

EDITORIAL

THERE WAS a time in our country's history when the government repressed free thinking. Many were rendered voiceless and the state's apparatus was used to oppress people and suppress information. Brave individuals stood up to that challenge. That time has not ended.

For the first time the LIP theme is press freedom. Freedom of the press is important not only for journalists: It impacts you, as citizens of our republic, every time you consume and enjoy media.

It is your right to know the truth and our responsibility as journalists is to report factually and accurately.

This can only happen when we are able to exercise this freedom. Our nation has made great strides from a torn and divided nation to the democratic dispensation we have today.

Our hard-won democracy must and can only be protected by ourselves.

The Honours in Journalism class of 2017 take a look at the people who fought for this freedom, the problems currently facing the press and where we as a country, part of a global society, are heading.

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Thinus Dippenaar
Professor Lizette Rabe
Jonathan Shapiro

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Class of 2017: What we think about press freedom



Marius Boonzaier:
Persvryheid is die steunpilaar van 'n gesonde demokrasie. Dit is dus van uiterste belang dat dit nie deur sensuur versuur word nie.



Martinette Hay:
Verskeie menings kan gedeel word en die mediaverbruiker se ervarings word ook verbreed. 'n Reg kom wel nie sonder verantwoordelikheid nie en ons moet ook soms 'n wag voor ons mond plaas.



Dylan Jack:
I believe media freedom to be of utmost importance to me, not only because of my chosen profession, but also because it often reflects the overall freedom of a state.



Dalaine Krige:
Freedom of the press is something that each citizen needs to selfishly protect. The only thing standing between an open society and chaos is a free press.



Lida Malherbe:
Sonder vryheid van die pers is die vryheid van die mense nie verseker nie.



Tegan Mouton:
Press freedom means a responsibility placed on journalists to ensure people have the information they need to make informed decisions about their welfare and leadership.



Christina Pitt:
Press freedom is one of the cornerstones of our democracy and should not be taken for granted. I salute those who have come before me and exposed the truth in the face of adversity.



Marli van Eeden:
Persvryheid vorm 'n integrale deel van enige demokrasie, 'n reg wat heelhartig beskerm moet word.



Holly Charlton:
Freedom of expression is the gift of being exposed to worldviews that are not your own.



Tania Heyns:
Gee Suid-Afrikaners wat hul toekom. Gee vir hulle hul welverdiende waarheid.



Aidan Jones:
Open communication strengthens civil society and promotes democracy. This cannot happen without a free press.



Marsha Leitch:
It's so important to realise how free we actually are within press freedom. We finally have the space to say what is true without having the fear to say it.



Tembisa Mguzulo:
A quote that deeply resonates with me, which relates to media freedom, is "a free press is the difference between a democracy and a dictatorship."



Vonani Ngomana:
Our internationally admired constitution guarantees our right to press freedom. A country's ability to maintain freedom of press reflects on the success of its democracy.



Paula-Ann Smit:
Despite consuming chaos, corruption and hidden agendas, journalism sheds a light of truth. A light that would have been smothered, had it not been for press freedom.



Franco Havenga:
Persvryheid beteken dat woorde toegelaat word om die wêreld te verander. Dit is die soort besigheid waarin ek belangstel.



André Huisamen:
Die media se posisie in die samelewing sal altyd wees om verantwoordelikheid af te dwing. In ons demokrasie kan geen mag of hoër gesag daai reg van ons af wegvat nie.



Andrea Kohrs:
No democratic society can be fully functional without a free press to call out the inevitable human shortcomings.



Welile Makena:
Without a free press, there is no democracy. Many people paid with their lives for me to enjoy a democratic dispensation today. They bought my freedom with their lives. Long live the free press of South Africa!



Nyakallo Moleko:
A society is not completely free and democratic until its press is allowed to tell people's stories without censorship.



Aydn Parrott:
Journalists are public servants, they provide the public with facts. People use these facts to make informed decisions about their role in society. Press freedom is about protecting freedom of expression.



Tom Stapylton-Smith:
Press freedom is the backbone of an informed and educated society. These are the two cores of our democracy, both of which have come under scrutiny in recent times.



Andeline Wieland:
Press freedom is the right to express your thoughts in a way that can be understood by the world. Like a delicate china tea cup, it brings joy but requires immense care not to break it.

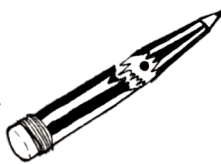
SA's Press Freedom History

Our past is riddled with people and laws that have attempted to restrict and stifle the voices of people. However, there have been victories won by people challenging those who have attempted to silence them.



1800

Governor Sir George Yonge, Alexander Walker and John Robertson launch Dutch and English gazettes, *Kaapsche Stads Courant en Afrikaansche Berigte* and *Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser*.



1824

George Greig attempts to produce an independent Cape Colony newspaper through his *SA Commercial Advertiser*. Lord Charles Somerset, the Governor, eventually bans and seals the presses.



1828

The Press Ordinance creates a law that ensures a measure of press freedom for England and its colonies. This was called the Magna Carta of press freedom for all times.

The SABC8 moving forward

Dalaine Krige

IN 2016 the eyes of the nation were fixed on the drama that unfolded at the SABC. Three senior journalists were suspended in June after they challenged a protest ban at the organisation. **Thandeka Gqubule, Foeta Krige** and **Suna Venter** stood up in a line meeting and raised their voices against a policy they felt would censor them. Shortly after their suspension, three of their colleagues penned a letter to management in which they criticised the suspension of their colleagues. **Krivani Pillay, Jacques Steenkamp** and **Busisiwe Ntuli** received a disciplinary notice after this letter was sent. Not long after, **Lukhanyo Calata** and **Vuyo Mvoko** faced disciplinary action after speaking out publicly against the actions of the SABC. It was after this that the eight SABC journalists found themselves fired and ridiculed by the SABC. These eight journalists collectively became known as the **SABC8** and attracted public and political support. Their victory at the Labour Court and the subsequent parliamentary inquiry into the SABC has since been widely discussed. However, little is known about how the individuals that make up the group feel today. Below, six of the eight discuss their thoughts on the past year and the way forward for press freedom in South Africa. Vuyo Mvoko and Jacques Steenkamp are no longer actively involved in the SABC8 grouping.



Krivani Pillay, Foeta Krige, Thandeka Gqubule, Suna Venter and Jacques Steenkamp celebrating after the Labour Court victory, Johannesburg. PHOTOS: FACEBOOK

Thandeka Gqubule:

“Anything, for as long as I live, that involves striving for the right to freedom of expression will always have my support.”

I think it's going to be another difficult year, but difficult in a different way. When we started off we had a mass action plan. This year we have a legal strategy, a legislative strategy, a mass action plan and a plan to consult and to lobby most of the significant influence makers and the political actors across the board. I believe that we will have to review once we have achieved legislative change, which means plugging the lacuna in the broad-



casting act. We must clarify the distinctions between the broadcasting act and the companies act that have always existed but were deliberately perverted by the minister and the previous board. We need an electoral college of editorial staff who elect an ombuds-like structure and a multi-stakeholder board through legislations. Once the black paper we submitted to parliament is successful, I will personally decide whether I'm involved in any further action. Right now, I am calm and determined that our struggle will prevail. We're just beginning.

Foeta Krige:

“As a journalist I feel more secure and as a news manager I feel more protected.”

The SABC abandoned just and fair journalistic practises and fired eight journalists for protesting against unlawful policy changes. The ensuing court cases and the parliamentary ad hoc committee on the SABC entrenched the idea of media freedom and rejected the irregular interference in newsrooms. Although it relieves some pressure on journalists in the newsroom, the culture of self-censorship, together with the fear derived



from the toxic news environment, will take a long time to abate. The knowledge that the courts, parliament, civil society and our constitution could withstand the onslaught is reassuring. The open discussions of the ad hoc committee, as well as the successes in the courts, strengthened the belief that our constitution protects freedom of expression and our newsrooms. Although we at the SABC are still in a tunnel, the light at the end holds some promises of a public broadcaster which can fulfil its duty as the voice of the people and not of the ruling party.

Suna Venter:

“Intimidation and hopelessness will not change my view. I will not be terrorised. Nor should any of my SABC colleagues be. We have the law on our side.”

Almost nine months of litigation later, we are back in our jobs - yes. No one has again attempted to ban a protest story that I know of. But the poison remains. One of our flagship television programmes is monitored every day by a man we only know by the name we have given him: The Watcher, who makes calls in the middle of the broadcast from a mysterious number, and then barks orders on



which stories should go and which should stay. In our own newsroom, journalists are mostly too scared or too disinterested to do SABC stories. I believe the reason for a lot of this is that nobody believes Hlaudi [Motsoeneng] is really gone. And his ideas have become entrenched in their thinking. But more worryingly - his “enforcers” remain in place. As one member of the ad hoc committee puts it: the SABC newsroom has become a house of fear and paranoia. For myself, no matter what happens in the Constitutional Court, there is work to be done.

Busiswe Ntuli:

“The truth is that all freedom-loving people must take responsibility for the gradual erosion of our institutions of democracy, including the complete decline of the SABC.”

The role of an independent public broadcaster can never be overstated at this moment in our history, where those who used to profess democracy have become the most autocratic in their pronouncements and actions, the abuse of state institutions is rampant and the only rule is that of patronage and clientelism. As we commemorate this year's World Press Freedom Day, we must



rededicate ourselves to jealously guard the public broadcaster. It is important to recognise that critical thinking is not the privilege of the schooled, but the general public must also be afforded unbiased information to enable them to make critical decisions to shape their own democracy. The last thing we want is to deny the people the right to receive unbiased information or to prevent them from articulating their uncensored views about society. It is a perpetuation of the injustice on the already disempowered population.

Lukhanyo Calata:

“Journalism has suffered an onslaught from politicians hell-bent on diminishing the good standing of the media with the public.”

2016/2017 has been an interesting year to live and work as a journalist. Our dismissals in 2016 served as a rallying point for South Africans. The public interest in media freedom led to an increase in goodwill from South Africans towards journalists. Media houses capitalised on the good favour and produced fantastic pieces of investigative



journalism and reporting. This entrenched the perception that the media is a voice for the marginalised, re-affirming the profession as a vital piece of the democratic puzzle. This points to a media in South Africa that is refusing to bow down to pressure from those who wish to either control it or silence it. The events of 2016 and 2017 have served to galvanise the profession and have strengthened the resolve of those who practice it. This is in the best interest of the public and our democracy.

Krivani Pillay:

“Like in the 1990s, I remain hopeful that the country of my birth, my heart and my pride, will heal and restore itself as long as its people continue to speak up for the greater good and not an individual desire.”

I never thought I'd be part of a campaign to expose political interference at an editorial level within the public broadcaster. A conversation led by Busisiwe Ntuli, together with Thandeka Gqubule-Mbeki and Jacques Steenkamp, encouraged me to speak out. I knew I had to defend my programmes on



Safm, my colleagues who were suspended, and expose the power that seemingly one man had. Little did I know that I would be thrust into the limelight. For a short time, the SABC8 were successful in exposing unethical editorial decisions. Sadly, our protests were not enough to overturn any unlawful decisions taken. There's also the sad realisation that some among us have had hidden agendas for political point scoring. My biggest lesson is to not take anything at face value.



1882
The Newspaper Press Union is established.



1884
The first black-owned newspaper, *Imvo Zabantsundu*, is published under John Tengo Jabavu.



1903
The Riotous Assemblies Amendment Act 19 strictly prohibits inciting racial hostility and prevents the press from reporting on or attending banned gatherings.



1915
De Nationale Pers Beperkt, now Naspers, forms to publish and print *De Burger*.

DRUM: An icon of the 1950s

Holly Charlton

SOUTH AFRICA. The 1950s. Apartheid has been a state-sanctioned institution for two years. Acts like the Group Areas Act and the Population Registration Act isolate one race from another. All non-white men carry a dompas in their back pocket.

It was in this political context that Jim Bailey, a young, rebellious Oxford graduate, saw a gap in the market for a publication focused on the emerging urban population of non-white South Africans. In 1951, *Drum Magazine* was launched.

By 1959, *Drum's* circulation had increased to 240 000 copies per issue and was being distributed to countries outside of South Africa, such as Sierra Leone, Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya.

Drum represented a new cultural movement in black urban spaces like Sophiatown. The magazine became a symbol of the “new African” who claimed their city identity despite apartheid’s labeling of black people as underdeveloped, rural and unintellectual. *Drum* became a vital platform for young black writers and photographers to revolutionise the way apartheid was portrayed globally and in South Africa.

Journalists, such as Nat Nakasa, Can Themba and Henry Nxumalo, explored “forbidden” topics, such as the abuse of black prisoners, the effects of apartheid laws on everyday people and the legend of township gangsters. “Whereas other magazines of the 1950s confined their copy to trivia and sensation, such as soccer, sex and sin, *Drum* interspersed its ‘popular’ voice with investigative journalism of serious, contemporary concern,” said Michael Chapman, editor of *The Drum Decade*, a collection of short stories from 1950s *Drum*.

The narrative of *Drum* was also written in an accessible style and flowed from a human interest angle.

Chapman provided the example of writer Can Themba’s report in *Drum* about being evicted from a Dutch Reformed Church, which was presented like a short story while making a political point about apartheid.

The writers of *Drum* would also manipulate language in order to make their writing accessible and relevant to readers. For example, Can Themba’s short story, *Baby Come Duze*, demonstrated how writers of *Drum* would infuse their English short stories with *tsotsi-taal* (township slang) and American slang.

Photography was another important aspect because it could visually expose the reality of apartheid to the global community and to those who were illiterate.

“I used my camera as a gun. I was prepared to die, no one was going to stop me from taking pictures,” said Peter Magubane, one of the foremost photographers of *Drum* in the 1950s, in a 2014 press release from 21 Icons South Africa. He would stop at nothing to put truth in the pages and was known to disguise his camera in a loaf of bread in order to escape the notice of police.

The *Drum* newsroom provided a unique environment for black journalists and photographers who became known as fellows of the “*Drum* school”, which Magubane described as “a different home [that] did not have apartheid [as] there was no discrimination in the offices of *Drum* magazine”.

Dr Nwabisa Bangeni, lecturer in English at Stellenbosch University, said it is important to revisit apartheid South Africa through the lens of publications like *Drum Magazine*. From an educational perspective, *Drum* has the power to show that the past and present of South Africa is still connected in that “the government is different, but the experiences of the marginalised seem to have stayed the same.”



Miriam Makeba on the cover of *Drum Magazine*. PHOTO: South African History Online, www.sahistory.org.za

The birth of Xhosa newspapers

Tembisa Mguzulo

XHOSA NEWSPAPERS have been in existence since the late 1800s, many of which were established by missionaries in the Eastern Cape.

Thabisa Xhalisa, a Xhosa lecturer at the University of Cape Town, said it is important to remember that the Xhosa people underwent missionary education. This group of missionary educated were an elite group. They were also writers (journalists) teachers and praise poets for kings.

Xhalisa said these newspapers were of a very high standard, as many of the writers did not only have an academic background, but were expected to have an immense amount of knowledge on Xhosa culture and history.

Isigidimi samaXhosa was run by

John Tengo Jabavu and William Qgoba in 1870 and was operational until 1888. Another newspaper of the time was *Imvo Zabantsundu*, that was published in 1884 by Jabavu in King Willam’s Town, with Jabavu as the editor.

In an interview, Unathi Kondile, editor of *Isolezwe lesiXhosa*, said he came across some of these Xhosa newspapers at UCT’s African studies library while doing his thesis research. Kondile explained the role of these newspapers. He said they were not established to develop black intellectuals, “instead these publications were used simply as a means of communication between black people as far as Cape Town.” This emphasises that the culture of creat-

ing intellectuals was not as prevalent then as it is today.

However, today, none of these papers have managed to survive. The main reason most of the newspapers closed down was “because of financial reasons as longevity was determined by funders,” said

Kondile. The missionary funding that most of these papers relied on, dried up.

According to Kondile, *Isigimi’ SamaXhosa’s* demise was due to the change in editorial content after the death of its editor, which led to funding being pulled out.

Kondile felt that it was a pity that these papers had to be closed down and said that they would still be alive today if they could have found a way

to fund themselves.

According to Xhalisa, the newspapers’ main aim was preserving the Xhosa language from extinction.

“Most of them had *amabali/iintsomi* (short-stories) and praise poetry, which was very important within that era.”

He cited John Tgo Jabavu as one of the most important figure of that time.

In comparison to newspapers of today, Xhalisa said “today’s newspapers aim to be objective,” but back then they were subjective. They had a way of storytelling and “promoting a reading culture”.

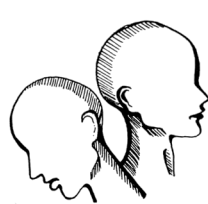
Although the newspapers were under control of the missionaries, they wanted to move away from missionary influence, hence the content was strictly written in isiXhosa.



John Tengo Jabavu



S.E.K. Mqhayi
PHOTOS: South African History Online, www.sahistory.org.za



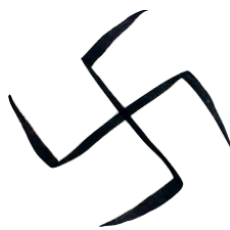
1927
The Native Administration Act 38 prohibits “fomenting hostility” between “Natives and Europeans”, restricting what media could report on.



1930
The Riotous Assemblies Amendment Act 19 tightens prohibitions on inciting racial hostility and prevents the press from reporting on or attending banned gatherings.



1937
Die Transvaler forms under the editorship of Dr HF Verwoerd, previously a professor of sociology at Stellenbosch. He propagates the views of the National Party.



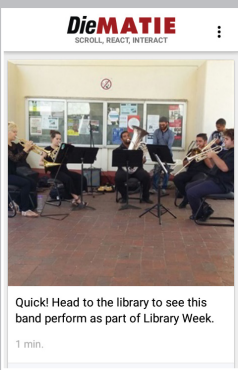
1943
Verwoerd takes *The Star* to court after it reported that *Die Transvaler* falsified news “in its support of Nazi propaganda”. The judge finds in favour of *The Star*.

Through
the
years

Die Matie 1941



Die Matie 2017:
a news app



Die Perdeby 1939



Perdeby 2016



Perdeby 75th
anniversary



Student media still fights for freedom

Dylan Jack & Paula-Ann Smit

STUDENT MEDIA has fought and continues to fight for media freedom in South Africa.

Varsity, the University of Cape Town newspaper, was founded to lower cultural tensions between English and Afrikaans speakers. *Perdeby*, the University of Pretoria newspaper, lists itself among the oldest student newspapers, having first been published in 1939.

Die Matie, the Stellenbosch University newspaper, started in 1941. In 1946 *Die Werde* was launched to counter *Die Matie*, but both publications were soon forced to close.

Many of these student newspapers were first run by the Universities' SRCs, often making them targets of the apartheid government's censorship.

In 1947, *Die Matie* was restarted under the SU SRC. As with *Perdeby*, there were suspicions that *Die Matie* was simply a mouthpiece of the SRC, but *Die Matie* quickly dispelled these suspicions.

It was in the 1980s that student newspapers took on a liberal view and fought for media freedom.

In 1985, *Perdeby's* editor-in-chief resigned when the SRC would not allow him to hire someone of liberal view. Increasingly, the control that the SRCs had over university newspapers became viewed as akin to that of the government's censorship of commercial newspapers.

Die Matie also became increasingly liberal. In 1984, the editor at that time, Corinne Oosthuizen, wrote an article criticising the appointment of PW Botha as university Chancellor as "too political". In 1985, the newspaper became more aligned with, and gave greater prominence, to the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) and the United Democratic Front (UDF).

In 1981, *Rhodes Music Radio* and *TuksFM* became the first student radio broadcasters. Initially, both radio stations only broadcast inside their respective campuses, before growing in the 90s and becoming known as community radio stations.

TuksFM station manager, Patrick Maloyi, said the initial broadcasts of *TuksFM* focused on students and staff. Maloyi says that the broadcast areas were centred around the "residences and residential areas" of UP.

In the 1990s, South Africa became a multiparty democracy, furthering change in student publications. Many student publications became service providers, and operated with their own elected management structure.

In 1998, UP established a Media Ombudsman to handle complaints around both *TuksFM* and *Perdeby*. A Media Complaints Commission was established to ensure accurate



Students being addressed during the Fees Must Fall protests.

PHOTO: FEZEKILE MSIMANG

reporting. Current *Perdeby* editor-in-chief, Carel Willemse, explained that "*Perdeby* is completely independent from the SRC." According to him, The Constitution for Student Governance now recognises *Perdeby* as an official student structure.

Chad Johnston, former news editor and journalist at *Perdeby* was asked about his experience of the SRC and said: "We are lucky in that we are a separate entity from the SRC, even though we do have certain connections. We have received a lot of pressure when we've published so-called 'negative' information about the SRC or even UP management. However, [we] strive to report the unbiased, objective news."

Die Matie's editor-in-chief, Eugene Gegan, said that *Die Matie* is also independent from the SRC: "In the 76 years since *Die Matie* was first published, there have been incidents where the SRC thought they could prescribe to the paper, but *Die Matie* aims to serve the students of Stellenbosch University and has to hold the SRC accountable for their actions."

Current *Varsity* editor-in-chief, Ashley Seymour, said: "As far as I am aware, we have independence from the structures of the SRC. While we interact in our coverage of them and our joint service in student parliament, any action taken against us, by any student body, can only be done by application to the Department of Student Affairs. We strive to represent all student bodies equally

and without bias, something we are enabled to do given our independence."

In the modern era, student media has started to move online, with many student newspapers, including *Perdeby* and *Die Matie*, starting their own websites.

Willemse said that social media has impacted the freedom of student publications like *Perdeby*. "Social media and digital content expanded student publications reach exponentially. In the past student publications reached a limited audience due to limited print runs. Now our content

is available instantly on a number of different platforms."

Seymour added: "We are able to give students live blow-by-blow updates of news events, detailing the intricacies of what tend to be very complex situations simplified when restricted to a print article. Social

networking has also allowed us to pick up on beats sometimes missed when you're unable to physically research all different areas of student interest."

In terms of the impact of student media on media freedom, Willemse said that "the core principles of journalism are taught and learned at student publications. We are seeing the youth taking a much greater interest in social and political matters and they need to see student media as a very important element of a democratic society. If they don't understand the importance of media freedom on campus now, they won't respect media freedom in South

Africa in the future."

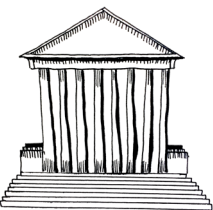
Willemse further emphasised the importance of student publications as he said student newspapers in general cater for a very captured audience and niche market. "Mainstream media wouldn't address the same issues or take the same angle on the content student media covers. In this sense, student media has the opportunity to give a voice to student issues and interests."

According to Gegan, "student newspapers operate in an exciting environment". Student newspapers are crucial "not only to hold the people in charge accountable for their actions – but also to foster an awareness amongst students that the people in charge cannot always be trusted and that the media serves the public interest by being a watchdog. If people can realise this on university level, it will make the case for media freedom even stronger."

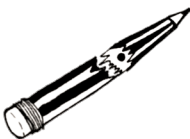
Varsity's Seymour said: "*Varsity* is produced by students, written by students and managed by a diverse group of students."

Seymour added: "I think student media is as important as public and private media in ensuring freedom of the press and freedom of information."

These issues are seen by the Fees Must Fall (FMF) protests, that took place on student campuses across the country. When asked about the role student publications played during the protests, Willemse said: "The coverage of FMF differed quite significantly when comparing mainstream media with student publications. I think the reason for this is that student media had a much better grasp of the inner workings of FMF, being students themselves."



1944
The Magistrates Court Act 32 limits and largely inhibits the press' access to court.



1947
The Commission Act 8 restricts reporting on commissions of inquiry.



1950
The Suppression of Communism Act limits what the media could report on through the silencing of individuals and organisations and banning orders.



1953
The Guardian is banned and "listed" persons are prohibited from most gatherings and sometimes forced to resign from organisations.

Social media makes freedom of speech accessible

Marsha Leitch

SOCIAL MEDIA contributes to press freedom because it gives people the ability to express themselves. This is especially true in politically unfree societies.

An example of this is the citizen-led activism under the banner of #ThisFlag. This social movement started when an unknown pastor in Zimbabwe posted a viral video on Facebook and launched a nationwide social media campaign.

Here in South Africa the Fees Must Fall movements of 2015 and 2016 are examples of activists using social media to tell their story, different to what was broadcast in mainstream media.

During the protests CNN reported: “An unprecedented movement of student activism has been sweeping South African university campuses and cities, culminating in a march on the historic Union Buildings on Friday 23 October 2015, the seat of the South African government. Not since the Soweto Uprising of 1976 have this many youth arisen to demand the right to quality and accessible education.”

Students participating in the Fees Must Fall protests used social media to tell their own stories in an authentic way.

“As a news agency, we are interested in promoting freedom of speech and use social media effectively. We are interested in what our readers



Social media continues to have an impact on society today.

PHOTO: PAULA-ANN SMIT

want to read that are important issues and news and also promote these stories through social media platforms.” said Colleen Monaghan from *GroundUp*.

In an interview, *EWN*’s Petrus Botha commented: “Social media has become the platform for freedom of speech. It has become a tool that people can use to speak out against their government, raise issues that concern them and to express their frustration, hopes & dreams.”

“If you look at traditional media like newspapers and even radio news, you only get a newspaper once a day or maybe twice and bulletins on radio every hour, but with social media you don’t have those constraints,” you can share and tell the news as it happens.

“The fact that social media is immediate is both an advantage and disadvantage. Sometimes you are so

rushed to get the story out there that you do miss some facts. I do think that people sometimes take the right of freedom of speech too far and will try and hide behind this right to defend their remarks,” said Botha.

News24’s Rene Lotter noted that governments don’t have control over social media platforms. “Politically, social media has made censorship almost impossible. One cannot keep secret what is really going on

anywhere in the world now since governments cannot control info on Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, WhatsApp and Instagram.

“In terms of people expressing their own personal views, social media extremists on both sides make it difficult for people to do so without fear of being labelled, ridiculed or bullied. So the majority stays quiet while the extreme left and right shout,” said Lotter.

Students question media objectivity

Nyakallo Moleko

THE RECENT student protests in South Africa have raised questions about how the mainstream media covered the events.

It has been said that the media were biased in their reporting.

Fees Must Fall activist and Stellenbosch University student Mischka Williams said she felt that the bigger problem lies with media ownership in South Africa. Williams remarked that “mainstream media is not free or independent”. According to Williams, the lack of independence of media nullifies the idea of press freedom.

Williams praised the alternative media, particularly *GroundUp*, for objective reporting. According to Williams, the mainstream media framed the national discourse on Fees Must Fall and essentially helped demonise the Fees Must Fall movement.

Williams also said that social media was used to disseminate information regarding the movement and protests.

The Fees Must Fall movement faced similar challenges and raised questions about the way in which the media reported and how that helped shape public opinion.

Many students felt that the media coverage of the protests was unfair



Stellenbosch University students gathered at the Rooiplein during the 2015 Fees Must Fall protests.

PHOTO: DALAINE KRIGE

and a threat to their cause.

Ashleigh Furlong, a journalist at *GroundUp*, said that media companies were seen as biased by many students. Furlong said mainstream media was thought to be “punting a certain ideological viewpoint”.

In November 2015, the Fees Must Fall Parents Solidarity Committee released a statement claiming that universities had tried to paint students as hooligans, which the students were not, said the committee.

Furlong continued to explain that although some articles had been written in an objective manner, they had been edited in such a manner that students were framed “as violent

and irrational”.

An example of this is an audio clip that made the rounds in the media in 2016. In the audio clip, Fees Must Fall supporters appear to say the death of “at least one white person”, was necessary for University of Witwatersrand Chancellor, Adam Habib, to pay attention to their demands.

The audio clip was circulated widely and the Fees Must Fall movement was thus framed as a racist movement with malicious intents by some media organisations.

Grundlingh said the media was not necessarily biased, but they sometimes reported without having complete information, which meant that stories often appeared one-sided. Fees Must Fall’s decision not to allow the media into their meetings contributed to this.

According to Grundlingh, while students protesting during the Soweto Uprising were willing to engage with journalists and mainstream media, Fees Must Fall leaders were not.

Due to a lack of trust in the mainstream media, many student leaders on various campuses used Facebook and Twitter to share videos and pictures about the protests.

However, it was mainstream media that had a wider audience and essentially had larger influence on the views and opinions of South African citizens on the protests.

During the apartheid era, main-

stream media was often used as a tool of propaganda for the apartheid government. The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) is a good example.

“The SABC was used a mouthpiece for the apartheid government,” wrote Tim Knight in his work *The Way We Were: The Unknown SABC Story Part II: Exploring our Journalism Heritage*. This became more prevalent in the broadcaster’s reporting of the 1976 Soweto uprisings.

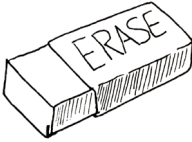
Protest action was criminalised and protesting learners were portrayed as rioters and anarchists, who were violent without a cause.

History Professor at Stellenbosch University, Albert Grundlingh, said that it was mainly through visual media that propaganda around the uprisings was spread.


He added that the visual media was a powerful tool as television had only recently been made available to South Africans.

Images of violent, unruly and destructive rioters were placed on the TV screens of South Africa’s homes. Grundlingh said, however, that without visual media the liberation movement would not have had as great an impact.


According to him, it allowed not only South Africans but also international viewers a full glimpse of the reality of the apartheid government, and the remnants it left.



1953
The Public Safety Act 3 gives government the power to introduce emergency regulations to detain and seize publications for making “subversive” statements.



1956
The Official Secrets Act places severe restrictions on what media can report on regarding defence and arms supply.



1959
The Prisons Act 8 makes reporting on prison conditions illegal. This is as a result of the exposure by *Drum* of the abuse of black prisoners as labourers on farms.



1960
The Sharpeville Massacre causes an influx of foreign journalists into South Africa. Photos act as an important tool in spreading news about the circumstances of apartheid abroad.

Fake facts pose public threat

Tom Stapylton-Smith

THE PHRASE on everyone’s tongues in 2016/17 is “fake news”. How does fake news affect us, and how can readers sort the facts from the lies?

Carryn-Ann Nel, editor of *Netwerk24*, confirmed that with fake news overwhelming online platforms, she and her team have been affected considerably.

Nel said that they “had to work harder to gain credibility and trust from readers as they are looking at us with more scrutiny.”

She also said that fake news affects “all news outlets in general.”

Sue Segar, who is a researcher for a number of MPs at Parliament for the Democratic Alliance, said that fake news is often politically orientated.

It therefore affects “all people in the political environment” and there are usually “spinoffs and repercussions.”

Segar stressed the danger of fake news as “it creates an entire climate of distrust, people might even stop digesting the news or stop reading any news. It is very dangerous for society if this were to happen. In order for society to progress, communities must be informed and involved.”

Segar said that there are many ways to identify fake news, but she “luckily [has] a strong intuition for fake news.” Sometimes, intuition is not enough.

Africa Check, a non-profit organisation set up in 2012 to promote accuracy in public debate and the media in Africa, provides detailed steps on how to fact check the news that you consume. This is a crucial procedure.

How to fact check:

- Ask where is the evidence?
- Is said evidence verifiable?
- Is the evidence reliable?
- Rely on credible data sources and experts.
- If data is used; when was it collected?
- What was the sample size?
- Spot the fakes by examining details.
- Be persistent

Nel confirmed that *Africa Check* has given training at *Netwerk24* in the past for fact checking and said that they are “a very reputable fact checking organisation”.

Nel gave some simpler tips for

casual news readers on how to spot fake news which can be found in the accompanying infographic. Fake news also affects readers.

Simon Drennan, a Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) Trainee in Cape Town, and a reader of *News24*, said that fake news can affect one’s “point of view on certain aspects”.

The news sources that Drennan uses the most are online sources, so if there were fake news it would affect him, especially as he “never” fact checks his news.

He went on to say that he still wouldn’t comprehensively fact check his news if he knew how to do so.

Douglas Waddilove, a mechanical engineer, who studied at Stellenbosch University and lives in Durbanville, mentioned that fake news from sources that he is not familiar with would affect him as he would not be able to call them out for being factually incorrect without in-depth fact checking.

He said that this is particularly an issue for him with international news.

Waddilove, unlike Drennan, said that he would fact check his news if he knew how to.

Five steps to find the truth

Websites
“Check the name of the website and if you have heard of it before. Make sure the spelling is correct because this is often the first giveaway that the news website is not legit [like The Guard1an].”

STEP ONE

Cross reference
“Cross reference the story with a reputable news website, such as *Netwerk24*, *News24*, *EWN*, *ENCA* or *IOL*. Chances are if it is not in the mainstream media, it is possibly not true.”

STEP TWO

Sources
“How many sources have been quoted in the story? If facts aren’t confirmed or denied, chances are it is not true.”

STEP THREE

Clickbait
“Do not just click for the sense of clickbait. It’s often sensationalised headlines from fake news websites that common sense tells you can’t be true, that ends up not being true.”

STEP FOUR

Sharing
“Never share these posts on other platforms such as Facebook or Twitter because then you are just adding to the hysteria.”

STEP FIVE

Graphic by Martinette Hay and Tom Stapylton-Smith SOURCE: CARRYN-ANN NEL



Focus on Freedom of Expression: Professor Herman Wasserman, Director of the Centre for Film and Media Studies at the University of Cape Town. PHOTO: PROVIDED

Digital media allows freedom of expression

Aydn Parrott

DIGITAL MEDIA such as social media and blogs have allowed more people to publish their ideas and opinions on multiple platforms.

Many view this as a strength of the new age of digital media because it promotes freedom of speech and provides a plurality of voices in the media.

Throughout history, technology has provided increased press freedom while simultaneously decreasing press freedom.

This is because authorities often begin to censor or regulate new platforms once they become widely used.

Prof. Herman Wasserman, Director of the University of Cape Town’s Centre for Film & Media Studies, said that the printing press was the most significant technological advancement in history prior to digital online media.

He said it was a way of putting knowledge previously kept in the realm of the clergy and elite into the public domain.

However, he acknowledged that inclusion and exclusion will always

be an issue. Both the printing press and digital media, although increasing access to information, have also excluded many from accessing the respective media forms.

According to Wasserman, media freedom is intended to promote freedom of expression and access to means of freedom of expression.

It is difficult to get a grip on it as it is so big and so dispersed. Not that media regulation is not important, but it is really important to build media literacy.

Wasserman added that it is important to question the regulation of online media and the effect that this could have.

Although no official body has been created to investigate and implement the regulation of online media, the Press Council has adapted its Press Code to extend to digital media as well.

Colleen Monaghan of news agency *Groundup* said that “there is no question that social media has increased opportunities for greater freedom of expression. However, greater freedom of expression does not always translate into better news reporting.”

Dr Willemien Marais, Programme

Director of Communication Science and journalism lecturer at the University of the Free State, said it is “obvious that everybody has more access or just a platform to voice their opinion”. She went on to say that increased access to digital media platforms, such as smartphones, comes with barriers to entry such as coverage and data costs.

Marais added that there are additional problems that still need to be addressed, including the lack of diversity in voices.

“My friends [on social media] are just my friends. I will not be exposed to a diversity of voices.” However she asserts that in general digital technology has had a positive impact because “we need freedom of expression and we need to make it possible.”

One way in which social media has been successful, is in giving a voice and a platform to those people whose voices are blocked in traditional media. Blogs can be seen as such a platform, which can be used by individuals or groups to give voice to their struggles that may have been suppressed prior to the internet and social media.



1960
The first state of emergency is declared. The rules under the emergency are so severe that it is essentially a ban on reporting about anything related to the crisis.



1960
A number of journalists are arrested, detained, and /or fined in 1960.



1960
On 8 April the Unlawful Organisation Act is passed which criminalises the ANC and the PAC.



1960
The National Party blames English South African publications for feeding false information to the foreign press on 20 April.

Press freedom:



“Press freedom means the freedom of expression, the freedom to have different views. Media freedom creates a platform we use to get to know what’s happening in the world.”

- Olufemi Johnson (25) from Cape Town, a product development specialist, and Alison van Staden (25) from Fisantekraal, a home-based nursing student.



“We think it is more about freedom of expression and getting to find out the truth. If the state can’t interfere, words will not get manipulated. Press freedom is the path to the truth.”

- Welekazi Ntloko (18) from Durban, an industrial engineering student, and Ulricke Maarman (20) from Worcester, a BA Development and Environment student.



“Ek dink daar moet persvryheid wees. Dit is hoekom die pers daar is. Ek is ’n voorstander van persvryheid.”

- Erna Deyzel (66) van Stellenbosch, koshuisdienste-koördineerder by Universiteit van Stellenbosch.



“Persvryheid bied vir my as individu toegang tot korrekte en deursigtige inligting ten opsigte van gebeure in die nuus, sonder weerhouding en weglating van feite as gevolg van wetgewing.”

- Marizanne Nel (24) van Kaapstad, klerk by die Suid-Afrikaanse Instituut vir Professionele Rekenkundes (SAIPA).



“Vryheid van die media is een van die waardevolste dinge van ons nuwe grondwetlike bestel.”

- Jean Dewet (22) van Stellenbosch, LLB nagraadse student.



“The public should be able to comment on what they think without feeling pressures of judgement.”

- Adrian Bothma (23) from Mitchell’s Plain, a Postgraduate Certificate of Education student.

What is it to you?



“It is good that each of us can have our own opinion.”

- Jadrian Goshai (22) from Paarl, a BA student.

“Ek dink die media kan berig oor die regering, want dit gee vir die publiek ’n *inside eye* en wys hulle wat aangaan. Anders gaan ons nie weet nie.”

- Cailan Alexander (22) van Namibië, BRekLLB-student.



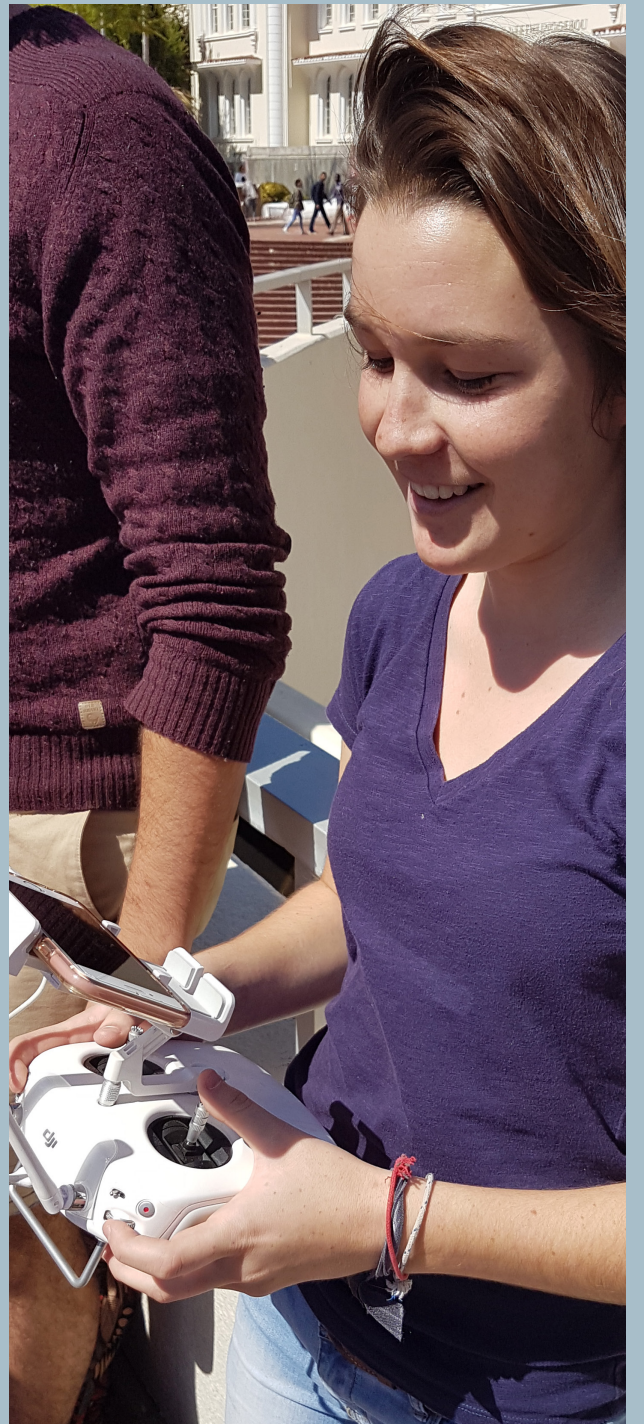
“Persvryheid beteken dat ek media kan gebruik en van alles rondom my bewus kan wees sonder dat enige iets gesensor word.”

- Stefan Lotter (22) van Kroonstad, ekonomiese- en bestuurswetenskappe student.



“I feel like it’s important because you can see in countries that aren’t free, people don’t know what’s going on.”

- Kadisha van Wyk (19) from Windhoek, a civil engineering student.



“The press should be able to report whatever they want. Drones can be a huge invasion of privacy, but can access new areas for new perspectives.”

- Calo Cranswick (19) from Zimbabwe, an investment management student.

Photos by:

Andy Kohrs
Dalaine Krige
Franco Havenga
Welile Makena

Lida Malherbe
Marsha Leitch
Martinette Hay
Tom Stapylton-Smith

Independent media stands apart

Aidan Jones

INDEPENDENT MEDIA organisations that are not tied into the daily news cycle play a crucial role in addressing important issues not covered by mainstream news organisations.

Conventional, modern newsroom environments are places with short deadlines and a growing need to publish stories immediately. This often leaves very little space for thorough, in-depth reporting.

This is why it's important to have independent media organisations with alternative funding models, that are free to address relevant issues with the time and attention they deserve.

GroundUp, based in Cape Town, is a non-profit news agency that focuses on social issues and works extensively with civil society organisations.

They look into the corners of society “that don't get much or any coverage in the mainstream media,” said Barbara Maregele, senior reporter at *GroundUp*. “We pride ourselves on being impartial, fair, balanced and accurate in our reporting.”

The bulk of *GroundUp*'s funding comes from donors and while they don't sell their copy, much of which comes from freelancers, it is re-published in news outlets such as the *Mail & Guardian* and *News24*.

GroundUp also conducts writing workshops for social activists that helps them become stronger advocates of social change.

Another non-profit independent media organisation that includes skills development as part of its operations is the investigative journalism unit *AmaBhungane*, also based in Cape Town.

“We have a mandate to develop investigative journalism as a field,” said Stefaans Brümmer, co-founder of *AmaBhungane*. “We offer fellowships for working journalists to teach



Operating outside of the daily news cycle allows independent media organisations to address issues not covered in conventional media. ILLUSTRATION BY HOLLY CHARLTON

them how to do good investigative journalism.”

Brümmer said they're strict about not taking funding from government or corporate bodies. “The majority of our funding comes from donations, so we have no corporate backers and dividends to pay.”

This allows them to probe issues and corruption with relative autonomy and to fight for information rights, which Brümmer said is of the utmost importance to them.

Africa Check is another independent media organisation that's in on the fight for better information.

Kate Wilkinson, senior researcher

at *Africa Check*, said their mandate is “to promote accuracy in the public debate.”

Africa Check is also a donor-funded non-profit organisation, with donations coming in from philanthropic organisations such as the AFP Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

But donations are not their only income stream, in an effort to make themselves more financially stable, *Africa Check* started up a services branch called *TRi Facts* in 2015.

TRi Facts does fact-checking training for newsrooms, journalism schools and civil society organisa-

tions, said Wilkinson. “We help them make sure that the information they put out there is reliable.”

This is an arrangement that expands the network of competent fact-checkers while providing income for *Africa Check* as well.

As for paid content, Wilkinson is adamant that their reports will remain free of charge. “Our mandate is to improve accuracy in the public debate, and we can't do that if we put valuable information behind a paywall.

Our content is freely available online and can also be republished in its entirety for free by any media

platform in the world”.

People are reading their content. According to Wilkinson, their current readership rates for 2017 are 120 000 unique visits per month.

Similar to *GroundUp*, *Africa Check* uses freelancers on the ground in the territories they report on.

“This helps us to contextualise our work and give it more authenticity,” said Wilkinson.

In terms of media coverage, *Africa Check* holds a unique position shared by similar independent media organisations.

Conventional newsrooms run on a daily deadline and don't always have the time to make in-depth enquiries. “*Africa Check* is different,” said Wilkinson, “instead of just quoting what people say, we go back and verify it. We can do that because we don't have the pressure of daily deadlines and take as long as we need to find out if something is true or not.”

Wilkinson said this is important in a democracy, especially one with a political landscape as contested as South Africa's.

“Leaders must be held accountable for what they say.”

Derek Carelse, managing director at *The Big Issue* in Cape Town, made the same point about the dynamics of independent media.

“Unlike the daily newspapers, we're not bound by the news cycle, so we can address a variety of topical issues in a long form, in-depth manner.”

According to Carelse, when media becomes concentrated in the hands of a few, alternative voices shrink, so one of the main reasons we need independent media is to guard against this.

“We have to prick the separate bubbles we're living in,” said Carelse, “so that we can start listening to each other, and seeing the world from other points of view.”

As with *GroundUp*, *AmaBhungane* and *Africa Check*, donor funding is necessary to run the *The Big Issue*.



James Oatway, who captured the murder of Emmanuel Sithole. PHOTO: FACEBOOK

The media must exercise its responsibilities

Andeline Wieland

MEDIA HOUSES all over South Africa adhere to the national constitution to determine what is, and is not acceptable for publishing without breaking the law. What is open for dispute are the grey areas between wrong and right and how each media institution makes a final call.

Up to this point South African media have enjoyed their right to the freedom of the press in post-apartheid South Africa. All around the country, publications work to “get the news first” and occasionally questions arise around controversial issues. An example is the front-page story and pictures of the murder of Emmanuel Sithole in the *Sunday Times*.

This story showed the “grey area” of media ethics as well as facilitating the conversation around how media

agencies should act when publishing to protect their right of freedom of the press.

The most important thing is to “always look at both sides of the story” according to *Die Son* news editor Neill Scott. Due to the nature of a tabloid, *Die Son* runs more controversial and risky stories and is often at the receiving end of complaints from the general public.

“What makes us special is that we are not afraid to get involved. If there were gang related activities then we would go to speak to the gang leaders personally,” Scott added.

They also aim to be as objective as possible. “*Die Son* doesn't really cover political news, however we do judge politicians and public figures based on their actions and will certainly expose their secrets in our tabloid.”

Scott acknowledged that they do adhere to the Press Ombudsman

and that they feel the constitution does allow for them to do their jobs relatively easily.

“It is a wonderful opportunity to have freedom of the press, but we need to handle it with care so that people don't wish to shut us down,” Scott concluded.

The *Cape Argus* agrees that news should be balanced, not influenced by outside factors and lastly, legal. But there are no solid rules. “We approach the rules on a ‘case-by-case’ basis, and try to not let other media outlets influence us,” Jade Otto, news editor of *Cape Argus*, said.

“A great example is the recent baby Siwaphiwe case. We had decided that despite the fact that other media outlets had already published the child's name, we were going to abstain from doing so, as it went against our code of ethics to name a minor involved in a police investigation. Each story we approach goes through a similar pro-

cess of evaluation before publishing,” she concluded.

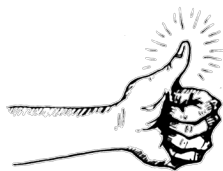
Herman Scholtz, news editor of *Rapport*, said: “In my opinion the secret to fair news is to speak to and to let as many voices as possible of people be heard.”

It is important to remember the fact that the media are being held accountable by the public and that news agencies should only publish stories that could affect someone's livelihood if it is for the sake of the greater good of the community.

“However, we don't get involved with neighbourly feuds and quarrels. Your story needs to have merit,” he added.

With regards to fake news, media shouldn't underestimate readers. “Newspapers have an immense responsibility to not warp stories or photos. If you misuse your authority as a newsmaker someone will call you out on it, guaranteed,” he said.

1961
The SABC consistently uses propaganda to reassure the general public that “all is normal” in South Africa.



1962
The Sabotage Bill is passed.



1963
The Publication and Entertainment Act 26 establishes the Publications Control Board that examines and suggests which publications should be banned.



1967
The Terrorism Act 83 authorises the indefinite detention of suspects under interrogation without trial.





Leanne George, ondersoekende joernalis van *Rapport*, tydens een van die weermag se media-ekskursies. FOTO: HANNO LABUSCHAGNE



Hazel Friedman, ondersoekende joernalis van die SAUK, verfilm Alexis Kriel tydens haar ondersoek oor die bedreigde ietermagog. FOTO: SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT

Die waarheid sal seëvier

Martinette Hay

MENSE WAT steel, lieg en moor, moet deur middel van ondersoekende joernalistiek ontbloot word. Dit is die mening van Leanne George, ondersoekende joernalis van *Rapport*. Sy en ander ondersoekende joernaliste in Suid-Afrika moet ’n fyn balans handhaaf tussen hulle reg tot persvryheid en ander mense se reg tot privaatheid. Pieter-Louis Myburgh, ondersoekende joernalis van *News24*, het gesê: “Ek sal nooit sonder goeie rede in iemand se private sake krap nie. Indien ons byvoorbeeld na ’n openbare ampsdraer se eiendomsportefeulje of leefstyl kyk, sal dit wees omdat daar ’n sterk aanduiding is dat die betrokke persoon by bedenklike transaksies betrokke is.” Mandy Wiener, bekroonde ondersoekende joernalis wat nou

vryskut werk, het gesê: “Dit is belangrik om altyd te onthou dat ’n onderwerp ’n mens met regte is en nie ’n teiken nie.” Om seker te maak dat sy niemand se reg tot privaatheid skend nie, het George gesê sy werk baie nou saam met prokureurs om te verseker dat dit wat sy skryf nie tot ’n saak van laster of naamskending kan lei nie. Verskeie ondersoekende joernaliste het vertel hoe hulle geïntimideer word wanneer hulle vrae vra oor sensitiewe onderwerpe. Wiener het gesê as mens ’n ondersoekende joernalis wil wees, moet jy gaan waar ander óf te bang of te versigtig is om te gaan. “Jy kan nie antwoorde kry tensy jy moeilike, alternatiewe vrae vra nie,” het sy gesê. Myburgh het bygevoeg: “Die intimidasie wissel van baie blatant tot meer subtiel. Dit het al voorheen gebeur dat mense dreig om my of van my kollegas fisiek leed aan te

doen. Maar in die meeste gevalle behels die intimidasie dreigemente oor regsoptrede teen ons as joernaliste en die titels waarvoor ons werk.” Volgens George is intimidasie onlosmaaklik deel van die werk - dit is so sinoniem aan ondersoekende joernalistiek soos wat skryf is. Sy het gesê: “Gewoonlik is die mense net baie ongeskik met jou. Ander kere spioeneer iemand op jou of agtervolg jou, of jou foon word ge-*tap*.” Daar is verskeie maniere om dié intimidasie te hanteer. Die meerderheid van joernaliste hanteer dit deur dit bloot net te ignoreer. Hazel Friedman, ondersoekende joernalis vir die SAUK, het vertel dat sy nie sommer gaan ondersoek instel as sy nie weet wat op haar wag nie. Sy neem net berekende risiko’s, hoewel sy soms eers ná die tyd dink aan wat die moontlike gevolge kon wees. Volgens George is een van die grootste uitdagings wat onder-

soekende joernaliste in vandag se tyd ervaar dat “ons in ’n era van waninligting leef.” Sy het gesê baie vals inligting word aan joernaliste geleek en dit is dikwels omdat die bronte na gekom is. Jy moet dus probeer uitvind of daar wel waarheid in die storie is. Myburgh meen een van die mees uitdagende aspekte van ondersoekende joernalistiek is om bronne te oortuig om inligting te deel. Hy probeer hulle gewoonlik oortuig dat dit in die openbare belang is om die inligting wat hulle het, te deel. Friedman het gesê: “Jy verwag inligting van bronne wie se lewens soms daarvan afhang. Jy kan nie altyd hulle beskerming ná die storie waarborg nie.” Ondersoekende joernaliste verskil oor wat hulle bereid is om te doen om inligting vir ’n storie te kry. “Ek is bereid om bronne in gevaarlike omstandighede te ontmoet. Mens moet net daardie risiko’s reg

bestuur en nie buitensporige risiko’s neem nie,” het Myburgh gesê. Friedman het vertel dat sy al baie moeite gedoen het om inligting te kry. Sy het al haarself voorgehou as ’n dwelmsmokkelaar om dwelmsindikate te ontbloot. Sy het ook al ’n kamera onwettig in ’n tronk in Thailand ingevat om ’n onderhoud skelm op te neem. Myburgh hoop dat daar altyd maniere sal wees om ondersoekende joernaliste se veiligheid te verseker, of minstens op te skerp, sodat hulle nie gekeer word om ’n ondersoek te doen nie. George het in 2015 die “Scoop” van die Jaar-toekenning van *Beeld/Netwerk24* gewen. Myburgh het in 2015 die Taco Kuiper-toekenning gewen. Wiener het al heelwat toekennings gewen, soos Webber Wentzel se “Regsjoernalis van die Jaar”. Friedman was in 2007 Vodacom se “Joernalis van die Jaar”.

Voëlvrye spraak bly relevant

Marius Boonzaier

DRIE DEKADES nadat die Voëlvry-beweging teen die sensuur van ’n staatsbeheerde SAUK uitgevaar het, is hul boodskap steeds relevant. “Die musiek was nuut en vreemd, maar ek het geweet *it rang true*,” het die sangeres Laurinda Hofmeyr gesê. “Dit het my lewe verander.” Oor hoe Voëlvry vryheid van spraak volgens haar beïnvloed het, het sy dadelik na Johannes Kerkorrel en die Gereformeerde Blues Band se lied “Sit Dit Af” verwys. Voëlvry was ook ’n groot invloed op die Fokopolisiekar-hoofsanger, Francois van Coke. “As die Voëlvry-beweging nie daar was nie, sou Fokopolisiekar

nie bestaan het nie. “Dit was die enigste musiek van daai tyd waarmee ons kon assosieer,” sê hy. Volgens Van Coke is dit ’n jammerte dat so min mense deesdae van Voëlvry weet. Daar is geen twyfel dat die Voëlvry-beweging ’n blywende invloed op Afrikaanse musiek en populêre kultuur gelaat het nie. Of die beweging werklik ’n beduidende of direkte invloed op die val van die apartheidsregime gehad het, word steeds gedebatteer. Musiekresensent en groepslid van Die Naaimasjiene, Theunis Engelbrecht, glo egter dat Voëlvry ’n impak gemaak het omdat hulle gesing het oor kwessies waaroor niemand vantevore gesing het nie.

Volgens die radio-omroeper Johan Rademan, wat ’n Matie-student in die tagtigs was, was dit instrumenteel dat Voëlvry in Afrikaans was. “Jy kan nie die mense bereik as jy nie in hulle eie taal praat nie. Hulle luister dan net nie,” het hy gesê. Engelbrecht stem saam dat die taal waarin Voëlvry protes aangeteken het, belangrik was. Die Voëlvry-beweging wat uit Johannes Kerkorrel, André le Toit (nou bekend as Koos Kombuis), James Phillips, die Gereformeerde Blues Band en kie bestaan het, het in die laat tagtigerjare opslae met hul protesmusiek gemaak. Hulle het in opstand gekom teen apartheid en sensuur en in 1989 het hulle op ’n landwyse toer gegaan.



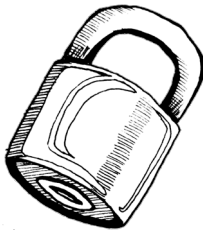
Bladsy uit die *Vrye Weekblad* van 12 Mei 1989 waar Matie-studente teen die verbod op Voëlvry betoog.



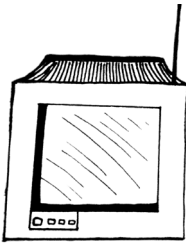
1973
January:
Union of Black Journalists founded.



1974
The Publications Act No 42 is passed. This act suppresses any critical media. This affected student press.



1974
Second General Law Amendment Act 94 of 1974 tightens restrictions on reporting.



1976
First South African TV channel airs.

Artists stand up for freedom

Tania Heyns

“ANYONE WHO is being critical, skeptical, reading between the lines, or asking questions, or publishing things that ask questions, they start labelling those people as unpatriotic, as traitors.”

These are the words of Jonathan Shapiro, known as the cartoonist Zapiro, who believes that freedom of the press and of expression are crucial to any democracy, yet under threat in South Africa at the moment.

Zapiro said he has felt the “official anger of an authoritarian state”. The ANC has often complained about his work, resulting in two lawsuits from President Jacob Zuma. Zapiro describes this as unusual for a head of state to do in a democracy.

Uproar has sometimes followed his cartoons. An example is the complaint by the Council of Muslim Theologians on his cartoon of The Prophet and the publication of the cartoon in the *Mail & Guardian*; the complaint by an American delegation on cartoons covering American foreign policy; and a cartoon showing the rape of Lady Justice published by the *Sunday Times* in 2008.

He saw the ANC come to power with a strong majority. The party abused that majority. This can be



Cartoon by Zapiro, *Sunday Times* © 2012 All rights reserved. For more Zapiro cartoons visit www.zapiro.com

seen in a lack of service delivery and corruption.

According to Zapiro, that is what has been happening throughout the 2000s.

“At the moment, it is a big fight.”

As a cartoonist during the apartheid era, he believes that he knows freedom of the press and freedom of

expression, “especially when it is not there”.

When asked about freedom of expression, Brett Murray, painter of the controversial *The Spear*, where Zuma was depicted as a Lenin-figure with his genitals exposed, refers to Noam Chomsky’s warning: “If we don’t believe in the freedom of expression for

people we despise, we don’t believe in it at all.”

Both Zapiro and Murray see glimmers of hope. They believe that there still is freedom of the press in South Africa. According to Zapiro, it is because of the strength of the constitution.

He said that, everything consid-

ered, the media have been free for the last two decades.

He said he was able to keep pushing the boundaries that he began pushing during the Apartheid era and as an activist, he was able to be critical, and to have that criticism appreciated by people in powerful positions including former president Nelson Mandela himself.

“The idea of the rule of law, the idea of freedom of expression being properly enshrined in the Constitution and working under those tenets, that for me has been phenomenal.”

Referring to *The Spear*, Murray felt “that some faction of a political party saw it fit to jackboot through a gallery space and call for the burning of an exhibition and suppress a newspaper editor’s independence, and by proxy attempt to censor the ideas of [...] social commentators. Coming so soon after the apartheid regime’s attempts to do the same, this was eye opening, short-sighted and ultimately chilling.”

Zapiro said freedom of the press needs to be promoted. A lot is being done, and there is a healthy, noisy dialogue. Activist groups like Right-2Know, Amnesty International and My Vote Counts make a difference, but more can be done.

Zapiro believes that some journalists are not “on the ground” or doing enough for ordinary people.



Die eens verbode *Kennis van die aand*. FOTO: LIDA MALHERBE

Sestigers veg om sensuur te systap

Lida Malherbe

SENSUUR IN Suid-Afrika het in die sestigs en sewentigs tot op ’n punt gekom waar die skrywer Jan Rabie die nasionale regering as ’n vyand van die Afrikaanse literatuur beskryf het.

Verskeie literêre publikasies is in hierdie tyd, wat deur die skrywersgemeenskap “die sensuurjare” gedoop is, verban. Protes deur skrywers was onvermydelik.

Prof. Heilna du Plooy van die Departement Afrikaans en Nederlands aan die Noordwes-Universiteit, het gesê dat die Sestigers ter wille van artistieke vernuwing, asook uit die behoefte om nuwe idees en ’n nuwe manier van dink in die Afrikaanse gemeenskap in te bring, oor temas begin skryf het wat met agterdog deur die konserwatiewe Afrikaanse gemeenskap ontvang is.

Temas soos seks, dood, ontrouheid en rassegelykheid het deels daartoe gelei dat die Wet op Publikasies en Vermaaklikhede in 1963 deur die regering aanvaar is.

In die wet staan geskryf dat enige publikasie ondersoek mag word as dit “onbetaamlik, onwelvoeglik, aanstootlik of skadelik vir die openbare sedes en/of godslasterlik sou wees en dit enige bevolkingsdeel van die Republiek van Suid-Afrika belaglik of veragtelik sou maak.”

In *The Literature Police* het James MacDonald geskryf dat 191 skrywers en kunstenaars ná die aanvaarding

van die Wet op Publikasies en Vermaaklikhede ’n petisie geteken het wat vra om die wet terug te trek.

Volgens die skrywer en akademikus Joan Hambidge was die tekste van die Sestigers op sigself ’n akute opstand teen sensuur. In 1973 is hulle uitgenooi na ’n kongres by die Universiteit van Kaapstad, en volgens transkripsies van hul toesprake het hulle hewig teen sensuur uitgevaar - ook teen die nasionale regering.

In 1974 is die Wet op Publikasies verskerp, en het skrywersvryheid in Suid-Afrika ’n laagtepunt bereik. Volgens Visagie was dit die eintlike begin van ernstige sensuur.

Die nuwe wet het behels dat ’n direktoraat aangestel word met die mag om publikasies te verbied. Prof. Willie Burger van die Departement Afrikaans by die Universiteit van Pretoria het gesê dat die raad nie literêre werke voor publikasie sou sensor nie, maar wel die mag sou hê indien die publiek beswaar daarteen sou aanteken.

In 1974 word *Kennis van die Aand* deur André P. Brink verban wat grootliks aanleiding gegee het tot die stigting van die onafhanklike uitgewersmaatskappy Taurus.

Skrywers John Miles, Chris Barnard, en Ernst Lindenberg het deur ’n kunsveiling geld ingesamel vir Brink om die verbod op *Kennis* te appelleer, terwyl Brink die boek vertaal en in Brittanje versprei het. Brink het toe die totaal van sy eerste tantième aan die skrywers terugge-



Die Sestigers Jan Rabie, Ampie Coetzee, André Brink, Daantjie Snyman en Alba Boucher voor die hof tydens die hofsak teen die verbod op *Kennis van die aand*. FOTO: LITNET

gee, waarmee Taurus toe uiteindelik gestig is.

Burger het gesê die doel van Taurus was om die Sensuurwet te probeer omseil deur boeke wat moontlik “aanstootlike” inhoud bevat het, te publiseer, maar nie op die rakke te plaas nie.

Hierdie boeke is deur ’n tipe bestellingslys aan lesers versprei, terwyl koerante die boeke geresenseer het. Wanneer die boeke op die rakke verskyn het, was dit reeds wyd gelees en geresenseer.

Die verbod op *Magersfontein*, O, *Magersfontein* van Etienne Leroux in 1977 deur die Komitee van die Publikasieraad was volgens Visagie ’n draaipunt in skrywers se protes teen sensuur.

Lede van die Direktoraat se komitees het bedank as gevolg van die bakleiery oor die roman, en die

regering het stadig, maar seker begin met die skrywers onderhandel.

In 1979 - dieselfde jaar waarin Leroux ironies die Hertzogprys ontvang het vir die verbode *Magersfontein* - is veranderinge aan die Sensuurwet ingedien, op grond van Brink se waarneming dat daar Engelse boeke op die rakke is wat meer “onbetaamlike” temas as verbode Afrikaanse boeke aanspreek.

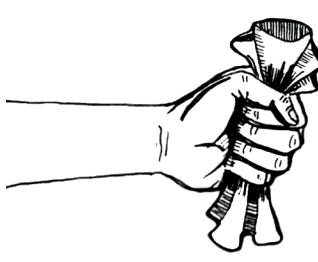
Magersfontein is in 1980 weer op die rakke toegelaat. Ook in hierdie jaar is die Sensuurwet so gewysig dat daar ook oor “immorele” onderwerpe geskryf sou mag word, omdat “aanstootlikheid” nie ’n vaste betekenis het nie. Die Komitee van Letterkundige Deskundiges is toe saamgestel om die Appèlraad te help, sodat publikasies reg gelees word, en nie op wanindrukke beoordeel sou word nie.



1980
National Key Points Act outlaws publishing information about a national key point without the permission of the Minister of Defence.



1982
The Intimidation Act 72 is introduced and effectively forces journalists to impose self-censorship.



1985
The Weekly Mail, a newly formed independent newspaper, runs into trouble with the government after its first edition is published. The threat of seizure hangs over its head.



1989
Association of Democratic Journalists is launched.



Bekommerde Suid-Afrikaners het in 2012 buite die Parlement betoog teen die sogenaamde geheimhouding wetsontwerp. FOTO: LISA SKINNER, MAIL & GUARDIAN

Media kom al meer onder politieke druk

André Huisamen

PRES. DONALD Trump van Amerika se aanhoudende aanvalle op die media het vrese laat opvlam oor mediavryheid in Amerika en wêreldwyd.

Die afgelope paar maande het Trump gereeld die media aangeval, soos toe hy verslaggewers as oneerlik en bevooroordeeld beskryf het.

Die aanslag op die vryheid van die media kom te midde van ’n toename in fopnuus (oftewel *fake news*) op die internet.

Die vraag ontstaan dus hoe dié gebeure die media in Suid-Afrika raak.

Nuusredakteur van *Netwerk24* in Kaapstad, Carryn-Ann Nel, het gesê persvryheid in Suid-Afrika is onder druk.

“As ons kyk na die uitsprake van David Mahlobo, minister van staatsveiligheid, dat Suid-Afrika dit oorweeg om sosiale media te reguleer, die moontlikheid van ’n media-appèltribunaal en die Muilbandwet, is dit duidelik dat daar

pogings is om die media se vryheid in te perk.”

Mahlobo is in 2016 deur die DA by die Openbare Beskermer aangekla omdat hy gekok en die Parlement mislei het.

Netwerk24 het in 2016 berig dat Mahlobo bande gehad het met ’n groot renosterhoringstroper in China.

Waldimar Pelser, redakteur van *Rapport*, glo dat die vryheid van die media noodsaaklik is vir die instandhouding van demokrasie. Volgens hom moet die media so akkuraat en vry van politieke inmenging as moontlik wees.

“Media-instansies bestaan nie ten einde ’geborg’ te wees nie. Dit bestaan met die doel om die land en sy burgers verantwoordbaar te hou, sodat mense self nie misbruik word nie.”

Volgens Luke Thorrold, nuusredakteur van die *Varsity Sports*-groep in Suid-Afrika, het die land baie ver gekom oor die afgelope 20 jaar in terme van mediavryheid, maar hy glo tog daar is beperkinge.

Mens kry die idee dat die regering die media wil beheer of nie op dieselfde politieke vlak as die media is nie. “Groepe soos *Right2Know* veg hard om korrupsie in die regering bloot te stel, maar mens hoeft net na Graeme Joffe te kyk om te sien waar vryheid van spraak en behoorlike ondersoekende joernalistiek jou kan kry.”

Joffe het in 2015 die land verlaat nadat hy doodsdreigemente gekry het oor sy uitlatings teen die departement van Sport en Rekreasie. Thorrold steun sosiale media in terme van persvryheid, hoewel hy glo die platform soms verkeerd gebruik word.

“Sosiale media het die spel verander en nou kan joernaliste as individue hulself meer vrylik uitdruk, maar vryheid van spraak het wel sy beperkinge en gee nie vir joernaliste die vryheid om te sê net wat hulle wil nie.

“Kyk net hoe baie bekende figure, soos Helen Zille, hulself al in die moeilikheid laat beland het oor wat hulle op Twitter en Facebook uitlaat.”

Reporting on religion remains controversial

Vonani Ngomana & Marli van Eeden

News coverage of religious affairs in South Africa remains a sensitive topic despite the fact that the country’s constitution guarantees press freedom. Self-censorship when reporting on religious affairs is prevalent.

Papers such as *The Star* and *The Sunday Times* aim for neutrality, or avoid reporting on religious affairs altogether.

“Journalism in South Africa, like other professions, is neutral towards religion unless it is something extraordinary. The media will report on incidents that are perverted and out of the ordinary,” said Tankiso Makhetha, a multimedia reporter from *The Star*.

“Objectivity and neutrality is what I as a journalist aim for, to avoid slanting articles in favour of or against any group in society,” Makhetha said.

Nadine Dreyer from *The Sunday Times* said that they avoid reporting about religious affairs because of the public backlash when doing so.

Their readers threaten to cancel subscriptions when they report on religious affairs, such as the religious conflict in Israel.

“It does not matter how careful you are when reporting about religion, the public will always feel that you are being biased and criticise you for it,” Dreyer added.

Dreyer concluded that *The Sunday Times* does however acknowledge religious holidays and observances. They will mention religious observances such as Easter and Ramadan.

They try to include a wide variety of religions, and mention what is happening in the upcoming week in their Sunday paper.

Wendyl Martin, news editor for the Sunday edition of *The Cape Argus*, said that they decide whether or not to report on religious affairs

depending on the context and the news value of the news event. They try to remain as neutral as possible.

Like *The Sunday Times*, *The Cape Argus* will mention religious observances and holidays, like Christmas and Ramadan.

In the past, *The Cape Argus* published an article reporting on what families eat during Ramadan, focussing on poorer families.

Die Burger reporter Malherbe Nienaber said that his publication does not shy away from reporting about religious affairs.

He said that *Die Burger* had a dedicated religious affairs reporter in the past, but this is no longer the case.

On a more national level, *Netwerk24* has several reporters that focus on religious affairs, although it is not their “beat”. This is because of the contacts and knowledge they have in the field.

Nienaber added that the Afrikaans media report more about religion than the English media or the media on a national level.

Nienaber said that the reason for this might be that religion forms an integral part of the Afrikaans speaking community.

Die Burger readers want to know about religious affairs, for example, the Belydenis van Belhar, which became a major news event.

Nienaber personally feels that although the media tries to report about various religions, there is a bias towards Christianity and Islam.

He referred to *Die Burger*’s letters column where the paper publishes a bible verse and a verse from the Koran, with no other religion represented.

He added that the reason for this bias might be that it is what the readers prefer and it is the two most “mainstream” religions.

“Religion will always be a sensitive topic and reporting about it remains tricky,” Nienaber concluded.



Church service at Hillsong. PHOTO: VONANI NGOMANA



1989
26 June: *The Weekly Mail* blacks out sections of articles and states: “Our lawyers tell us we can say almost nothing critical about the emergency. But we’ll try.”



1994
First democratic election. About 100 censoring laws are abolished and press freedom is established.



1994
Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), now Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA), is established.



1996
South Africa adopts a new constitution that entrenches media freedom.

The curious case of Shiraaz Mohamed

Christina Pitt

SINCE SOUTH African photojournalist, Shiraaz Mohamed (39), was abducted in Syria five months ago, there has been no word on his fate. The silence surrounding his disappearance has raised some interesting questions about his kidnapping.

“We have no idea whether he was kidnapped for his profession or if he has in fact defected. We have absolutely no idea,” said Yusuf Abramjee from Operation SA, a non-profit relief organisation operating in Syria.

He continued: “The fact that he has been missing for so long and that there have been very few media reports is very concerning.”

A reliable source said that there are concerns that Mohamed may have defected to ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria).

Unusual details about his abduction have set off alarm bells. The fact that no ransom was demanded and that he had texted his ex-wife anticipating his abduction is very unusual.

Dr Imtiaz Sooliman, founder of Gift of the Givers (GotG), vehemently denied these allegations: “Shiraaz was captured in an area where ISIS cannot enter. For him to get to ISIS he would have had to cross several checkpoints and would have been arrested before he even got to them.”

Sooliman argued that Mohamed was desperate to come home for many reasons: “He wanted to marry a Syrian girl and bring her back to South Africa.” He said it is also extremely unlikely that Mohamed would abandon his mother.

The silence surrounding the negotiations is also not unusual, according to Sooliman. “There are no reports because it can jeopardise Shiraaz’s life. Many things are happening behind the scenes and we cannot talk about it.”

Other sources have also questioned the validity of the defection theory.

A strategic task team consisting



Photojournalist Shiraaz Mohamed (39) was abducted while on assignment in Syria PHOTO: FACEBOOK

of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), State Security and GotG has been created to resolve the mystery of Mohamed’s disappearance. The names of the team members have not been disclosed to the public.

The government has shown its support for the Mohamed family and has offered assistance. Deputy Director General of Public Diplomacy at DIRCO, Clayson Monyela, said: “The government is aware of Mohamed’s case. We are in constant contact with his family and we have offered our assistance.”

Professor Annika Rudman, an

international law lecturer at Stellenbosch University, is of the opinion that the South African government may have limited bargaining power. “South Africa has very little political influence in Syria. Whoever has Mohamed has very little to gain from detaining him. He is in a lot of danger.”

Who is Fekri Shaban?

Recent photographs of Mohamed’s ex-wife, Shirley Brijlal, in the company of Turkish national and former GotG volunteer, Fekri Shaban, have raised some eyebrows. It has been confirmed by Sooliman and various

journalists that Brijlal accompanied Shaban on a trip to Turkey in February for unknown reasons.

“The ex-wife has been cut off from Shiraaz’s family. Shaban has her wrapped around his little finger. He is a man clutching at straws, trying to be relevant,” says Sooliman.

There is no blood lost between the two men. Sooliman fired Shaban for his behaviour at the GotG hospital in Syria around the same time that Mohamed was abducted. Mohamed’s travel to Syria was also facilitated by Shaban.

During an interview with South African radio station *Salaamedia*

Shaban claimed that GotG would implicate him in Mohamed’s abduction once he was released.

Threat to press freedom

There has been speculation that Mohamed may have been kidnapped as a result of his journalistic profession. However, Sooliman is uncertain whether that was the reason. He suspects that it was all a misunderstanding: “No one has interfered or threatened our members for four years. Everyone knows our reputation in North Syria. We help everyone unconditionally.”

This speculation is not unwarranted as Syria has been ranked as the most dangerous country for journalists for the fifth year in a row by the Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ).

According to the CPJ, more than a dozen international news organizations have signed a joint letter to the Syrian armed opposition about the “disturbing rise in the kidnapping of journalists” in Syria, which has led many outlets to reduce their coverage of the conflict out of safety concerns. Currently about 30 journalists are missing in Syria.

It appears that civilians have had to take on the role of the media due to the lack of press freedom.

Dr Simon Adams, director of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, said: “In areas occupied by the so-called Islamic State there is no independent journalism whatsoever. The only sign of light in this darkness is the emergence of many civilian reporters across Syria who have risked their lives to expose the suffering and atrocities inflicted on ordinary people by the war.”

The abduction

Mohamed was on assignment in Syria with a South African disaster relief organisation, GotG. He was abducted by unknown gunmen on the Turkish border on 10 January 2017.

Hate Speech Bill threatens press freedom

Franco Havenga

THE HATE Speech Bill is “an insult to our democracy and the constitution”.

This is how Dr Shanelle van der Berg, constitutional law lecturer at Stellenbosch University, described the first draft of the Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill.

The draft was made public at the end of 2016 and is open for public scrutiny before it will be sent to Parliament later this year.

However, many discrepancies in this bill foreshadow a similar fate to that of the Secrecy Bill, which has still not been implemented since 2010.

According to Van der Berg, the Hate Speech Bill disregards the Constitution of South Africa and shows little to no knowledge of constitutional law.

“According to the bill any person who intentionally brings into contempt or ridicules any person or group of persons could be held liable,” Van der Berg said.

This would entail that all forms of satire could be held up for scrutiny and that any political commentator, comedian, or writer could be sent to prison.

Chapter 16 of the Constitution of South Africa says: “Everyone has the right to freedom of expression.” This first and foremost includes freedom of the press and other media. However, this right is lost if propaganda for war, incitement of violence, or advocacy of hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion is portrayed.

Francis Antonie, Director of the Helen Suzman Foundation, said: “The real question in regards to any bill that needs to be passed is, will it pass constitutional muster?”

The Helen Suzman Foundation



The bill was presented at the Parliamentary precinct, Cape Town PHOTO: AIDAN JONES

is a strong advocacy group against the Hate Speech Bill. They stated in a report released on 31 January: “However well-intentioned the severity of such a sanction may be, the suppression of speech through the criminal law will not address the

underlying causes of why such prejudices continue to stain the social fabric of our country.”

“Our concern over the Hate Speech Bill stems from the manner in which it seeks to define ‘hate speech’ as a criminal offence,” the report said.

According to Van der Berg, the definition of “hate speech” is also problematic. Here it says any person who intentionally displays or makes available any material which is capable of being communicated and which constitutes hate speech is guilty of an offence.

“This would mean that I could get three years imprisonment for showing an example in class where this law is transgressed.”

Prof. Vasti Roodt, political philosopher at Stellenbosch University, said that she supports freedom of speech.

“You don’t control people’s thoughts by policing them. Yes, some opinions are wrong and hurtful, but

people will continue to hold these opinions and express them around the dinner table.”

It is only once these thoughts are in the open that they can be discussed, debated and critiqued said Roodt.

According to Van der Berg this in turn does not further our democracy, but stops it from progressing and evolving.

“It is a step in the wrong direction if we want to move forward.”

The Secrecy Bill and Hate Speech Bill show that the constitution might be a little too vague in certain aspects, but both have met a lot of opposition and will continue to do so.

“The sloppiness of this bill indicates that it will have to go through a lot more drafts to even be presentable to the court,” said Van der Berg.

“Even when it reaches a presentable level, it will be met with strong constitutional opposition.”



2010
The Protection of State Information Bill, dubbed the Secrecy Bill, is introduced in parliament and is met with high contestation.



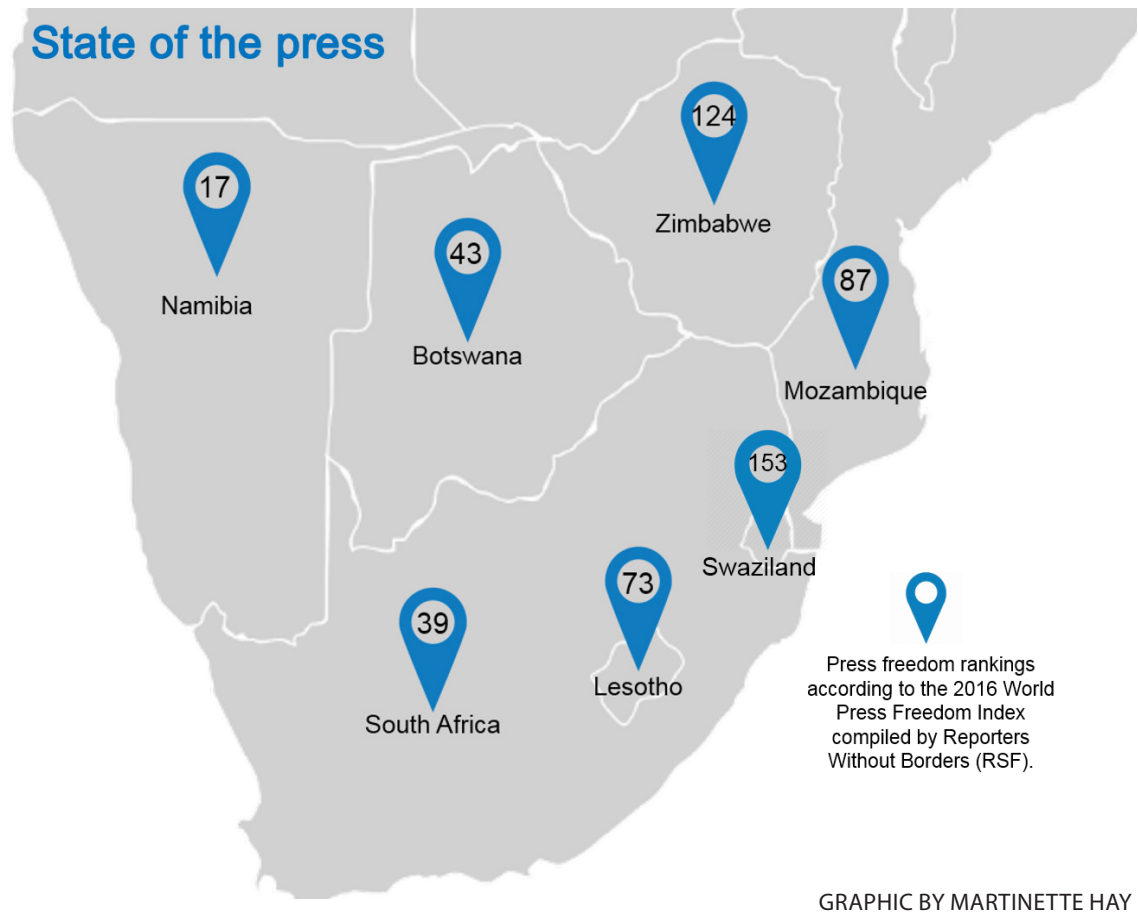
2010
Right2Know campaign starts in response to the Secrecy Bill.



2010
South Africa ranks 33rd on the world's press freedom ratings.



2010
Freedom House downgrades South Africa's press from "free" to "partly free".



Southern African press freedom in danger

Tegan Mouton

ALTHOUGH AFRICA is listed in the 2016 World Press Freedom index as the second most improved continent for press freedom, only one African nation (Namibia) cracks the top 20 countries world-wide for press freedom, with 17th place.

Dani Booysen of Namibia’s *Die Republikein* said about press freedom in Namibia that “although government from time to time criticise the media, I personally think there are very little obstacles or impediments.”

But 26 years after the signing of the Windhoek Declaration on 3 May, now recognised as World Press Freedom Day, most Southern African nations still have a long way to go for a truly free press.

In the Zimbabwe chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa’s (MISA) recently released *State of the Media* report, 2016 is referred to as a “write-off”.

Kholwani Nyathi, editor of *The Standard* said: “The information ministry has publicly stated that journalists cannot report on the military without expecting dire consequences. Reporting on the first family has also become a hazard for Zimbabwean journalists, with the latest arrest having occurred as late as March 2017.”

The adoption of a new constitution and progressive Bill of Rights in 2013 has helped journalists face “draconian laws” such as criminal defamation, which has been used against critical media, but Nyathi said “five years after the new constitution was passed several laws are yet to be aligned to the new charter.”

These laws include the Access

to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Official Secrets Act and a number of others that restrict press freedom. “In short, the terrain remains dangerous for Zimbabwean journalists and restrictions remain.”

Similarly in Lesotho, which ranks 73rd, MISA’s *State of the Media* reports the country’s media freedom is not “in step with international standards for democratic media regulations” and there is little media law or policy to protect press freedom.

Billy Ntaote, a reporter with the *Lesotho Times*, said to MISA: “In the day to day work of reporting news I find myself having to self-censor to avoid finding myself being accused of defamation or of contravening some of the internal security laws.”

In January, Ntaote wrote an article where he interviewed a member of an opposition party. Afterwards Lesotho police requested he provide a statement regarding the article.

When asked by MISA-Lesotho about police action in the country, Ntaote said: “The manner in which they handled their investigations do threaten the media from doing its daily work. Not only does it threaten the freedom in Lesotho, the police seem to suggest how the media on numerous occasions should report news. In fact the police suggest the media or journalists should censor stories and that is a threat to media freedom.”

Mozambique (87) and Botswana (43) both have an active press but often see defamation suits against the media by politicians, while access to public information is often limited.

Ditiro Motlhabane, news editor of *The Patriot on Sunday* in Botswana, said. “Since ascending the Presidency the Head of State has never addressed an open press briefing, save for a few choreographed interviews with mostly government media.

“The President has openly accused the private media of being unpatriotic, misinforming the public, harassment of political leaders and senior government officials and snooping where they should not. To this end, the President has issued a directive to the effect that government will fund lawsuits by senior government officials (this includes ministers who are politicians) against private media when they feel hard done by,” he said.

Similarly, when asked about challenges facing journalists in Mozambique, Adérito Caldeira, editor of *@Verdade* said: “In Mozambique journalists are free to speak out, there is no direct threat to our life. However, there is a lot of pressure on the media houses.

“For example to get advertising the media must be friendly to Frelimo and government and if not, like what happens with *@Verdade*, all sponsors move out, even big companies such as Coca Cola.

“The big obstacle is to keep the media alive and journalists independent,” he said.

South Africa’s rank, at 39, is above the United States and one place below the United Kingdom.

On the topic of South African press freedom, the Right2Know Campaign said: “Compared to most of our neighbours, and indeed many old western democracies, our press freedom record is not all that bad, but this is only because with every attempt by the powerful to restrict media freedom, the public is able to keep pushing back.”

***Rankings are based on the 2016 Press Freedom Index compiled by Reporters Without Borders (RSF). The 2017 Press Freedom Index was released on 26 April 2017 by which time this paper had been printed.**

Space for free press shrinks in Swaziland

Welile Makena

“The continent’s most quietly repressive nation,” said Jeffrey Smith, executive director for Vanguard Africa and expert on human rights in Southern Africa.

One of the world’s last absolute monarchies languishes at the bottom of press freedom hierarchies among various institutions and NGOs.

For example, in 2016 the country’s press freedom status was “Not free”, according to the NGO Freedom House.

“A web of repressive laws, combined with governmental intimidation and harassment of journalists, severely constrains Swaziland’s media environment,” said Freedom House.

Furthermore, according to Amnesty International’s 2016/2017 report, the country’s “legislation continued to be used to repress dissent”.

Smith said: “A free, independent and vibrant press is a necessary bedrock for a functioning democracy, the monarchy fully realises this truism, which is why King Mswati and his coterie go to extreme lengths to muzzle independent reporting through harassment, intimidation and jailing of critical voices.”

Veteran Swazi journalist Bheki Makhubu said: “Press freedom exists when there is free speech, when a society can talk to itself and people can be informed about what is happening.”

When asked whether or not press freedom can be attained under an absolute monarchy, Makhubu said that “the space where an exchange of ideas between those who are governing and those who are governed must be allowed.”

However, the Swazi government has made it such that this space does not exist.

That said, Makhubu believes that even under the circumstances, journalists should let their work do the fighting for press freedom, by writing

the stories that matter, despite the threat of violence and imprisonment.

“I don’t think there will ever be a democratic revolution in Swaziland, at least not in my lifetime,” said Makhubu.

“But journalism, good and proper, is still needed.”

Smith commented that ordinary Swazi citizens do not fully understand the role of the media, “people don’t understand that they actually have basic human rights, including rights to free speech and press freedom”.

“From a young age, Swazis are taught absolute obedience to the monarchy and that life’s privileges derive from the king and his power alone,” said Smith.

Makhubu is a seasoned journalist in Swaziland. He is the founder and editor of *The Nation* magazine, that focuses on the political landscape in the country.

He is known for publishing work that holds the powerful Swazi elite to account, providing what perhaps can be described as the only media watchdog.

In 2014, Makhubu and human rights lawyer Thulani Maseko were arrested as a result of a news article written by Maseko and published in *The Nation*.

The article exposed the questionable conduct of then Swazi Chief Justice Michael Ramodibedi.

Makhubu said that the year he spent in jail was a positive step for journalism because it embarrassed the government.

“It forced them to respect the rights stated by the 2005 constitution,” said Makhubu.

Interestingly, Makhubu’s father was a career journalist who discouraged his son from pursuing journalism. “My father pushed me to study law, he said there was more money to be made there and a better life.”

Smith is a political analyst and human rights advocate, who specialises in Southern African research.



Press freedom in Swaziland remains a far-fetched goal.

PHOTO: WELILE MAKENA



2011
November 18: *Mail & Guardian*’s front page, in response to the Secrecy Bill, is covered with a black banner and reads: “Censored: We cannot bring you this story in full due to a threat of criminal prosecution.”



2013
April 25: Parliament votes in an improved bill concerning the treatment of classified information.



2013
August: SABC COO Hlaudi Motsoeneng insists on a 70% good news policy.



2013
August: South Africa now ranks 52nd on the world’s press freedom ratings.

Black women find their voice

Welile Makena

PRESS FREEDOM in the South African context would be incomplete without a discussion of the role black women have played and continue to play in the industry.

World Press Freedom Day brings to the fore questions of gender representation in the South African media landscape.

Historically, black women have hardly featured in the media. They have been the exception, not the norm.

This is evidenced by the ownership patterns and the workforce.

From large media organisations such as The Argus Printing and Publishing Company and De Nationale Pers Beperk, to smaller black owned publications like *Ilanga Lase* and *Imvo Zabantsundu*, black women hardly featured.

Currently, the picture has changed for the better. According to a report by Intellidex, Times Media Group is 100% owned by Tiso Blackstar with a black ownership level of 58.5%.

Another example is Primedia (94.7 *Highveld Stereo*, 702 *Talk Radio*) that is 41.73% black-owned.

Although the workforce and ownership patterns have changed, some black female journalists question the prevalence of the black female voice.

The narrative of the stories covered in the media is seen by some as largely neoliberal and westernised, said Phindile Xaba, Pioneers section editor at *The Journalist* (an online publication) and accomplished academic and media practitioner.

This begs the question: How prevalent are the voices of black female media practitioners?



ILLUSTRATION: MAWANDA MALUK FANISO

The accidental journalist

Xaba, born in Soweto, freelances as a journalist, content editor and scriptwriter, with decades of experience in print and broadcast media.

Press freedom is not something Xaba takes lightly. Growing up under the apartheid regime exposed her to the oppression of that state.

She witnessed her colleagues and superiors being intimidated and arrested by the police.

In an interview, Xaba said that me-

dia in South Africa is free “but [there] remains a push and pull relationship between the government and the media as we jealously guard against tampering with media freedom.”

She feels that black women are significantly under-represented in the South African media and that “commentary is still very much of a male voice.”

Xaba refers to herself as an accidental journalist because she had initially planned a career as a chartered ac-

countant. At the age of 17, she began her journalistic career by writing a letter to the editor of *The Sowetan* which was published.

She was later mentored by Dr Aggrey Klaaste.

Xaba has worked at various organisations, including as executive editor at *The Sowetan* and editor of *REAL*. She is also a Harvard journalism fellow and lectures in South Africa and internationally. She is also passionate about education.

She currently resides in Johannesburg, “I love the knowledge that I am in the heartbeat of the economic hub, fast-paced and adrenaline rushing,” said Xaba.

The broadcast producer

Bongi Magudulela is a director, producer, scriptwriter and editor who is currently working to set up a gospel TV channel.

The bulk of her career was spent at the SABC.

In an interview, Magudulela said she felt that “black women are still not represented in [the South African] media,” and that needed to change for the media to truly be free.

While working at *Ukhozi FM*, she was the only woman in management and noticed that black women in the industry at large were “few and far between”.

Press freedom means being able to tell stories as they happen, without fear of intimidation, said Magudulela. She said that the South African media landscape needs to transform both in the public and private sector.

One of the most memorable moments of her career was covering the world-changing event on 27 April 1994, “the first democratic elections in the country, from Umtata, Transkei.”

She felt the full potential of being young, black, female and free on that day, working alongside journalists from all over the world.

Magudulela’s career started at (then) *Transkei TV*.

She has gone on to produce content for the SABC on both TV and radio platforms, such as *Ukhozi FM* and SABC channels 1, 2 and 3.

Magudulela currently lives in Johannesburg.

Influential black female journalists



Nontsizi Mqgqwetho on the cover of *The Nation's Bounty* by Jeff Opland.
PHOTO: South African History Online, www.sahistory.org



Joyce Sikhakhane-Rankin pictured in the 1970's
PHOTO: www.nelsonmandelafoundation.org



Alyce Chavunduka, the first Black female TV news reporter in South Africa.
PHOTO: www.drum.co.za

1920s: Nontsizi Mqgqwetho

Victorious on two fronts: Mqgqwetho became an imbongi (praise poet) of the Xhosa, a position rarely held by women. Then she became one of the first black women to contribute her works, more than one-hundred poems and articles, to *Umtleli wa Bantu*, a Johannesburg-based newspaper, between 1920 and 1929, according to Jeff Opland in his book *The Nation's Bounty*. She was described as fearless and futuristic, a woman whose voice could not be stifled by her gender or the political climate of the day, by Sibusiso Tshabalala from *The Journalist*.

1960s: Joyce Sikhakhane Rankin

In 1963, Sikhakhane Rankin became the first black female journalist at *The World* newspaper, the same year the Rivonia Trial began. She wrote extensively about the apartheid government. Rankin used her relative freedom as a journalist to assist banned activists like Helen Joseph, Albertina Sisulu and others. She organised meetings and carried messages between them and even “[collected] money from the Anglican church to pass on to families of political prisoners,” said Rankin, writing in *The Road to Democracy: South Africans telling their stories, Volume 1*.

1990s: Alyce Chavunduka

In February of 1992, Zimbabwean-born Alyce Chavunduka made history when she became the first black female news anchor on SABC’s then TV1. “I wasn’t just black. I was also quite young,” Chavunduka once said in an interview. “Her consummate professionalism, intelligence and air of grace helped to change white perceptions of black people,” wrote Chris Barron in *The Sunday Times*. Chavunduka also hosted her own radio show on 94.7 *Highveld*. She remains a constant feature in the South African media.



2014
SABC bans DA’s Ayisafani advert as well as EFF election advertisement.



2016
Eight SABC journalists are charged internally and suspended for voicing their concerns about the SABC’s protest policy.



2016
Cabinet formally publishes a new draft of the Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill for public comment.



2017
After an ongoing inquiry into the SABC suggestions are made to dissolve the entire board.