progressive and dedicated teachers” she worked on the school newspaper and “got a feel for print”.

After completing matric she was accepted to study journalism at Rhodes University, but her parents could not afford the cost of sending her away to study. Instead she went to Wits University where she read African Literature and English, and also tried to fulfil her mother’s dream of her becoming a lawyer by taking a law major.

While a student at Wits she had made up her mind: “The *Weekly Mail* was the only newspaper I wanted to work at. I’d heard Anton Harber speak at Wits when the newspaper was launched, and decided that was where I wanted to go.” After completing her BA degree this quietly determined and focused woman applied to the *Weekly Mail*’s training programme and was accepted onto their one-year training programme.

She started at the *Weekly Mail* in 1991, which she says, “feels like yesterday,” but says, “I was a different person then, and the *Weekly Mail* was a different newspaper”. Unlike the current situation, when she joined the *Weekly Mail* training programme “there was a lot more money for training and I was part of a large intake of trainees”, she says.

After completing the one-year training programme she was recruited as the *Weekly Mail*’s labour reporter and general news hand. “This was the beginning of a complete love affair for me. I could write about my interests. There were no limits imposed on me. Covering labour issues struck a chord with my personal life, as both my parents were clothing workers and had always belonged to trade unions.”

Haffajee left the *Mail&Guardian* for three years to try her hand at broadcasting at the SABC, but returned in 1996. She later also worked at the *Financial Mail*, but once again “came home” to the *Mail&Guardian*.

Recalling formative on-the-job experiences, Haffajee says: “At the *Weekly Mail* I can’t point to any one particular mentor, as so many people were supportive of my work. The entire workplace was geared towards training young people. If you had a smidgeon of talent, there were many wings under which to be nurtured.” Having said that, Haffajee adds that she did some of her most exciting writing under the guidance of Charlotte Bauer; while Barbara Ludman had the particular skill of “honoring the ‘I’ writing of many young journalists into

professional writing”.

Drew Forrest, now one of her two deputy editors, taught her the ins and outs of labour reporting. She notes that it is odd that one of her mentors now works as her deputy editor, but says the *Mail&Guardian* is a space able to work within the challenges of our history and times.

Throughout our interview colleagues wanting her advice intermittently interrupt us. She deals with the interruptions with a calm kindness, promising that she will be there as soon as she can. I get a sense that this woman takes everything in her stride. I cannot imagine what would throw her off balance.

Since Haffajee’s editorship of the *Mail&Guardian* the paper has visibly sought to increase its women sources and women writers, receiving praise from media monitoring organisations for rapid progress in this regard. Haffajee credits her abiding interest in gender issues to Pat Made, the respected Zimbabwean feminist, journalist and media trainer. “Pat was one of the first people who drew my attention to the importance of capturing ordinary voices, to understanding politics and inequality through the eyes of ordinary people. She taught me how to do it,” she says.

Of her experiences as a woman in the newsroom, she says she has been “lucky to work in an enlightened space like the *Mail&Guardian*. It has always been a gender-conscious space in which debate is vigorous.”

Haffajee’s experience includes time at the SABC – posing more challenges in terms of gender issues. “When I joined the SABC – in addition to inheriting a racist past – it also had to confront a legacy of gender inequality. Of the old guard, the senior people were male. I entered at the cusp of change.” Haffajee mentions broadcasting veterans Amina Frense and Sylvia Vollenhoven as senior women she could look up to while at the SABC.

While she loved the adrenalin of producing radio, Haffajee jokes that she “didn’t have a voice for radio” and realised she loved writing most. But, she says: “The SABC is ultimately the place to go back to. If you want to effect change in society, if you want to change voice and change perspective, if you want to make women’s voices heard, the SABC is the place to do it.”

Her experience at the *Financial Mail* introduced her to “an entirely different world” where she learnt that the business and economic networks are still very much male. Praising the strong women-led team at the *Financial Mail*, Haffajee says: “While women run the *Financial Mail*, the audience and style of business is still male,” pointing obliquely to the fact that more women running newsrooms does not by necessity lead to more gender equitable coverage.

Of the personal gender considerations of being a woman

working in the media, Haffajee mentions that her first marriage could not withstand the strain of her being a journalist. At the time she worked at the SABC where work would start at 3am.

And how does one find balance in journalism? “It is a passion and you live it. That is not easy.” She notes that employers are however becoming increasingly flexible – with more opportunities for women to work as freelancers or on contracts that suit their lives. “If employers thought laterally there would be a lot more space for women to make arrangements that work for them.” But, she cautions that the increasing flexibility of employers has a lot to do with “the cost-cutting era” where work can be done more cheaply from home.

Commenting on the state of South African media 10 years into democracy, Haffajee says, somewhat despondently: “We are not in a great space. There is a lack of quality and depth in South African journalism at present. It shouldn’t take only an hour to get through the Sunday papers.”

She argues that this lack of quality and depth impacts on the gendered nature of coverage. “There is a lot of short-cutting taking place. Gender-sensitive reporting is not about Women’s Day supplements or women’s pages. Gender-informed coverage needs to be much more considered and long term than at present.”

Haffajee observes that some of the women’s magazines are doing excellent work when it comes to engendered reporting and writing, but that newspapers and other media are lagging. “At the *Mail&Guardian* we are trying hard to make gender less self-conscious, to ensure that gender perspectives are included in a cross-section of the newspaper.” On progress made in this regard, she says: “We are doing well, but it will take a while to get it right.”

A gender perspective, she argues, should inform how one chooses a freelancer, which economists are quoted, who is featured and on which page, who speaks on the budget. Asked about accessing women as sources and as experts, she says: “I have access to various networks of women and I make use of those, but to be frank, it is not always easy. It is often easier to get hold of Iraj Abedian than a woman economist.”

And the significant media attention her appointment as editor of the *Mail&Guardian* has garnered? “It is wonderful to be so celebrated as a woman editor, but it is sad that after so long there are so few of us.”

At the end of the interview I am left with the sense of a quiet, focused and determined woman who goes about her chosen task with a steady and calm determination. I can’t imagine anything will get in Haffajee’s way of transforming the *Mail&Guardian* into not only “Africa’s Best Read” but also into a newspaper that reflects ordinary people’s voices and views, and importantly women’s voices and viewpoints.

Getting hold of veteran journalist Sophie Tema is not easy. Whenever I call her to make an appointment, she is at the prison where cellular phones have to be switched off. We miss each other numerous times, and when, at last, we do speak, it is late in the evening. She seems to have time for everyone and everything.

After quitting journalism, Tema started an NGO called the Learn and Earn Trust, which aims to rehabilitate prisoners by focusing on life skills, handicraft skills and HIV education. At the Leeuwkop Prison, inmates are also being trained in home-based care to take care of terminally ill prisoners. This is where she now spends most of her time: in maximum-security prisons working "with hardened criminals".

Asked how she made the switch from journalist to prison worker, Tema says she resigned from her job as journalist at *City Press* in 1993 to take care of her mother who was ill. After her mother's death she decided to quit journalism. A factor that influenced her decision was that in her experience, women were not promoted. "After nearly 30 years in journalism, I was not promoted to anything more than journalist. I realised this was a waste of time," she says without remorse.

And how did she land up working in prisons? She was watching television one day and heard the then Minister of Correctional Services speaking about the desperate need to rehabilitate prisoners. In that moment, Tema, who had never set foot in a prison before, realised that this was what she needed to do. She started working at Modderbee Prison doing life-skills training. "I designed a life-skills programme that the prisoners could identify with, that made sense in the contexts of their daily lives. I realised that copying a US approach would have no relevance or impact on their lives. I needed to design something that spoke to their reality and it has been a great success," she says.

Since working at Modderbee Prison, word has spread about her work and she was approached by a number of other prisons, including the Johannesburg Prison where she works with women inmates. Tema says the biggest challenge of what she does is that while there is great need for this kind of work, there is a desperate shortage of funds. She often finds herself covering travel costs out of her own pocket.

Judge JJ Fagan has also appointed Tema as an Independent Prisons Visitor, which means that she can go into prisons to listen to the experiences and complaints of inmates and has the authority to take up their problems and ensure they are sorted out.

Asked about how she came to be a journalist, Tema says she had wanted to be a lawyer. When her father heard this he told her he did not approve because "lawyers have to lie to earn a living". She then asked her father what he would like her to do and he replied "journalist". Tema says at that time it was completely unheard of for a woman to be a journalist.

After her father's death in 1962, Tema got a job as a telephone operator at the English-language, Afrikaans-owned and -managed newspaper for Africans, *Elethu Mirror*, in Johannesburg. Tema notes ironically that she got the job because of her proficiency in Afrikaans, which she perfected while attending an Afrikaans-medium mission school in the Free State.

There were only four journalists at *Elethu Mirror*, and in between answering the phone, Tema would write up "snippets, laughter columns and a bit of gossip". She once accompanied a journalist to a beauty contest where he proceeded to get drunk. "The following day he was too babalaas to write his piece and asked for my help. I wrote the story, it went down well and I had proven myself," she recalls with good humour.

Tema says her male colleagues helped her

a great deal and respected her as a woman and as a journalist. "They could not do anything to elevate my status. Those decisions rested with management and management would always promote a white woman over a black woman," she remembers.

When her colleague Humphrey Tyler became editor of *The World* newspaper, he remembered her contribution to *Elethu Mirror* and asked her to join him at *The World* to work on the women's pages. Tema joined him but wanted to do more than the women's pages and started working on "hard news".

It was her experience with Hector Petersen on 16 June 1976 that brought her to prominence. On 15 June 1976 a young girl delivered a letter to Tema advising her of a planned march by students to Orlando, Soweto, against Afrikaans as the medium of school instruction.

"On 16 June 1976 I went to Naledi High School where the march was planned to begin. The students had left and were already in Mafolo. I was with a photographer from *The World*, Sam Nzima. We went on to Orlando West and while driving around the area we came across a boy carrying another little boy in his arms. A little girl was running alongside them. I jumped out of the car and told them to get in. We rushed to the clinic, but by the time we got there he was already dead."

Asked about her reaction to what she saw on that fateful day in South African history, she says: "The little boy was wearing a jersey like my little boys'. My motherly instinct kicked in. I thought this could be my child, or my friend's child. How would I feel if I'd sent my children to school and learnt they were shot dead? I put myself in the shoes of the mother. Imagine finding out your child is not in school, but dead on a cold slab in a morgue."

The World was banned in 1976 and then relaunched as the *Sowetan* by the Argus newspaper group. Tema continued to work for the newly formed *Post and Weekend Post*. In 1980 she was offered a job at the *Rand Daily Mail* and worked there until its demise. She then moved to *Business Day* and while there was offered a job at *City Press* where she stayed until finally quitting journalism.

Tema says of her experiences of working at the *Rand Daily Mail*: "Journalists, black and white, were trying to build a unified situation in the newsroom. I can't complain that I was made to feel out of place. Our white colleagues tried their best to make us feel at home, to make us feel a part of them."

Black journalists always had a "problem with management who would make decisions about promotions and could make life unpleasant. There were no promotions for black women and the highest level a black man could rise to was news editor," she recalls. Tema adds that black journalists' salaries "could never compare with what the white journalists earned, and that black women journalists were in turn paid less than black male journalists". I am left wondering how "unity in the newsroom" could be promoted in such a vastly inequitable space. I also note that Tema tells me all of this without a trace of bitterness. She has clearly made peace with her experiences in journalism.

Now, spending most of her time in maximum-security prisons, she says the inmates treat her with respect. "I often feel safer inside a prison than outside." Of her experiences of working with prisoners she says: "I feel like a mother towards them, working with her children."

Tema's "motherly instinct", viewing situations through the lens of "mother", giving and making time for others, made it possible for her to do some of her best work in journalism. It is this humility and compassion that she now brings to the work of rehabilitating criminals.

sophie tema



THE STARS... AND THE VERY DARK SKY

NomaVenda Mathiane speaks to the women who think it's time to take charge of the agenda for both newsrooms and news.

Former Sowetan newspaper and award-winning journalist Charity Bhengu swears that when she became a journalist in 1994 she was aiming at the stars. She left the newsroom 11 years later, deflated and dejected. "I had failed to realise my dream. I could not crack it. Not because I was incapable but because of the newsroom environment," she says.

SABC national bulletin editor Alinah Dube says: "Our male colleagues' attitudes nudge us out of the profession." She joined the Sowetan in 1980 and worked her way up to running the Pretoria bureau. She left in 1993 in protest after she was overlooked for a senior position which was given to a junior male journalist.

Masipati Tsotsotso, senior news researcher at the SABC, started off in print. She does not mince her words: "The newsrooms will not change. You sit at newsroom conferences with men who have big egos and it is as if you are not there. It is a boy's club and as long as they run the newsrooms then we are not ever going to crack it in this profession."

Ten years into democracy, South Africa has seen many changes – good and bad. The media have undergone interesting transformation with companies changing hands and editors shifted like pawns on the chessboard to give way to black males.

"What has changed?" asked Sophie Tema, one of the oldest and most respected black women journalists.

Tema became a journalist in 1965 when there were few black women reporters. She recalls working with Joyce Siwani who later went to university to study social science and became a successful social worker; Joyce Sikhakhane who went into exile in the 1970s and is now an author, and Clara Taukubong who got married and left for Botswana.

Tema argues that theirs was not just a profession but a calling. "We did not only work as journalists. We were consulted by members of the community on various issues. We were social workers and we had a passion for our work."

Tema was in Soweto on the fateful Wednesday in June 1976 when the students protested against the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. She had the unfortunate ordeal of witnessing 14-year-old Hector Peterson being shot by the police. Tema dropped the story and rushed the little boy to hospital where he was certified dead on arrival. She later testified before the Celliers Commission which was appointed to investigate the causes of the Soweto uprisings.

Tema says she is disappointed that newsrooms have not changed. She said when they were reporters in the '60s, they worked hard to ensure that the women who would come after them would not struggle as much as they did. "Alas, that was a pipe dream. I see women's bylines come and go, and I know the reason why. The men make it impossible for women to succeed."

She said one of her newseditors once called her into his office and told her that she was "a very good journalist but we cannot promote you above that man", pointing to a junior male reporter.

She is also critical of today's practice of doing stories by telephone and Internet. "We went out and looked for stories, interviewed people. There was no Internet to depend on. Today's journalist clicks on the website and that is their source of news. In a way I am glad I am out of it."

Joyce Siwani, who worked for the *Rand Daily Mail*, says: "We were tolerated in the newsroom so that the newspaper could be seen to be politically correct. It was expediency. Nobody cared for us. At times we did not have transport to travel to do the stories and had to share typewriters."

Siwani says apartheid destroyed the soul of black

men. "And as if that was not enough, culturally, men were made natural heads of communities. Now they have to prove themselves. As it is, they are busy in the engine room recapturing their souls."

Former deputy editor of *Business Report* Sipho Ngcobo says: "The experiences of black women journalists are a reflection of the society we live in. Added to that, newspaper companies are the least progressive and most conservative industry. They are like building construction companies where only the tough last."

Most of these companies do not have a development plan to advance members of staff, he said, adding: "And these are the people who wake up everyday and tell people how to run their lives, but look at the newspapers they operate."

"Surely even if they have not transformed, let them at least have a policy and plan at hand to show they mean business and intend to address employment equity and development."

However, former Sowetan journalist Pearl Majola left the profession for totally different reasons. An exception to the rule, maybe. "I was not frustrated. I wanted to make more money," she said laughing.

When she left the newspapers to join the corporate world she did not have a driver's licence, nor did she own a car. She now drives a two-door Mercedes Benz.

"SA journalism is a strange industry. It is the only profession that cannot find women who can make it to the top. Even the government has beaten them to it. We have ministers and directors general who are women. What I know is that journalism doesn't pay."

Joyce Sikhakhane traces the causes of the problem to the period when she became a journalist, the turbulent '60s. She argues that it was a time of great trials and many of the best black male journalists had left the country or died. "The rest were depressed and drank themselves silly. I worked with these men and was struck at their lack of respect for themselves, the women and the profession. They would not touch politics. I became interested in politics and I paid heavily for that. Come 1976, they woke up from their drunken stupor and became responsible. They must not give the impression that they have always cracked it because they did not."

Former *Daily Dispatch* journalist/activist Thenjiwe Mtintso who practised at the height of apartheid and was detained for several months says: "There are so many obstacles strewn on their paths that makes it impossible for black women to stay in the industry."

However, she said, all is not lost, the situation can still be remedied. One of the challenges facing the industry is the matter of ownership, and black business women must buy into this industry, she says.

"It must cease to be the monopoly of white men. Owners and editors must have gender policies that will start addressing problems from entry level right up to management."

"This policy must also define what is news, and all stake holders must undergo gender training courses so that they can understand how society functions, because 10 years into our democracy newspapers still report they way they did 40 years ago."

Alinah Dube agrees that black women journalists must reflect on the ownership of the media and do something about it. "It is time for us women to form partnerships and buy shares in these companies and decide on the course the industry should take."

Sikhakhane says: "Women need to be organised and make a special effort to change the working environment and draw up the agenda for the news."

YOU GO GIRL!

By Joyce Dube
SABC News Marketing Manager

The 21st century female journalist must reclaim her "writeful" place in media ownership for the doors were opened in the '60s by the likes of Mary Nontolwane and Winnie Mahlangu (radio broadcasters), Joyce Sikhakhane Rankin, Juby Mayet and Sophie Tema (in print). Although these women made in-roads into the media for women, their roles were confined to story-telling, community-based reporting and entertainment.

Still, they were pioneers and played a significant role in the liberation of black South Africans. They worked beyond deadlines and in their communities they became the voices of direction, the voices of reason. They were teachers, social workers and leaders of their people, emancipating women through their writings and programmes.

The '70s saw a new breed of female journalist who faced teargas, bullets, detention, police harassment and other atrocities by Nationalist Party government. As media workers, they worked side by side with their male colleagues, fighting for liberation, striving for unionism, sacrificing themselves for the freedom of the press and literally risking their lives for this industry.

Some battles were won – like recognition of unions. Some were lost – when publishers decided to promote journalists they empowered males as if women could not lead newsrooms. This created a wave of departures for the disgruntled '70s women journalists. Gifted and brilliant writers quit the profession en masse – Suzette "Stray Bullet" Mafuna, Matilda Masipa, Pearl Luthuli, Maud Motanyane and many others – to start their own businesses, study or venture into different fields. Today, Pearl is a publisher, Matilda is a judge and Suzette is a communications specialist.

The '80s women came and left the newsrooms as fast as they could. Firstly corporates were beginning to realise that communications with their target markets was vital. Women journalists had great potential in advertising, research and communications and were snapped up in no time. Also, journalism did not pay well, especially if you were a woman.

By the '90s there was a dearth of black women in journalism. Democracy was around the corner and clearly the newsroom was the last place to be for the creative who also had dreams of emancipation and a new position in the new South Africa.

The 21st century female journalist must therefore complete the job by learning every aspect of media leadership. She should take advantage of education and training at tertiary level in sales and marketing, HR policies, financial aspects, research and the resources of the particular medium they chose to venture into. Female journalists must also specialise in many areas of reporting so that they can have better chances of heading different desks – economics, labour, politics etc. To claim the "writeful" place, the 21st century female journalist must be an all-rounder who is versatile with any subject, anywhere with anyone.

For the 21st century journalist who is really ambitious for leadership – those are the secrets for success.

You go girl!

This article is dedicated to those women journalists who have passed on: Zodwa Mshibe, Nokwanda Sithole, Nana Mkhonza and Beledwe Mazwai.

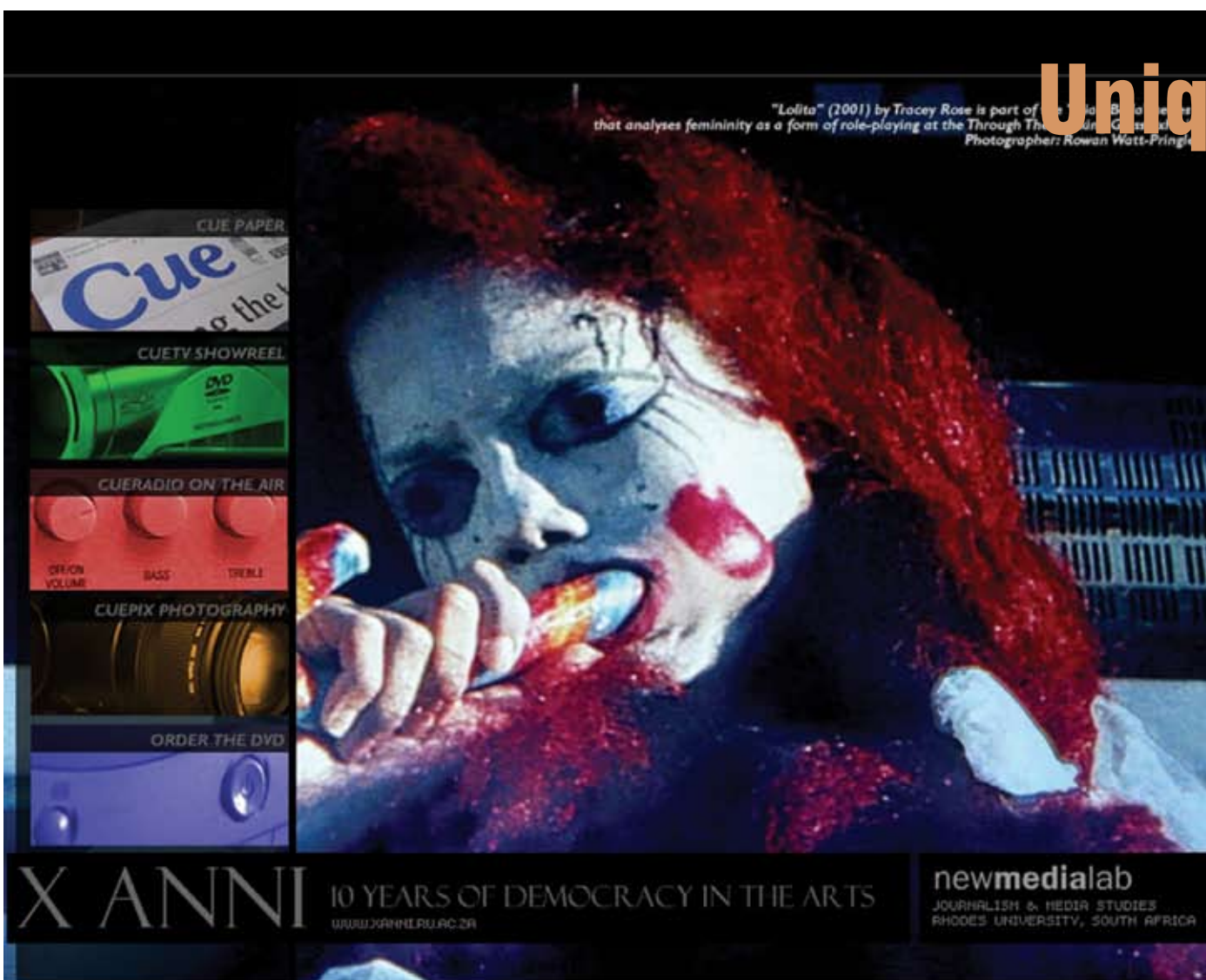


Unique multimedia story-telling

Every year during the National Arts Festival journalism students and staff at the Department of Journalism and Media Studies produce a daily newspaper called *Cue*, daily radio and TV inserts broadcast nationally and photography syndicated internationally. This project is called CueMedia and it all comes together in one single multimedia interface which was named X ANNI this year to celebrate 10 years of democracy in the arts.

The X ANNI web site (<http://xanni.ru.ac.za>) and CD/DVD will have the longest life-span of all the media produced during the National Arts Festival. The new media outputs have emerged as the focal point for our experiments with media convergence. In these multimedia spaces we not only publish a range of media from streaming audio to downloadable documents for mobile PCs, we also demonstrate a new model of multimedia story-telling that seamlessly integrates these media components in a way that is unique to the medium.

The CD available in Review is a teaser for the DVD that will be available in summer 2004. On the DVD you will get exclusive X ANNI interviews with perspectives from critics like Mike Van Graan, high-definition video footage of the festival, all the multimedia stories produced by our new breed of mobile journalists and a souvenir screensaver with a selection of the best photography from the festival.



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Our Honours course provides skills for those seeking theoretically-informed understanding and research methods in Media Studies. Graduates leave with an informed knowledge of theories and scholarly positions and able to perform critical and competent analyses of media texts.

Post Graduate Masters in Media Studies

The Masters degree is a combined research/course-work programme aimed at providing critical insights into media production which will enhance the capacity of media producers and educators. This course is offered full and part time (over 18 or 24 months), and has proved to be especially useful for mid-career journalists.

Post Graduate Diploma in Journalism and Media Studies

This one-year intensive requires no previous media training and is for graduates who want to change their career direction and move into journalism. It provides graduates with a firm grounding in media studies and with practical production skills to take into the workplace. It empowers candidates with the means to access job opportunities in the media field.

Sol Plaatje Media Leadership Institute's Post Graduate Diploma in Media Management

This one-year diploma covers a range of management training deliverables demanded by African media organisations. It empowers candidates with the necessary skills and competencies required to perform in mid-level media management roles. This course is facilitated by the department's Sol Plaatje Media Leadership Institute.

Go to www.ru.ac.za/journ or contact h.shaw@ru.ac.za for more information.



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Pippa Green SABC Radio News Editor



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