

**S A B C – SANEF – UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO**

*Transcript of the conference on –*

**TRANSFORMATION OF THE MEDIA IN A SOCIETY IN TRANSITION**

**Held at Hilton Hotel, Sandton  
18 & 19 October 2005**

**VOLUME ONE: 18 OCTOBER 2005**

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CHAIRPERSON:

MR CECIL MSOMI  
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**MR MAZWAI:** Thank you very much, we are now starting in what is going to be a very historic conference / colloquium / forum, you can use any term. But I think that what is evident, this is history in the making. It is taking the whole process of democratising our country another octave higher. You'll forgive my stuttering a little and mispronouncing words. You can always take somebody out of the Transkei, but taking the Transkei out of him is going to be much more difficult.

Now, before calling on the Chairperson of the SABC to welcome us, I'd like to welcome our partners in this Conference. That is because it is a Conference jointly organised by the South African National Editors Forum, the University of Limpopo and the South African Broadcasting Corporation. We have pooled resources and decided that it is important that we have a conference of this nature, because a conference of this nature is long overdue. You cannot talk transformation without really putting in place specific indicators on what that transformation is. Obviously, I'm going to perhaps give some of these indicators when I talk more about the Conference, but at this stage I would like to call upon our Chairperson from the SABC Board and Chairman of the SABC to welcome us all. Thank you. Mr Funde.

**WELCOME  
Mr Eddie Funde,  
Chairperson: SABC Board**

Mr Chairman, Mr Thami Mazwai, Chairperson of the SANEF, Joe Thloloe, the Head of Media Studies of University of Limpopo, Prof Bhekimpilo Sibanda, Chairman of ICASA, Mr Paris Mashile, my colleagues of the SABC Board, the Group Chief Executive Officer of the SABC and his fellow executives, who I must recognise otherwise this conference will not be paid for. I am pleased to welcome you all to this seminal media and society conference which seeks to engage in a robust dialogue on the role of media in a society in transition.

We have, as the SABC, joined up with the South African National Editors Forum, SANEF, and the University of Limpopo to convene this Conference on the Transformation of the Media and to reflect honestly on the media's performance during the first decade of our democracy.

We have two days that certainly will provide us with the opportunity for the first time, as Mr Mazwai has said, to do some assessment of the state of our media, since the advent of democracy. In that sense, therefore, this exercise is ground-breaking. Just this past weekend SANEF concluded a conference for African editors in the print, broadcasting, electronic media

sectors to debate issues of media and democracy on the continent. That conference aimed to entrench media freedom as indispensable to the success of the African Union and the NEPAD initiative and to start building institutional capacity across the continent, aimed at promoting and advancing the cause of media freedom.

The SABC is challenged by Section 2 of the Broadcasting Act, whose object is to, in the public interest:

"Contribute to democracy, development of society, gender equality, national building and the provision of education and strengthening of the spiritual and moral fibre of society."

The SABC Board, in pursuance of this objective of the Act, set the following goal for the corporation:

"To ensure the SABC promotes democracy, non-racialism, nation building, empowerment, through innovative programming that is informative, entertaining and educative in all official languages.

Already the Constitution of the country requires the full recognition of all languages of our country. We are therefore, as the SABC, required by both the Constitution and the law to do things that are not required of all other media institutions. Nevertheless, we felt that in being part of this Conference, we felt that it is essential that we enjoin all our media owners and activists to work with us in achieving these noble objectives outlined above by our Parliament, which by its nature, represents the will of all the people of our country.

Like SANEF and the Limpopo University, we are committed, as contained in our corporate goals, to:

"Ensuring the SABC plays a meaningful role in the African renaissance and NEPAD."

We are also committed to capacity building in the industry. It is on this basis that the partnership for holding of this Conference was built. In the time and space that we have, we are hoping that new ideas, in line with these principles, will be charted here. We think the time is right for a serious national conversation on the state of our media. Other sectors, from land to finance, have already done some navel-gazing of their own and we, as the media, have been lagging behind.

The very first session of our deliberations will focus on issues of ideology, race, media, democracy and society, where we try to examine the role of the media in society. The media the world over finds itself grappling with these questions over issues of race, ideology and society. Many of us would have followed keenly, for example, the debates that raged over what was seen as the racial stereotyping of black people in the US media coverage of the storms that hit New Orleans recently. We observed how reports by some US news outlets were said to be portraying black people as looters of the aftermath of the Hurricane Katrina, while similar pillaging was seen to be depicted differently by other races. This same media showed people carrying away goods that were said to have been found and not looted.

No doubt we'll hear in the deliberations that are about to begin how ideology shaped this kind of reportage and how the issue of ideology is fundamental to racism. It is fundamental because stereotyping in the media in terms of race leads to the creation of certain ideas about particular groups of people.

At its basest level, race has to do with external appearances, but indeed, we have to go beyond that to interrogate its relationship to past and prevailing economic structuring. That is in fact fundamental to ideological thinking and behaviour. But do we understand what these ideological formations are? Have we examined, for instance, the impact of the collapse, say, of the socialist

states in many countries around the world and in this situation, do we understand why, in a market economy that is deficient, the role that the state should play, which is why we are where we are, as a country, in order to ensure that the poor, who then become victims, are not left to their own devices.

We are discussing the interventions that can be made into our market economy, such as we saw in the strategic intervention in the economy by the state through the New Deal in countries like the USA, to combat the poverty that resulted from the Great Depression. But is there an African ideology? These ideological debates are not taking place. Invariably, in our case, the whole issue of how far the state is allowed to intervene in an economy that is plagued by high levels of unemployment, is not debated rigorously enough. We have to ask ourselves if the media should be putting these issues at the top of its priority list or not.

The issue of race, which is part of our colonial legacy, which in our country was further systematically entrenched by apartheid, a question which I daresay we should be trying to answer during this exercise, is how far we have come in dealing with these issues. Does democracy only apply to the political sphere? To what extent should, in the eyes and ears of our media, should issues of democracy apply also to issues of ownership of land, of the productive means of the economy? Is democracy only about the freedom of speech? The issue of the legacies of our past is indeed important and is, to a large extent, a factor of all of these things.

To what extent are we prepared to explore this, without being accused of reviving the past? Is the issue of black economic empowerment an issue of reverse racism or is it in fact an attempt at normalising our situation by democratising the economy? We need to be asking serious questions of the extent to which we are involved in the different levels of the social strata. How strong are civil society structures in participating in their own development and whether we are truly getting to the root cause of what the real issue of crimes are and what role civil society is playing in its own development, and in combating crime and criminals within its midst; like the vigilante activities. Do these complicate or resolve the issue?

We shall interrogate during the course of this exercise the tenuous relationship between the media and various stakeholders. Our purpose can be served by examining to what extent aspirations of black people, women or people living with disabilities are represented in the media. We are getting ready to enter a campaign as a country in which we observe a period of activism over 16 days against violence on women and children. As we get into the run up to this campaign and through its duration, the media will find a number of angles in publicising it and, as the national public broadcaster, we will play our part in championing the fight against violence on women and children.

We must answer honestly, though, the question of whether we are really tracing the roots of where the violence is coming from or whether it is a case of the media merely highlighting the crimes as and when they occur. We have not sat back on the face of these problems, but there is a whole movement to find ways of repairing the moral fibre of our society, yet we read about it only when someone has made a speech in a conference.

We witnessed a few years ago how frustration is what was seen, as racial stereotyping by our own media reached boiling point. We saw how claims by the Association of Black Accountants of South Africa, ABASA, and the Black Lawyers Association, that some quarters of the media were on a crusade to portray black failure, which culminated in the South African Human Rights Commission instituting a formal probe into issues of race in the media.

In a paper delivered in Namibia, following that exercise by the South African Human Rights Commission, an academic and Head of the Department of Journalism and Media Studies of Rhodes University, Prof Guy Berger, who is here and who's taking part in these discussions here today, made the following remarks:

"As a watchdog of all human rights in South Africa, the dilemma for Human Rights Commission was whether the right to freedom of expression in South Africa compromises the constitutional right to dignity.

Naturally, dignity includes the right to be free of racist portrayals in the media. So the matter of the HRC is whether South Africa should curb free expression. If so, how much and, finally, how? Things are a little bit more complicated. In fact, South Africans might be right to say whatever they want is already limited by their country's Constitution and several laws. In South Africa it is illegal to express racism that causes harm. Because it is hard to imagine any hate speech that is not hurtful, essentially all racism is outlawed in the Republic.

What becomes complex though is how to pinpoint racism in the less crass guises and further, whether the laws should be tightened to deal with such subtle racism or whether strategies like education would be more effective. There is also the matter of separating out cases on racism as related to something where it does not exist. In other words, cases where racism is an all too easy, even automatic way of explaining things, even though in the particular cases under focus it is irrelevant."

We undertake this journey at a time when the media is in the grip of a story of racial tensions in which the main protagonists are members of the Cape High Court. I'm suggesting that the South African media has a responsibility to examine the manner in which it treats issues of this nature. Should the media give prominence to stories of this nature between leading lights of our society, such as the high court judges? I daresay the media must look at ways in which it plays a role in accelerating racial harmony in our country.

We will all of us at this Conference be faced with some tough questions as to how far the media has moved since these complex issues arose. This Conference is about the role that the media has to play in facing up to fighting this inequality, in building the nation and the culture of human rights. We undertake this exercise as a partnership with SANEF and the University of Limpopo against the background of the SABC's renewed commitment to public broadcasting, espoused in our 14 Corporate Goals developed by the SABC Board within the first quarter of 2004 that now drive our corporate strategy and operations. These goals are available on our website and I've pointed to some of them.

This review will therefore be justified to address the issues, what should be done to guarantee press freedom in our country, coinciding as it does with the 28th anniversary of the banning of the South African newspapers and journalists on the 19th of October, 1977. It is an appropriate date to reflect on how the media has used the space that was opened up by the results of the struggles of the past.

We must create at this Conference the space to examine closely if it is fair to talk about a patriotic press. We sport ourselves as operating under a libertarian press in which we see our jobs as reporting things merely as we see them. No doubt, debates must arise on whether or not there is a higher form of media in the form of social responsibility of the media. It will be the task of this Conference to deliberate rigorously about the relevance of this social responsibility of the media to the times that our people live in.

The discussions and participants at this Conference represent a critical cross-section of the African intelligentsia, people in the forefront of the media, be they publishers, editors, journalists and media academics; from here and abroad, representatives of civil society and government. I welcome you all. I wish to mention by name, though, our eminent visitors from the continent, Prof Kwame Karikari and Dr Francis Nyamnjoh.

Prof Karikari is a professor in the School of Communication Studies at the University of Ghana. He's a working journalist and the Founder and Executive Director of the Media Foundation for

West Africa.

Dr Nyamnjoh is a sociologist and specialist in Mass Communication studies. He used to head up the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Buea in Cameroon and is now Senior Lecturer in the Department of Sociology at the University of Botswana in Gaborone.

Both Prof Karikari and Dr Nyamnjoh have written extensively, having published academic papers, journalist articles and recently, Dr Nyamnjoh's book was launched at Highway Africa in Grahamstown.

We believe that this important Conference will not be a mere gathering for networking, but that the South African media and society will critically look at how our society benefits from those wielding the mighty pen. With the enthusiasm we see in the response of the participants, we are certain that it will be a success.

I thank you.

**MR MAZWAI:** Thank you, Cde Chairperson.

### **CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES**

**Mr Thami Mazwai,  
Board Member, SABC**

I will briefly outline the parameters for this Conference and as soon as I finish, then I'm going to ask Mr Cecil Msomi, who is the Chairperson of the News Subcommittee of the SABC, to come to the podium and take over.

I think one of the first outcomes of this Conference is that we are all going to agree that it's going to be an annual affair, we are going to have media and society interrogating each other on an annual basis. The reason for this is that we cannot talk about democracy without ensuring that the press freedom is enshrined. Without press freedom there can be no democracy and without an independent media, there can be no press freedom.

What normally gets at issue, which are some of the things that are going to come out here, I'm just bringing out these as teasers, is the degree of independence in the media. Some will argue that it's too much, some will argue that it's not enough. These are some of the issues that we are going to be interrogating.

Secondly, we also have to understand that the media, as an institution, is affected by the environment. And by the environment, I'm referring to the political, economic, social dynamics that you find in our country that the Chairperson has referred to quite elaborately. And that environment is both internal and external. It's internal to the media itself and there are also external elements in this environment, and all these impact on the media.

We are also aware that the media is very influential in influencing public opinion, there's no doubt about it, it is the most influential institution in shaping the minds of people. Because of this, there is an array of forces that are always exerting pressure on the media and these forces will be big business, they will be sportspeople, they will be government or elements in government, elements in business, they'll be ordinary members of society, they will be trade unions. Nearly everybody in society has got a view on how the media should operate and is putting his own pressures on the media because he wants his perspective to be seen as public opinion, as what the people believe in.

So these forces will always be on the media, whether we like it or not. The question is, to what extent is the media able to withstand these forces. These are issues that we have to grapple with because media, as an institution, is an element of society, it does not operate outside

society, it is part and parcel of society, the same way that the judiciary is part of society. The current controversy bedeviling the judiciary is an indication of the disease that we, as the media, should avoid; that of believing that you are above society.

When other organisations were busy accepting that they played a role during the apartheid era, the judiciary refused to even come and apologise, they said we were never part of that, when all of us knew. When there was transformation, the judiciary believed that by co-opting a few black faces, bring in judges, that was transformation. Bringing in black faces is not transformation, it's not. Transformation is much deeper. Because the judiciary did not go that deep and they thought papering over the cracks would solve everything, they are today embroiled in controversy after controversy. And until they address the cultural issues that affect them, as the judiciary, only then will they be able to continue.

The same challenge faces the media. But fortunately we have come here today to address those cultural dynamics. That's why we are here, to say, when we talk of transformation are we talking of having black editors or are we talking of having a media that is part of our society in all respects? These are the challenges that we have got to grapple with.

In discussions with a good friend of mine, Joe Thlooe, I mean, over the ages that Joe and I have been together, we have sometimes debated on some of these issues. And we have said that during the apartheid era, the media was a specific model. Now this is my view. There was a specific model. That model resulted in many journalists saying "I am black before I am a journalist", and we got into the liberation struggle, boots and all. And you find a situation in which, by and large, the media in South Africa, the bulk of it, said we have got to destroy apartheid and they took a specific position. You know, the stories that came were always stories that were intended to keep government on its toes.

Then with our democratic elections, the question is, does that model still apply, the model of keeping government on its toes? I don't have a view on that, but I expect people here to contribute so that all of us can express our views, as to say does this model still apply? We recall that as soon as we had our elections, after our elections, it was one of the government leaders who said, "this model no longer applies", and there was an outcry from society, from a lot of people, ostensibly mostly the opposition, that said "it still applies". We, as society today, are going to interrogate that. We are going to ask ourselves: Is this an appropriate model? if it's not an appropriate model, what model should we have for the media? What elements should we take, what indicators are we going to have to define our role, as the media?

At the weekend there was a ground-breaking conference of African editors who came from various countries, to come and define the whole question of press freedom in a changing African continent. Those editors are going to go to their countries and discuss press freedom in a change environment, because some of them have never had press freedom, it's now something new and we are having that debate today.

So, in short, Chairperson, ladies and gentlemen, we are here to interrogate and define the media in a transforming society. There are a lot of expectations from society about what the media ought to be doing, what it should do. There have been a lot of responses from journalists, from the media itself, which said this is what our role is. Unfortunately, these expectations and the responses, people were talking past each other. We saw just a few weeks ago there was an article that criticised Minister Essop Pahad and then Minister Essop Pahad responded to that article.

These are the issues that we should be dealing with today, to say: What is our understanding of the role that the media should play in a transforming society like ours? Indeed, our country has transformed. Nobody would believe that sitting in his office in 1993, in the year 2005, just 11 years later, we'd be addressing the issues that we are addressing today, not only in the media but in the judiciary, in health, in many other activities, social activities. If anybody had said this is

what would be happening, we would have said you are lying, we are still going to struggle a long time before we get the liberation that we want. But it has happened, we are now here today.

With those few words, I believe that this is a momentous occasion for all of us, we are here to describe the bonds between the media and society. To entrench the fact that there can be no democracy without press freedom and there can be no press freedom without an independent media. We are here to entrench that. But over and above that, we are saying that the media is part of society, what should its relations be with society?

Thank you very much.

#### **SESSION ONE:**

### **IDEOLOGY, RACE, MEDIA, DEMOCRACY, RACE AND SOCIETY: WHAT ROLE FOR THE MEDIA IN SOCIETY**

**CHAIRPERSON:** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, fellow media practitioners. All protocol observed, that's the easy way out.

It is indeed an honour for me to be chairing this first session of this very important meeting. The Chairperson of the SABC, Mr Eddie Funde, described it as historic and Mr Thami Mazwai described it as seminal. I think indeed it is ground-breaking and you know when you break the ground what happens to whatever surrounds the area you've broken. That is why then I'm very proud to be part of this session because I know that the people who are here present will be able not only to answer the questions that are being posed here, but will go out there and put them into practice, as practising media practitioners.

Bra' Thami said this is a conference to interrogate the role of the media in society. Indeed, there are several questions that are being raised, but the subject matter of this first session is ideology, race, media, democracy, race and society: what role for the media in society. And in the panel of distinguished media practitioners here present on this floor here, I think it's professor, Prof Kwame Karikari, Joe Thloloe, Prof Bhekimpilo Sibanda. These distinguished media practitioners will attempt to shed some light on the subject.

Thereafter, I will be calling upon Prof Guy Berger, Lizeka Mda and Jody Kollapen, after they've finished delivering their subject matter, to join us to interrogate further the subject.

I now have the honour to give the floor to the first speaker, Prof Karikari.

#### **PROF KWAME KARIKARI School of Communication Studies, University of Ghana**

The Chairman of the SABC Board, members of the SABC Board, the Chief Executive of the SABC, the organisers, my colleagues, Prof Guy Berger, Prof Tawana Kupe - I hope Tawana is here, I haven't seen him for a long time - it's a great honour to be invited to be a part of this extremely important conference. It's even more important precisely because it is being initiated and being hosted by the SABC. I think, if I'm not wrong, since August, when we went to Rhodes University for another important meeting on the media, there have been others, and in recent years there has been a series of these meetings on media issues in South Africa, which indicate that the new South Africa is taking the issue of the media and the issue of communication and the issue of exchange of ideas, exchange of information and public information and education seriously.

My participation here, I would just like to - not present a theoretical thesis on this very complex topic of the theme of this session, I'll try to jump here and there to touch on so many different experiences and observations concerning the media, but still within the framework of what the

media ought to be doing in our societies that seem to be in transition in some of our countries or in some parts of our continent; the transition seems to be forever.

Mr Chairman, I don't know how long I'm supposed to speak. 30 minutes? Okay I'll try to speak less than that. As I said, I will ramble a bit, just because I don't live in South Africa so I do not know the critical issues of our immediate character, so it would be presumptuous to try and address specific South African questions. I will just touch on different issues and observations around the continent and hope that they make sense and contribute sensibly to the discussions here.

On a day to day experience, a common feature of our continent is that all our communities appear to be caught up in a variety of transitions and we seem to be still reeling from the effects of the enormous forces that have shaped our destiny in the past so many centuries. In recent decades, we have been beneficiaries of traumatic violent upheavals that have not only killed and maimed, but have uprooted and displaced whole communities, regions and territories.

We have witnessed the sweeping away of institutions nurtured and established by our forebears over the centuries. And one of the most disturbing experiences in these traumatic experiences in the past few decades is the specific targeting of women for killing in many of the so-called civil wars. Now it would be improper on my part, however, to suggest that it has all been lamentation on this continent; no, I don't believe that. We have had occasion to celebrate the good harvest of our people's own blood, sweat and tears. The fall of apartheid is a joy that cannot be dimmed in any way and it signals to us also to count our blessings all the time, however minor or major they may appear.

Now, in all of this, two key processes of political transition have preoccupied our countries in the past nearly two decades, that is apart from the transition from apartheid to a democratic, multiracial South Africa based on equality. In the first instance, there has been a remarkable populous striving to end authoritarian systems of government and build liberal democratic systems. Chequered and inconclusive as the results so far present, some movement forward has been made to build on. More importantly, there are a number of countries that we can point to as examples of liberal democratic states that are in the processes of consolidating the institutional structures and the culture of democracy.

In the second instance, we have seen in the past three or so years, the end or reversals in some of the more ghastly violent conflicts on our continent. Today the brutalities in Darfur remain the only spot where the guns continue to blast. Though warlordism is far from over in Somalia, at least full scale war has been absent for a few years now. That situation of no peace, no war also characterises Cote d' Ivoire today. Indeed, what is most remarkable in all this is that the initiatives to end these fratricidal mayhem have been led by the African Union or its sub-regional affiliates such as the ECOWAS, SADC and so on, as well as by the efforts of individual governments, notably the governments of South Africa, Nigeria and a few others.

It is important to state also that this expression of solidarity and peacemaking at a pan-African scale is not new but rather a continuation of a tradition since and indeed, before the Organisation for African Unity or any of the sub-regional structures was founded in 1963 and later, respectively. These important instances of progress notwithstanding, the political conditions that define the states and governance are generally in complex processes of painful, tedious and protracted transition.

Additionally, the socio-economic factors and conditions of our societies present much more complex and intractable challenges that if conditions, socio-economic conditions, remain on a large scale, impervious to change, which are usually premised on externally driven policies, tend to aggravate the elements that frustrate peace-building and democratisation. Namely, that for as long as poverty continues to suffocate our communities, there will always be a basis for violence and aggravation of the relationships that we have.

In the midst of this political complexity, Africa, except the Arab North, has seen phenomenal transformation of the media landscape in less than two decades. The multiplication of newspapers and radio stations in cities and rural districts provide a strong basis for strengthening and expanding free speech and free expression that should support a healthy democratic culture and promote also a sustained progress in culture expression.

Indeed we can assert with certitude that this phenomenal outburst of many voices has aided peace and a democratic strivance very well. It is on record that in those countries where the media enjoy the most freedom, you also find more open and more stable liberal democratic governance systems. Examples are Benin, Cape Verde, Ghana, Mali and Senegal in West Africa. Kenya and Tanzania in the East, Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia in Southern Africa.

Press freedom may not be the determining condition for democratic governance but those countries in Africa show the greatest example of political stability and more open democratic governance where the media also enjoys the least restrictions, legally and politically cannot be a sheer coincidence. It is also remarkable to note that those countries that have experienced some of the most gruesome and destructive civil wars have also experienced phenomenal development of radio pluralism. In the midst of war, against the arson, murder and constant intimidation by warlords, radio has grown with unstoppable speed and expansion in Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia, for example.

Most importantly and contrary to the Rwandan aberration where radio was made a megaphone for mass murder, in these countries, radio has become a source of useful information, an outlet for communal expression and solidarity and a mouthpiece for peace. In other words, apart from the nasty experience of Rwanda, in all of these other places where there has been conflict, radio has been used for more positive purposes and has not at all been part of the conflicts.

Whereas this media revolution is primarily an African initiative, there is a global context that merits clarification. The boom in broadcast pluralism, particularly has been facilitated by technological innovation that make it impossible and nonsensical for states to perpetrate their monopoly. The same technological transformation supported by the impact also and imperatives of the new liberal economic drive on a global scale has meant the rapid and near overwhelming expansion of global media oligopoly. This means that Africa's media pluralism has taken place in the shadow of the global behemoths. In other words, we are many tiny voices which is good for several reasons, but hardly do we have big voices in the global airwaves.

Further, whereas indeed we do now have outlets for local news, events and other forms of expression, we have hardly made any progress in developing African sources of reporting and recording global events for African audiences. In fact, the dependency on non-African sources for news and information on other African countries and on the external world appears to have grown in this same period.

In most countries, both the state-owned public broadcasters and a host of small private stations compete to rebroadcast or transmit news and other programmes from the international media networks, notably the BBC, the VOA, RFI, the Tatuvela, and so on.

Multiplication of media sources, channels and ownership is inevitable and unstoppable in this world of rapidly advancing technology. It severely limits the possibilities of controlling access or imposing uniformity of media access and therefore also media content. We all do know that this also creates vast possibilities for meeting the information and cultural needs and demands of vastly different local communities or for satisfying the particular interests of groups in our multi-ethnic, multiracial and multicultural societies. At the same time, the potential of pluralism heightens the competition for relevance. Of course, the potential for heightening competition for the frivolous and diversionary is also with us.

What is of even more significance for our discussion is that the reality of pluralism compels us to define clearly and precisely the particular kind of media we focus our discussions on. For it is not easy or desirable to prescribe the same objectives for all media in a pluralistic condition beyond the basic demands of technical professional requirements.

That is not to say that there are no universal principles that are applicable to all media in the state of pluralism. Unless media has set up strictly for narrow sectarian and specifically partisan self-serving purposes, they ought to be bound by some principles and standards of performance that are universally valid and applicable.

More than half a century ago, that is in 1947, in the United States a Commission on the Freedom of the Press convened by Henry Loos, the publisher of Time magazine and checked by the Chancellor of the Chicago University, Robert Hutchins, presented one of the most lucid summaries of the social responsibilities of the mass media in a democracy. Of course, there are many such expressions, but I just want to put a little paragraph from the Hutchins Commission Report. He was talking about America in 1947:

"Today, our society needs, first, a truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning; second, a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism; third, a means of projecting the opinions and attitudes of the groups in the society to one another; fourth, a method of presenting and clarifying the goals and values of the society; and, fifth, a way of reaching every member of the society by the currents of information, thought, and feeling which the press supplies."

This quotation from the Hutchins Report has many assumptions, one of them being that the society that one talks about must have certain values, must have certain core values that that society has as a consensus by all of its members if they are going to live in peace, in democracy and in progress.

Now, this seems to me to be a set of objectives that all media may be expected to try to meet, regardless of their ownership character unless they have declared themselves as opposition to the very democratic conditions that ensure and protect their existence. Even more so, this seems to me to be most appropriate for public service systems to be founded on and the truth is that they are included in the canons that organisations such as the SABC are bound by. Further, they must be the object of all processes of media transformation in societies in transition to democratic governance and social organisation.

The legal regulatory and structural reforms of media ought to aim at enhancing the media's capacity and active yearning to serve these social responsibilities. But what concretely do these objectives consist in as the media in our transitional societies operate from day to day? That is that these sets of principles must be translatable locally in very concrete terms because what dictates the values from societies to societies are different. What are the demands in the societies that the media must meet or respond to or provide directions about?

In other words, I'm saying that the media must respond to certain demands and needs in society and it must also provide certain directions about these needs and demands. In other words, what do our societies in transition demand from the media? Better still, what do the societies want for themselves that therefore they require the media to assist in attaining?

Media functions are conditioned and determined by the historical demands of the times they find themselves in. These objectives from the Hutchins Report are fulfilled according to the practical historical demands of the society. The relevance of media is therefore measured by how media respond to the needs and demands of the times they find themselves in. The needs and demands of the times are not usually the same for all the social forces that may find themselves confronting particular historical conditions. The media, therefore, are also always compelled to

make clear choices according to the social objects at stake.

Ultimately, however, the demands on the media have tended always to be to seek social justice, to be on the side of progress, for the rights of the weak, for those values that propel humanity forward into peace and improved social conditions of life, equality and greater enlightenment.

So, what are the questions, needs and demands of our societies that our media must address? And what are the challenges the media must confront in order to address these questions in the best interest of our societies?

For our discussion, as I've said, we choose to focus on the public service media, because they are set up with a mandate to directly respond to the needs of the public. First of all, let us draw attention to a number of constraints that hinder the capacity of most of the public service media in our countries to perform. In the first instance, the legal framework most operate on, continue to maintain strict government controls. A public service system without an editorial independence cannot fulfil the objectives of representing fairly, all sections of society, of providing reliable useful information and of serving as a forum for healthy exchange of ideas.

Most of the state-owned public services nowadays are so starved of resources that they are incapable of performing adequately the basic duties of public information. Both this problem of resources and a drive to be commercial, appear to have induced many into a poor vision of their future or their rules or a confusion of their objectives. A common challenge for the public service media continues to be the question of independence. There are two sources of this challenge at least.

The first is the pressure and propensity of the governments to interfere or even to dictate the editorial direction of the public service media. It should be stated that the intensity of this government pressure may vary drastically, or more or less, from country to country. In countries with greater levels of press freedom, this tendency appears to be quite minimal or not there at all, essentially. The other source of the difficulty is the subjective partisan tendencies of the men and women who manage these public service media.

At one level, there are those who have not been able to assert their independence even when the legal and political conditions demand so, and protect them. In this case, it is usually a case of people who have not liberated themselves from the old shackles of government control.

At another level, there are also those who, by free choice, feel committed to the ideals and objectives of the political and social agenda of the new political dispensation and therefore act in ways that tend in the end, to weaken their independence vis-à-vis the government or even political party in charge.

For this last example of people placed in charge of the public service media, particularly following the exit of an undemocratic regime, there are sometimes real dilemmas that are not simply a desire to be partisan or to sacrifice independence. As so often happens, every new political system confronts real threats to its existence from elements of the old regime. The test of the independence of the decision-makers of the public service system in these circumstances is how to manage, quite often, the subtle or the complex confusion between a defence of the principles of the new order or the political state or institution to which one might legitimately have sympathies for.

Obviously, the business of the public service is independence from government and all forces in society. It has neither friend nor foe, except the promotion and defence of the people's rights and interests and the values and ideals of the democratic system the society desires to attain. All said and done, societies in transition in Africa have democratic governance as their political objective in which to manage peaceably the complex relationships and interests of our multi-ethnic, multiracial societies.

Now, we may conclude by quickly running through some three or four challenges for the media in our transitional processes. The first concerns the media and the challenge of poverty. The second is about the media, the promotion and protection of human rights and democracy. The third has to do with the media and the expansion of freedom of expression. And lastly, the media and the assertion and the elevation of the dignity of the African personality. I have a few minutes so I will just quickly run through this.

The first point is simply a question of the media addressing the issue of poverty. Now, poverty in Africa is so suffocating, indeed indescribably subversive that nowadays, in the global media today, Africa is nearly now a synonym for poverty. But we do know that it's not a media that works or fashions the policies to fight poverty, but it is the media's role, it is the media's responsibility to pursue some courses that could contribute to government's pursuing policies and actions that help to end poverty. One of them is a relentless mission by the media to expose and condemn corruption. The other is to create a forum for discussions, rigorous discussions of policy directions so that the right options are given us. And of course, a rigorous investigative skill or activity to expose businesses and organisations that work in the economic realm and enhance poverty.

The defence, promotion and protection of human rights ought to be one of the cardinal objectives of all media in Africa. This must be self evident; self evident not only because human rights are universal principles but for the simple reason that as a people, as a race of people, our very history is one of unmitigated humiliation and abuse of our rights. There is not any form of kind of violation our people have not experienced. There's not an abuse our women have not faced. There's not a threat to life our children have not faced, and there is not an attack to dehumanise that our men have not suffered. It is even more an imperative when we consider that rulers from our own communities have often perpetuated the trampling on our rights. The defence of human rights, I will submit, perhaps must come before every other duty of the media because it concerns our very survival as a people.

Now, let me just address the last point, that is media's role in asserting our dignity as a people. It seems to me that one of the critical complex challenges that face the media in Africa is how to confront the age-old problem of our dignity as a people. That is, what can or must the media do to help Africans recover our self image as a people with respect and dignity. We do not need to shout out too loudly that practically all the other races of human beings on earth have at one time or another or perhaps even today, consider or have considered themselves more superior to the African. All skin colours have looked down on and many still look down on the black skin. This cultural and ideological construct has become the burden of the African. Obviously there has been tremendous progress in the world today, only the most grossly backward of people would openly and publicly express such sentiments.

The burden now is how Africans themselves exorcise from our own being, this ideological spirit that manifests in so many debilitating forms, and I will say that this also one of the elements that hold us down from developing as other people. So what can or must the media do to assist Africans to assert their belief in themselves as capable of building their lives themselves and to the highest level possible by humanity. Dignity is not an abstract reality at all, it is that untrammelled realisation of a people's cultural worth and it is realisable when a people fully enjoy their human rights and have full control of their freedom of expression.

It is impossible to live a life of dignity without a right and the opportunity for freedom of expression in all of its manifestations. The specific place of the media in this context involves principally the creation and representation of images and symbols to create, produce, reproduce and represent an image of the African that recovers the downgraded image and perception, is the essence of this challenge to the media. It is a practical, though ideological question.

All of Africa today, for example, television is no more a medium for the elite, it is the most

important medium in this particular context. But as we noted earlier, the opening up of the media landscape also means a dwarfing of the African media by the global media oligopolies whose primary functions and mandate are to project other images. It is rare, of course, sometimes just subtle nowadays to find images that obviously and deliberately set out to demean the African image on these channels. That is not the point. The point really is, how can we fill the screen, the airwaves and the pages with an African image created and produced by Africans for Africans.

The SABC has announced recently that it was going to introduce a French language channel. Indeed, we should hope that it will have one day a Hausa, Kiswahili, Wolof, Fulani, and other such channels, but whose image will that be. And the images that are on the screen are not only on news, it comes in all manner of forms, including advertising and all other kinds of forms that we put into our media.

Obviously, this gigantic question demands more than the media's particular role. Indeed we must not complain if we do not work to create and present to ourselves our own image. The presence of other people's images is not anymore a conspiracy against us, it is the natural order of things, so to say. To create and help our image the way we want it, it must be produced. It requires that our writers write, our sculptures carve, our dramatists recreate our realities, our filmmakers produce. It requires that our media utilise the creative and intellectual works that build this image in an active promoting way.

To have our image as everybody else does in their media and in their literature, we must project our history, its glories and bitterest lessons; everybody does it. The demands on the media cannot be sustained without comparable demands for accelerated development in education, in publishing and in the performing and fine arts. That is the responsibility of governments, the business communities and other sections of society.

But what do you find in Africa today? In many countries, levels of literacy are even going down. The media's role is to create conditions and facilities to be ready and supportive outlets for the creative and intellectual productions in the society. But the media must consciously develop the mandate, policy and responsibility to support the recovery of the new image for the African.

Thank you very much.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Prof Karikari, in the interests of time I will not be in a position to summarise what challenges the Prof has raised, but we will be able to do so later on. The floor now is for Joe Thloloe, he's our next distinguished speaker.

**MR JOE THLOLOE**  
**Chairperson, SANEF**

I don't know about this "distinguished".

Mr Chairman, distinguished guests, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen; I was quite delighted when I found out I was being sandwiched by two very, imminent academics, because I thought I could leave the difficult task of tackling the concepts, ideology, democracy, race, society, etc, I would leave that to them. Analysis, classification and abstraction belong to the academics and I have, in some instances, a fear of heights.

For now, I'll just talk as an ordinary practitioner, media practitioner, about what I see as a role of media in South African society. I will not even attempt to look at just trying to abstract it to the role media in society; that again is going to heights that I am scared of.

Just to remind you that this conference comes when we celebrate our National Media Freedom Day, October 19th. We remember the day, 28 years ago, when 17 black consciousness organisations and 3 publications were banned and there was an attempt to shut them up

completely. This is a day when we remind ourselves never again will it happen in our society; never again. But just to mention that October 19, 1977 gave us one interesting insight. It showed us that the media are very closely linked to the people they serve. They didn't ban the media and leave the people's organisations, neither did they ban the people's organisations and leave the media. The two are closely inter-linked. I'll come back to this theme.

Let's talk about today's South Africa. The other day I was looking over the shoulder of a friend of mine while she was preparing a report for her bosses and it was just after the AMPS, the All Media Products Survey, the figures had been released, and as I was reading the report, I was shocked. These are things we see daily as we walk around the townships, we see people holding up banners saying, "no food, no work", whatever, we see them daily. But it comes as such a shock when you see the figures put down on paper; this report, 11 years after the birth of our democracy. It told me that ten million South Africans over the age of 16 are unemployed; ten million unemployed, and that nine million of these are indigenous Africans. It painted the old picture of the pyramids with the affluent, possibly some of us here, right at the top, at the pinnacle but with the bulk at the bottom, forming a very huge base.

There's a sprinkling of us blacks at the top; we, who can sit at conferences like these and speak very eloquent English. But this report also told me that the lowest category LSM wants, people whose households earn less than R890, these are almost all; the figure is 99.4%. These are indigenous Africans. Only 17 000 of these are "coloured", 17 000. And there were, according to this report, no Indians and no whites at this base. The same report told me that 21 million of us have to live in households where there is less than R4 000 a month. And this picture was being painted while they were saying, in the same MC Report, that there's been a shift upwards in almost all categories, but that's the picture that it gave as of the beginning of this year.

Now that's the one side of today's South Africa. But again, I should remind you that in 1996 December, South Africans defined their mission, their vision in a constitution that was drafted after extensive consultation. I think Prof spoke about a national consensus. In fact, the explanatory memorandum that goes along with this Constitution says:

"The process of drafting the Constitution involved many South Africans in the largest public participation programme ever carried out in South Africa. After nearly two years of intensive consultations, political parties represented in the Constitutional Assembly negotiated the formulations contained in the text, which is an integration of ideas from ordinary citizens, civil society and political parties represented in and outside of the Constitutional Assembly."

Now, there can't be any better consensus than that. The Preamble of the Constitution spells out South Africa's vision, which is:

1. To heal the divisions of the past, and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights.
2. Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people, and every citizen is equally protected by law.
3. Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person.
4. Build a united and democratic South Africa, able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations."

Very clear. I've always said to my friends, to people who are interested in such matters that if you read the South African Constitution, it is so profound and yet we just throw it around as if it has no meaning.

Now I read the M's figures against the backdrop of this vision and what I see is that South Africa's long walk to freedom still lies ahead of us. Having said this, I should also mention that the media are off their societies and in their societies. We suffer from the same ills as the rest of society, even when we try to patch ourselves, I think Thami was talking about that, we try to patch ourselves above society. We have to grapple with the divisions of the past; we have to lay the foundations for democracy and openness in our industries. And we have to improve the quality of life of our own workers.

And just as the rest of society, we suffer from the legacy of the education policies of the apartheid regime. We struggle to get skilled people into the industry. We are part of the chorus that moans all the time about the quality of graduates from tertiary institutions; graduates who cannot deal with complexity, who cannot disentangle fact from fiction in their stories, who cannot bring understanding through their stories. But in spite of this, society goes on to complicate the lives of the media.

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:

"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. This right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference, and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media, and regardless of frontiers."

And the South African Constitution that I quoted earlier says:

"Everyone has a right to freedom of expression, which includes freedom of the press and other media; freedom to receive or impart information or ideas; freedom of artistic creativity, academic freedom; and freedom of scientific research."

In other words, society has reserved a special place for the media, for artists, academics and scientists. But our special rights are embedded in the right of every member of our society to freedom of expression. And that's why Jimmy Kruger, who was Minister of Justice in 1977, didn't just ban the newspapers or just the people's organisations, he tried to shut both up. What we, as the media should be asking ourselves is, why did society single us out?

Why were we or why were the manufacturers of shoe laces, for example, why were they not accorded this honour? But then the question is, do we deserve this special place, and does our performance live up to this special place? At its launch this past weekend, the African Editors Forum, repeated what journalists have always maintained, that public and media scrutiny of the exercise of political and economic power is essential for the promotion of democracy and human rights. We've taken on ourselves the job of being the watchdogs of society, of course for a profit. But I still insist that media in South Africa are part of South African society and are therefore obliged to strive for the goals spelt out in the Preamble in the Constitution.

We also have three other responsibilities. One, we need to hold up the vision in the Constitution as a reminder to South Africans of their commitments. We need to hold those in power, we need to hold them accountable for turning this dream into reality. And we need to tell the daily story of the bumpy journey to this new world. We'll be judged on how well, collectively, we meet these responsibilities. Each print or online publication, television or radio channel will have its own recipe, more or less information, more or less education, I'm quoting the old Irishian formulation, but these different menus will provide for diversity.

But one thing I should mention very emphatically is that as far as I'm concerned, at this stage in our history, there's no place for those who are driven by greed to pander to the lowest case. I think Prof spoke about the frivolous, the diversionary, I should also add the bizarre. I'm not asking for our legislators to clamp down on this. That in fact would go against the grain of freedom of expression. But it's the market that's going to route these out. I believe we have to fix this plane while it's flying, while it's in the air.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you very much, bra'Joe. Now you know why I said in my introduction, "a distinguished academician and a media practitioner". I'm not sure whether he'll still query that.

The opportunity now is for Prof Bhekimpilo Sibanda. The floor is yours, sir.

**PROF BHEKIMPILO SIBANDA**  
**Head of Media Studies, University of Limpopo**

May I call upon my good Samaritans, the two gentlemen and the ladies to assist? Thank you very much.

May I thank very much the initiative and Corporation of SABC, University of Limpopo, and the South African Editors Forum. The support by the Executives is highly appreciated. The Chairman of the SABC, Mr Eddie Funde, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Limpopo, Prof NM Mokgalong, the Chairperson of the South African Editor's Forum, Joe Thloloe. My Chairperson has given me just 15 to 20 minutes, which is what I like very much because I usually prepare very little. I was with bad company last night, and we talked a lot and I couldn't prepare much. But may I thank you all for coming and all for listening.

I'm going to summarise my talk and I'm sure it will be available through perhaps Pumelele or somebody. Right now I'm just going to focus on issues which my colleagues have not raised. And these are very critical issues which I think and feel should be spoken from the heart. Ten years in any country's development, 10 years, 11 years in any country's freedom democracy is even less than a drop in the ocean. We are reminded and jerked into attention by the events in [Cote d'Ivoire](#). Many of you will remember through our beloved mother, Miriam Makheba, that by the time she moved out of the US, she went to Abidjan and lived there. Many of us saw the very beautiful pictures of Abidjan through the songs of Mama Miriam Makheba.

It was one of the most peaceful countries in Africa. For almost 40 years we never heard anything. All the NGOs were moving there, it was a tranquil place. And all of a sudden, two years ago, the bubble of tribalism burst and we now know what is happening in [Cote d'Ivoire](#). My brother here, Professor Karikari referred to it as a no-peace and no-war situation. I don't know whether a society should be described like that. What it means is that, at any time we may find in our news that somebody has been killed in Cote d'Ivoire and so on.

So South Africans and those of us who think very strongly, and who I admire so much for the successes in the ten years, put that in your kit as if it's provision for the future. It's provision for the future, it's not success. My grandfather used to say, when you have no time, he used to summarise cases for the chief. He would just pick on those beacons which matter, which are, you are guilty as charged, we need two cows, and so on.

So what I'm going to do now, is to summarise. But I know there are one or two people in this room who love this summarising ability of my stories. I will not deny you that opportunity, those of you, my friends. Guy Berger is usually one of the bashing bags of any media conference. I'm not going to bash you today, my friend guy.

One of the stories my grandfather told me was about the barefoot journalist. Once there were societies, societies which lived in tranquil positions, in tranquil situations where food was aplenty, where clothing was not even necessary. They lived through the craft of fishing and hunting. The fish were so many that they learnt just to catch them. Even the children learnt to catch them in the rivers. And the function of the journalist then was just to write how many fish had been caught that day; how many animals had been caught that day.

There wasn't much happening in society until the weather changed. Those of you who were listening to the news, the weather has changed, which means that even as we speak there is a conference which talking about the environment today. When the weather changed and the waters became muddy, the fish were even more difficult to see. The animals ran away. All those animals which were clumsy, which were easy to catch, were finished.

So society and people had to learn to go and hunt. The journalist had a problem, the barefoot journalist had a problem then because it was no longer the function of the journalist just to write about how many fish were there in abundance, they were not there. So the journalist had to learn to help society about strategies of what kind of fish were still available in what rivers, how clever they were, how fast they ran. And some of the major stories which you ran on the Sunday columns were on how young people could improve their skills to catch fish in muddy water, to harness or snare animals, which were now fast. You were no longer just going to be able to club them, they were able to run away.

So journalists' function was to help publicise stories about new ways of catching fish in muddy water; new technology of catching fish without running with your hands, because you can't catch them; new technology of snaring animals, because now they can run. So the journalists began, they were among the first in the community to wear shoes because they had to run after animals as well, so that they learn how these animals hide, how they run away, in order to write their Sunday columns and help society.

And things changed and changed, I will cut the story short, and you can get the moral. What is important therefore is that in the new South Africa, there are these challenges, there are these changes. I'm going to run through very quickly in the next ten minutes, something I had prepared: Transformation of the media in a society in transition." This is very interesting. The media is learning how to deal with muddy waters, not only to deal with muddy water but to understand what - you know, water used to be clear, now it's muddy. What is causing it to be muddy? How can people live when these waters are muddy? And the muddy waters are our economy.

Our economy is muddy. Our politics is muddy. Our society itself is muddy. The technology is muddy, and I daresay that technology is the driving, the chief driving engine of this muddy water. So when we talk about society in transition, you will see that it is important to understand the role of ideology, the role of race and the role of democracy in the media. What does this say? If I may just summarise what ideology is. The term 'ideology' is popularised by the world, particularly Europe, after the events of 1784 to 1794, in France. You'll find that the term 'ideology' begins to take route coined by Antonie de Tracy.

De Tracy is the one who studied society and noticed that there were some things in the new society, the rejection of royalism, the rejection of the nobles, and the actual execution of the French King. All these demanded new visions; made waters murky and demanded a new way of thinking. Feudalism was no longer going to be the way for living. So ideology means simply the science of the study of ideas. Sometimes we talk about Marxism which I'm not going to talk about today. We talk about socialism, we talk about liberalism, we talk about feminism, which I might touch on briefly because it's very important to our society today, and we talk about ecologism which is the peace movements and the like.

I tried to understand all this, and I'm going to talk briefly after you see the video about the libertarian theory of the media in particular. To say why, in South Africa here all the journalists will tell you we are libertarian, we are free, and so on. But where does libertarian come from? Libertarian comes from the very 18th century, 19th century philosophy. Libels, libels is a Spanish word which means gentlemen. It means gentlemen. So in other words, libertarian it was a gentlemen's club of nobles who understood where society's coming from, who would then help to engineer it. And they believed that their goods, the slaves which were being imported from Africa should be their property.

And therefore their landed property had to be liberated. They believed in the freedom of property, in the freedom of the individual in the private and capitalist ideology. Is it what we are about? We go around saying libertarians but we need to see also the source. I'm going to explain very briefly if you will expand perhaps during question time, but my problem has been this. I'm too shy and too scared to talk to people. And sometimes people lie to me when I'm doing research. Most of our research is assumptions, assumptions, and assumptions, dictated by ideology; dictated by ideology. So it is important to unpack it, and what did I do? In order to unpack it, I spent a few months studying insects.

And I will not give you the benefit of hearing my commentary. The pictures - may I apologise to the SABC cameramen - are not very good. They were taken by a practising amateur, professor, journalist, video cameraman and so on, who is myself. Because there is no time, I just want you to see this, and then it's going to be easy to summarise from there. These are societies, these are the tower builders, you can see the ants here, where I live. Somebody had just destroyed this tower, because they thought they were being a nuisance. They built their home near this tree, and this is a different society and you can see the big power is threatening them there, and you can see how they are running around, trying to deal with the big power.

And here is a different society. We call them the hunters and you see, this intruder here was killed because of teamwork. The stiffheads, you have seen them, they are really tough ants. Their society, if you try and interfere there - unfortunately I tried to cut it very short - this is a different society here, and these are the diggers and you will see a little bit of what they do. There they are there. If we have time we will show it again, because at the beginning it was a bit bumpy. We call them the diggers. You see, there they are. They learn to live together and dig in pairs.

The beauty of this, look at them there, look at them there. What is beautiful is that I visit this country which is just about a few square yards, and I found different societies living harmoniously. This is what really killed me, except the big power who tried to interfere, he was killed; you saw the *Shongololo* there, he was killed. You see how they partner, you see how they partner. And you will see in terms of communication it's beautiful how they communicate. And their journalists do a wonderful job.

Look at them here, the diggers, look at that guy there, these are the grass cutters now. It's a different society within a 100-metre radius. Look at how busy they are, look at what they do. And the journalists here, their function is to find out where there is grass. So you can see the different societies. You see this guy there, he has information about food, and he's taking it down to the city, and you will see the other guys coming, you'll see them, all of them dragging, its economy and so on, and the journalists have a very important function in this society, I observed. They even wrote an article about cutting this boulder. Look at that, look at that. Look at how the society begins to understand.

You will see, I think I will end when we have – you can see how they work. There are two guys somewhere, here they are. He's struggling with a problem in society, that guy. He's struggling alone. I'm going to go back to him, you can see that boulder has been cut, so that's how information is being used, for economic, political and whatever. And they are sentries; I discovered that there are sentries around who go around checking if society is not being attacked. Look at that guy there, I think I'm coming to the guy I want to end with.

But what is important is to look at the city and the society in general. Ja, these are the two guys I wanted to show there. This guy there is being helped by another guy. Look at the problem. So society cannot deal with problems on its own. It's very important to be assisted – look at them now, he has got somebody to help, and the third guy, through information, through the media, has come to help. He's not fighting with that guy, look. He's helping them, but you'll see, once their task is done, he picks up his own problem and dashes off with him. There he is, there he is

there. He has helped them to tilt the boulder, the problem in society.

You can see it's two of them, one is there and one is there. And what is actually interesting in this society is that this thing is about two metres away from the city, which could be about 2 000 km from the city, and they help each other, through co-operation they help each other – and information; they get information from passers-by and so on. You can see everybody is busy, and this guy here, the journalist, there he is. He is going to get information; he has gone inside there to get information. And you will see that because of co-operation and the availability of information and the society, and the way they work, they eventually drag that big boulder to the city.

I think I will spare you; you can see there what's happening. And if we study this, there are queens and chiefs, who I understand are inside there. And there is a chief communication specialist inside there who is giving direction as to which boulder we need, and so on, and so on. And actually writing on the Sunday paper, you know, on what is required. Alright let's stop there. I have no time. The entertainment would have been immense, because we look at the culture, the culture of society. If we think about the culture, my colleague, he talked about values.

Values are very important, so culture consists of values that the members of the given group hold. And I think it is important that in South Africa, we begin to create this understanding that we have a beautiful set of flowers. These set of communities, we saw the grass cutters, we saw they've got their own type of journalist, we saw the tower builders, they have got their own type of journalists. We saw the hunters, they've got their own type of journalists. What we need to do is to understand our societies. And the challenge for South Africa is this. In the past 350 years, we have been grooved into societies, the Xhosa, the Zulu, the Sotho and so on. And we were not encouraged to do what we saw the ants do. We were encouraged to hate each other; we were encouraged to report on each other to some superior being and so on.

I think that the challenge now, most societies have learnt to work with each other amicably. What we need to do is how to develop a global understanding of South Africa, between the tower builders who are white, the stiffheads, who are going to black, and the grass cutters and so on, who have a very sophisticated media system and know how to write positively about society. They know how to write stories which will take everybody out of the city, to go out and work, without supervision. This is the issue; working without supervision.

So it is very important therefore that, very quickly then - you know, I'm not going to waste your time with the simple university things - I think what I will do is just to rush on to the final section. But it is very important to know that you can understand your liberty from what you see there; freedom of the individual.

So do we understand this ideology from Europe which emphasises capitalism, which emphasises individualism? How can we term individualism to accommodate all of us? How can we transform individualism to work for everybody? How can we term capitalism to work for everybody?

And perhaps, if I may just rush and end by saying that these ideologies which we have learnt at university, which we are teaching at university, we teach as if they are given truths. They are not. These things come from 18th century France. Some people forget that even Marx was reacting to what was happening in Europe, in the comfort of Britain. I'm not going to be suicidal. I know some of us blacks are suicidal in our approach, where we serve criticised to a point of suicide. I'm not going to do that. I think it is important to realise where we are wrong, where we are strong, and to strengthen those aspects which build harmony in society, those aspects which say a beautiful bouquet of flowers has red, yellow, white and so on.

I'm going to skip the thing about the media because my colleagues have spoken about it.

Very quickly; Race, It is important to understand that race has the capability of scheming, of strategising, of hiding. It picks on genuine issues, and transforms genuine issues into racial issues. Just genuine issues, that look, I don't like the way you have given that judgement. I think you need to open up your ideology from being libertarian to a bit of socialism, isn't it? I've been insulted. I think we need to create debate, the role of the media is to create debate. The role of the new journalists is to penetrate through fake excuses and go and see that racism is now subtle. Racism is no longer you are black. Sibanda you are pitch black, aren't you? Ja, I'm pitch black but the way you're saying it you have insulted me.

Racism is subtle, you know its stereotypes, people. And we begin even by the way we sit; 'I don't want to sit near Dali Mpofu, I don't like his ideas, he's too radical', and so on. Even the way we sit, we begin to use subconscious racism. And I think I will end there because my Chairman, I'm saying some things which are a bit radical.

Thank you very much.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you very much, Prof Sibanda. Indeed the intention is to stimulate debate in the hall here. Time is not on our side, ladies and gentleman. What we're going to do now is to just summarise and then get three speakers to respond to the issues that have been raised here. Prof Karikari here raised an issue about what seems to be transition forever, and he's a bit concerned about that. And I'm reminded of this little story here I heard some time back about a professor and an old farmer. The old farmer visited a local museum and while he was perusing and browsing around, he meets this professor just in front of an old fossil of a dinosaur. And the professor asked this old farmer: "Do you know how old this dinosaur is?" And the old farmer says: "Yes. It is 2 million years and 10 months." And the professor seems to be very concerned, and he says: "But you see, it's written here, it's 2 million years old." And the old farmer says: "No, I've been here 10 months, and the curator told me 10 months ago it was 2 million years."

You see, so there is transition even in a fossil. So it's something perhaps that we need to debate, Professor. But there are points that have been raised here about technology and transition in the media industry. About the media being the watchdog, are we the watchdog really? Do we set the agenda? Whose agenda, what agenda? These are the issues that came up, directly and indirectly from the presentation we made here today. Do we have a role to play as an advocacy type of journalist? Do we have the right, or even indeed, the ability to keep the government on its toes. The editorial independence, who determines that? Do we define editorial independence in contrast to our relationship to government or to all other stakeholders, or interest groups?

And then Professor has also raised very pertinent issues about the media practitioner's understanding society. I think Bra'Joe also made reference to that earlier when he raised concerns about graduates not fully grasping the socio-economic issues surrounding a particular story. He even went on to raise issues about what he termed the bizarre, and whether these can be routed out by the market.

These are the issues that came up. I'm sure you were all attentively listening to what was said here. We're going to take a break now, and then have the three speakers to respond to the issues that have been raised. Immediately after tea break we will have Lizeka Mda, Prof Guy Berger and Jody Kollapen.

## **TEA BREAK**

**CHAIRPERSON:** This is the final part of the first session on ideology, Race, Media, Democracy, Race and Society, and The Role of the Media in Society. We have picked up a few points that were raised in the presentations made this morning, including the one on patriotism

in the media. How do we define that? We have three panellists who have joined us, just to respond briefly to some of the points that have been raised earlier, and then we open the floor for debate.

I will introduce Lizeka Mda. Lizeka is the Editor-in-Chief at Mafube Publishing. She's seated next to Prof Karikari there.

And then I have the pleasure to introduce Prof Guy Berger, Head of Journalism at Rhodes University. We're also pleased, ladies and gentleman, to be joined by Jody Kollapen, who's the Chairperson of the South African Human Rights Commission. We will hear their presentations in that order. Over to you, Lizeka.

**PANELLIST**  
**Ms Lizeka Mda,**  
**Editor-in-Chief, Mafube Publishing**

Good morning. I think I will apologise first, I've got a bit of a cold, so if I'm speaking through my sinuses, please don't hold it against me. I feel a bit like Bra'Joe here, these are too big concepts. For me I'm just a journalist. The title that was given to me like the, I'm the Editor-in-Chief, well I'm one chief with no Indians at all. So that is what I am.

So what I will do is really share with you what is on my mind about our role as journalists and as the media organisations that we work for. And I was thinking how can I illustrate for the people here what we are dealing with; and something happened a few days ago. I was on a freebie trip with a bunch of other editors. One banking group in South Africa invited us to Reunion, and one of the activities there, our guide, started to sing a song about Reunion, etc, and then after we thanked her she said we could return the favour by singing a South African song. Someone started *Shosholozza* and that was what we sang.

But later that evening at dinner, I was seated at a table with a couple of editors and some representatives from the Bank, and some of the people are from Britain, and they wanted to talk about this *Shosholozza*. And we're talking about it, and one editor at our table objected, actually. He really felt - he didn't think *Shosholozza* really was the South African song. As far as he is concerned, there is no South African song. So when I started communicating with him, you know, which South Africa are you from? You cannot say anywhere there is no South African song. Our problem might be we have too many songs, but you cannot say that we do not have a song.

He insisted that, no it is not, he only knows one line of it, and anyway as an English speaking South African, he didn't identify with *Shosholozza*, He didn't identify. Then he said, unlike Australia which had Waltzing Matilda, we had nothing. So this is the editor of a newspaper in South Africa, and I was wondering if somebody can be so violently opposed to *Shosholozza*, not want to be associated with it just because - he said he had a different cultural, whatever; I don't know. But I suppose it's the same reason people have been here for 300 years and they can't speak an African language. If you look down on something, you are not going to associate with it, you are not going to feel part of it, and we are editing, and we are writing newspapers for these people that we obviously hold in contempt. So it is very strange.

So another example, someone here, whose permission I don't have anyway to talk about this but I will, got into a spot of bother at a newspaper he was editing, because he started introducing a lot of African content, African in the sense of content from the continent of Africa, and the people who reported to him felt he was dumping down the newspaper. So content that is African is dumping down, but it's okay to fill the paper with rubbish about British royals; it's okay to fill the newspaper about high school dropouts whose only claim to fame is that they work in a place called Hollywood, but that is not dumping down. This is the South Africa we live in, anyway.

So I think we have a problem because I don't know what all of us would answer to the question. I mean, who are we, you know, who are we? What do we stand for? So if we do not even know who we are anyway, what role can we have, as media in this society that we are in? Pre-1994 we were dealing with apartheid and the media then, I suppose maybe had life a bit easy. They were from one extreme, I'm not sure where to go now, but anyway, let's say one extreme, you know, there was the hear and see no evil. But the media and the journalists that inspired me at least to come into the profession were the activist journalists, the people who thought they had to change society, the people who felt that they could put their necks on the line. I didn't follow them in that direction, never put my head on the block in that way, but I admired them and those are the people who brought me into this profession.

And fast forward now to 2005 and what do we see in terms of the media that we are dealing with? I'm sorry, I talk a lot about print media, that is where I have been, so apologies to the sponsor. We have now in the year 2005 what I call 'The Revenge of the Tokoloshes'. In 2005 when you would have thought that we have gone a bit of a distance, you know, on the food chain, the most successful newspapers are the peddlers of the tokoloshes, you know the headlines which go, "My stepfather is a snake" or something, all those things, which is fine. But of course we're talking about people here who definitely hold African people in contempt. But it's fine, they must be doing it.

But when it gets upsetting to me when everyone gets so mesmerised by this pursuit of the tokoloshes that every newspaper now is only aspiring to this lowest, you know the basest – I'm sorry to name names, but my disappointment is greater with the Sowetan. The Sowetan, I mean, which stood for something called nation building, a very proud institution and all the soul is being bled, you know to chase the tokoloshes, and it's really very sad.

So what are the challenges that we are facing as society? Because I think our challenge as the media is to deal with the challenges that we face, as society. We need to be buying into this project that is South Africa that we are all trying to do. And I think the biggest challenge that we have is poverty. I mean, if you listened to Bra'Joe earlier, you heard all those figures. We have a serious problem with poverty. But what are we doing about it in the media? Is this what we are dealing with as really our main concern so we can change those figures that we were hearing about. Or is it not our concern? After all, those people at the base of the pyramid, we don't share the same culture with them, they are the *Shosholoz*a people? We don't want anything to do with them; they are not of our background, so we do not have empathy for them?

In fact, someone referred to the New Orleans thing. I think those people live here in South Africa and we have our own 'Katrina' victims everyday here, but society doesn't care. You know, there are people in Limpopo, there are people in Transkei, there are people in the squatter areas and they are not of us, so we do not care that much about them.

In the past, people would at least know that there is a newspaper that is sympathetic to us and what we are trying to do. There are journalists that are sympathetic to that. Where are those, which newspapers are those now? Maybe there'll be one. The journalists, I mean those people who used to be calling under difficult circumstances just to get their stories in, who are we champions for now? I mean, we're just champions for advertisers, as far as I can tell.

Talking about the big story in the media now, the Jacob Zuma story, I was thinking the other day, why am I finding this story so boring? It is so boring. And it occurred to me that the story is boring because, like Prof Sibanda was saying, all the story is saying is that the animal, you know the fishes are smart, they are running. There is nowhere in the media where you are finding those journalists who are saying how to catch the fast fish, you know, where the fish can be found, why the fish are so clever, why the waters are so muddy. No; all we are doing is telling people what they know, that the water is muddy and the fish are very quick runners.

And I think if we were better, or whatever digging ends - were those the good ones? Who are the good guys? The diggers, ja, if we were the diggers, we would recognise that this South Africa, you know, the same way Nkrumah's Ghana, the same way Lumumba's Congo, Mbeki's South Africa is not pleasing to everyone. And there are people who will make sure that this success that we see now doesn't go any further.

And for me personally, I saw the future at the Durban Magistrate's Court last Tuesday, and I didn't like it. The future that I saw there is a future that looks to me like Idi Amin's Uganda, it looks like Sani Abacha's Nigeria, and I don't want any part of it. And I think the more of us who stop being such wimps, because this story has exposed us to be such wimps and so spineless, I think the more of us who stood up and said, actually that is not the future we want, I think we would be better off.

Anyway I was told to stop.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you very much, Lizeka. Prof Guy Berger?

**PANELLIST**  
**Prof Guy Berger,**  
**Head of Journalism, Rhodes University**

Good afternoon. I want to just start by commending the SABC for having this timely conference and also say that it's really befitting of a public broadcaster to have such an initiative, and that the Board comes along. I can't think of any private media company that would convene an initiative like this and the Board members attend. So I think that is really the nature of what a public broadcaster should be doing, and I think that's excellent.

So the title of this session is Looking at Media's Role, and as Joe Thloloe pointed out, it is in our Constitution, we have freedom of expression, which of course applies to everybody, but it also mentions freedom of the media. And that is unusual, many constitutions just say freedom of expression, but here we have freedom of the media. And Joe Thloloe went on to say, well, this is the role that is specified by the Constitution. An implication of what he is saying is that we need to try harder live up to the role and the expectations and the values of the Constitution.

I want to say that I think we're in danger here of - and to use the isiXhosa expression which I hope will make my colleague here happy, *sibamba isisilo sehobe*, that means we're in danger of grabbing the tail of the dove and not the bird itself. Because the role of the media is not something that exists just there for us to choose, or for the Constitution to dictate. There are many things that determine the role of the media, and I want to throw the cat amongst the pigeons; hopefully we'll catch the cat as well as the tail of the pigeon. And I want to just read for you, three paragraphs from a column that I do for the Mail and Guardian online. And it starts like this:

"The publisher, Deon Du Plessis, likes to see newspapers as pure business. I first heard him on this theme more than ten years ago. It was at a workshop in Cape Town that debated 'The role of the media in the new South Africa.' At the time, his argument was very simple. The role of the media was nothing more than to make money. It was just like any other business, it was a matter of customising the commodity for what the market wanted."

Now as everybody here knows, Du Plessis went on to invent the Daily Sun, which targeted township residents, with a formula that has made it the biggest selling paper in South African history. He's now started another newspaper, and what I say at the end of this article is that if he succeeds with his other newspaper, he will have proved something. This is that his theory is that newspapers are only commodities, and you do not need any lofty purpose or noble role added to that business. I said that "in a normalising country there might just be space for that kind of

venture to succeed."

But what I'm getting at here is that we talk about the role of the media, but for many people there are other roles. For people like Deon Du Plessis there's a role to make money; for people like the editor of the Sowetan, the role is to actually build the circulation again. For SABC and Robin Nicholson is here, the SABC also has to make some money. These things complicate the worthy role that the Constitution would spell out for us, and we cannot ignore this.

Now, I also want to complement what I'm saying by adding that, much as there are these other roles that media performs in this society with this economy, we cannot, particularly as, for e.g. SABC, we cannot look only at the role of making money or building circulation, without accepting that there are some other roles here. And I think if there's one thing that accepts, that characterises us as South Africans is that we are not like the insects that Prof Bhekimpilo showed us, we are not pre-programmed. We are in a transition, and that transition is because we do not accept certain realities, we actually try to change them, and we are changing them. And the same thing goes, much as that role of the economics is absolutely critical, we do not have to accept it as if it was unchangeable completely. There are lots and lots of variations within that.

And that brings me to the topic of this, the second part of this session which is ideology, and I would say that this where media's role becomes a question of ideological struggle. Obviously it is not going to fly to a media's role is only to do good things, irrespective of the economics. But in terms of saying that there's an ideological struggle, I think there's a lot of stuff that we can actually discuss very productively here. And I want to say I think that ideology is mainly at the end of the day about identities. Ideology is about what identity you feel you are responding to.

And there are three identities I wanted to mention here. The one is our identity as journalists, and not just any journalists, you know, there's an ideology of journalism but we have to say where does that ideology come from, and what is that ideology's relation to the conditions under which African journalists work. I think it's excellent that we have Kwame Karikari reminding us that this country is actually in a wider continent and there are big issues in the wider continent. And so when we talk about an identity of journalists, it's not the same as to say you have an identity of say a British journalist. A British journalist does not respond to a European project of the European union, in the way that a Kenyan journalist, a South African journalist, a Cote d' Ivoirean journalist will respond to the African project. So we need to understand that we have a particular history on the continent which means that journalism has a certain difference in the way it calls on us to do things.

At the same time, I think this question of journalism, it relates to a point that Kwame Karikari raised. He said, in some countries on the continent, one has found that your broadcasters, which have been governed controlled in the past, have not made the transition completely to be seeing themselves as journalists. Now we had an issue here in South Africa with the SABC on the Women's Day coverage and non-coverage, and I don't want to go into that in too much detail. But the point I would make is that there was a certain, I think a certain culture within some circles in the SABC which were not alert to the fact that there could be a political story coming out of what was a Women's Day event. As a result of which, the story was not broadcast, as I think everybody knows.

Now, why was there not this pre-sensitivity to actually predicting this story? Because if you take a step back and look at that story on the Women's Day from a journalistic point of view, you should be able to say, here's the new Deputy President. She's coming into the turf of the old Deputy President. It's one week after the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal has been pelted. Now, there's likely to be some action at this thing, so we need to be sensitive to that story when we go in, we need to brief our staff accordingly.

But that did not happen. Why did it not happen? Because I think the identity of journalism is not

sufficiently entrenched in SABC. We still have the SABC - it is making the transition from a propaganda journalism, not even journalist, propaganda apparatus towards a public service broadcaster. At the moment I think it's still got some traces of civil service journalism which is not enough journalistic in my view. So I think that's an important question.

I also, on this question of journalism and where we come from, and the ideology of journalism in South Africa and across the continent, if we just take a journalist's ideology as a European or American ideology, then you come with - and I'll bring another isiXhosa proverb into the picture here - then you come with a relationship which sees journalism always at loggerheads with government. In other words, *nyoke nesela*, which means the snake and the frog, who will never have any relationship between each other, they each others guts, as a principle.

Whereas I think we would say, in a transitional Africa, and again to use another isiXhosa proverb here, we should be also looking, be open for a case of *umcha netunga* which is the thong that keeps the cow in one place, and the milk jug, okay, so that you can actually have some collaboration. And I think we need to be sensitive to this, that we can't just take an opposition mindset as the default, the be-all, the alpha and omega of journalism in Africa. There are cases for the *umcha netunga* relationship. Okay, that's our ideology of journalists. Now I need to wind up.

Ideology of race, to summarise this point because time is running out, I think the ideology of race, of course we made progress in South Africa, but it is still here in the form of racism, particularly white journalists and I think my colleague mentioned this, in the question of white journalists being sensitive to the historical arrogance that comes with that background, we still have a great need for that kind of ideology to be interrogated.

At the same time I think we must remember that race, as Steve Biko pointed out, race is a project. It's a project to create an identity. In many ways, our construction of identity in South Africa is going backwards. It used to be a case where black consciousness constructed an identity of black people in common. Now we have blacks which refers only to African people, and I think that's a sad thing.

Then I want to come to ideology and class, because the one problem with looking at race in the media today is that to the extent we take account of race ideology and race identity, we are tending to forget class. And here Joe Thloloe did us a favour by reminding us about the poor. Now if we have an identity and an ideology about solidarity of the poor, I think that again changes our journalism, has impacts on our journalism. Because it means that we start reflecting more on pro-poor stories and we start debating policies more about what is the impact on poor people.

And then I'll also come to another point, and now here I have to critique my colleague, Joe, because he mentioned the poor, the 10 million unemployed. But he did not disaggregate that in gender terms. In other words, what I'm saying is, when we look at this question of ideology and journalism in South Africa today, we have to say what is the ideology of journalism? What is the ideology of race? What is the ideology of class? And what is the ideology of gender? And we need to grapple all those things.

Now that brings me to my conclusion, that for some people, for a Deon Du Plessis, the role of the media is to make money, okay. For us, I think here, we probably share some greater role. As Joe Thloloe said, the Constitution has got certain values and the role should be more in that direction. But I conclude with this challenge to all of us, which is a painful challenge to me: What is the role of the media, for the people who are buying the Daily Sun Newspaper? Here I have a newspaper which, as Lizeka Mda says, it's an anti-African paper, it's an anti-woman paper, it's conservative on class issues, and it's the most popular newspaper ever to sell in this country. So what role is that newspaper playing for the people who buy it and read it?

Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you very much, Guy. Jody?

**PANELLIST**  
**Mr Jody Kollapen,**  
**Chairperson, South African Human Rights Commission**

Thank you very much. I'm mindful that I'm probably the ninth speaker this morning, and the last speaker before lunch, so I'm going to err in favour of the right to food which is in the Constitution, and not in the favour of the right to expression, which I'm guaranteed.

But I think just to start with, when I received the invitation it says that this is about transformation of the media in a society in transition. And there were two sort of strong ideas that came out of that. The one is transformation of the media, and I assume the assumption of holding such a conference was that there was a need for transformation in the media. And I'm yet to hear, in a sense, a lot of substance around that. What do we need to transfer the media, from what, into what? Is there a problem with how the media functions today in our society? Do we have a media that we can be proud of? And do we have a media that serves South Africa's interest? I'm not talking of the government's interest or anybody, but do we have a media that serves South African's interest?

I must assume that we don't, in some substantial way, and that's why we're having this gathering here. And that was in part what prompted the Human Rights Commission to conduct an enquiry into racism in the media. And although some participants here will think that we copped out at some point in time, the whole objective of the enquiry was not to launch a full frontal attack on media enquiry. It was to try and get an understanding of how race and ideology does indeed inform media. And how assumptions of worth, of excellence, of values, begin to inculcate how people think and the kind of products –

And one doesn't want to harp on that or to try and build a better past, but I think as we look at the debates in the judiciary we're reminded that apartheid and racism wasn't simply about a legal construction. It was how individuals brought their own prejudices into the system. Why, for e.g. in the context of our own county, did the Chief Justice say to an advocate: "Are you not aware that black people and African people will sometimes stab each other out of a simple desire to stab?"

That wasn't required by the law. There was no law that required the Chief Justice to say that. But he was articulating his own prejudice, that black people will recognise each other in relative darkness. Judicial notice was taken of the fact. The fact that not a single white man was sentenced to death for the rape of a black woman, whereas many black men were sentenced and executed for the rape of white women, gives an indication of how our court's valued women in terms of race. Now we would be naïve to believe that that didn't permeate into every other aspect of society and the racism hearings highlighted that in many respects. And people came forward, I think with some honesty, to speak about that.

So the first question we need to answer is, five years down the line, have we seen the kind of transformation in the media that serves our society. I'm not sure we have, and I'll give you some examples to indicate how media is not serving society. The second is whether we have a common understanding of what the objectives about transition is. I don't think we have. I think, with respect, the TRC process was too painless. I think for many South Africans it was almost like being able to get into a bus, and take a drive into the past, see what had happened and at some appropriate time say thank you very much, we've seen enough now. Take us back to the present or the future.

And that's why we grapple with some of those difficulties today. Why does Delmas occur in a

town where there's supposed to be an abundance of water and poor people still die because they don't have access to water? Why in the South Africa of today are we told that one million people have been moved off our farms in the last ten years, without the legal system being able to respond in any effective way, and yet this week or last week the Cape High Court has heard a case where a property owner is litigating because a property in front of him is blocking his view to the sea. Now, he may have a right to do that but what does that say in a sense about how we've tackled the issues of transition?

Last week the Human Rights Commission conducted three days of public hearings into the right to basic education and what emerged is that over and above having two economies and two worlds in one, we have two education systems in a single country. The evidence was quite overwhelming that if you're poor and you're black and you attend a rural school, your chances of getting a quality education are minimal. So those are the challenges of transition, and unless we have consensus around that, it becomes difficult to locate what is the role of the media in that context.

Now Joe's spoken eloquently about the Constitution and he said it's useful to always have it around. I have a bound copy as well and I must say it's valuable. It doesn't always prevent me from getting a fine that I got last week for 500 bucks for talking on my cellphone, but I do think that media freedom and freedom of expression is guaranteed. But also the commitment to public administration that is transparent and that is accountable. I think that goes to the question that Thami posed earlier; does the media continue that model of holding government accountable? I think precisely it does so, but it does so in the context of an understanding of this Constitution.

And I think one of the problems we have with media, and Guy may have touched on it, is that sometimes the Constitution is an afterthought. There is not a sense that the Constitution is so central, and in the diversity that is South Africa it is the only glue, in a sense, that binds us together. You often have this reference to the Constitution after everything is said and done.

And I must remind you that the former Chief Justice of our country, Justice Ismail Mohammed, spoke of the constitutional contract being created by this document, a contract between the state and its people. And I do think that 11, 12 years into democracy there's a need to look at some of the key aspects that arise out of this.

Let me just mention one or two things. The first is, and I think few of us will disagree, that from a public ballot perspective our democracy is on a sound footing. Amartya Sen made a distinction – I think he may have spoken at Rhodes – about two perspectives of democracy. The one he called the public ballot perspective which is the ability to hold ballots and to ensure that the will of the electorate is exercised in a credible way. The other is what he called the public reasoning perspective of democracy, and there he referred to the ability of governments to respond to public reasoning, what he called government by discussion.

If we regard that as an important aspect of democracy, then who is conducting that discussion? With whom is the government having that discussion? And what is the role of the media in that discussion? Is the media a discussant? Does it unduly influence that discussion, or does it act to honestly facilitate that kind of discussion? I'm not sure and I doubt whether it always does that. And I want to give some examples of the power of the media and how the media begin to frame important discussions in our society.

Last Friday I saw the headline of a daily newspaper, "Land Grab Starts". Front page. Now when you look at that, you get the impression of some illegal, unconstitutional manner of expropriating – or not even expropriating, it's a grab, an illegal grab. And yet, if you have consensus on the transition, you will agree that we're doing quite badly with regard to our land reform programme, that Section 25 of the Constitution recognises the right of the state under appropriate circumstances to expropriate land, and sets out the terms and conditions of that expropriation.

But to that community that that newspaper appeals to, there were certainly discussions at the braai parties and the dinner parties that night that the land grab programme that we saw happening elsewhere in Africa has now finally arrived in South Africa, and it has started today. I think that's just not irresponsible media, I think that's dishonest media, and I think that's media that's decisive. But let me give one or two other examples which some mainstream media are responsible for.

We have a major problem in South Africa with regard to intolerance and how we treat each other, but more often than not, how we treat those who come from outside of our borders, particularly those who come from other parts of the continent. I know I went to a workshop once to talk about the rights of migrants, and I picked up a newspaper – because I know, when I go into those situations, I get a pretty hostile reception. I saw the headline and I said, oh, this is not going to help my talk. The headline was "Illegals Arrested, Luxury Vehicles Recovered".

Now anybody reading a headline like that will form one conclusion only, that these guys who were illegal were responsible for the theft of these vehicles. The opening paragraph said: "40 illegal aliens" - and I won't comment on the term 'illegal aliens' and all that goes into it - "were arrested in Pretoria last night, and luxury vehicles worth R2 million were recovered, in two separate operations". Now again, is that lazy journalism or is it deliberate?

The Human Rights Commission brought out a report on boom gates. The public debate around that was only around the issue of crime in relation to boom gates. It wasn't about social dysfunctionality, it wasn't about marginalisation, it wasn't about wealthy people seeking to appropriate public land. So again, the media then, in the manner in which they frame issues, don't tell us what to think but they certainly create the parameters within which that thinking takes place. And I have a major problem with that because it happens all the time.

I think the media, in terms of their coverage around crime and violence, have been extremely irresponsible. They look at the moral aspect of the perpetrator, they look at the emotional aspect of the crime, and maybe that's understandable at some point, but do we ever have an analysis in our own country of the underlying causes of crime, of how marginalisation, exclusion and poverty impact on crime patterns? We don't, and that's why the current debate around crime and violence is: can we build more prisons? Can we put people into jail for longer terms?

I think that kind of reporting, whether it's deliberate or not, certainly is not the kind of role that the media should be playing in a society in transition. If anything, such kind of reporting simply moves towards ensuring the retention of the status quo in many, many, many respects. I do think that the media have an important information role to play, but I think the media have a development role to play. How are citizens able to make informed choices, how are they able to engage with their governments, how are they able to properly hold their governments accountable?

And it's not the media's role to hold government accountable, it's the citizens' role. The best guarantee of a democracy is not whether you have an effective human rights commission, or whether you have a Constitutional court that's functioning, or you have a vibrant and strong civil society. I think those are important factors, but ultimately, when you strip all that away, the ability of ordinary citizens to engage in honest and robust dialogue with their government is critical and I'm not sure, in the current circumstances, whether we're seeing the media play that kind of role.

This is not about bashing the media but it's saying that 11, 12 years into democracy, I think, as Lizeka says, we have much to be proud about, but we have much more work to do. And clearly the message that comes out, certainly in terms of our work that we do as the Human Rights Commission, is the promise and the guarantee of the Constitution still remains illusive for millions of our people. We can sit and pontificate and talk sweet nothings for as long as we want to, but as long as that reality exists out there, then what has the struggle been about?

I do believe the media – I don't want to even say have a choice. They don't have a choice. I think the media have to live within the parameters of this Constitution as well, there's no place outside of this. For better or for worse, this is the kind of structure and framework we've chosen for our country, and I'm hoping that we can have the kind of discussion, frank, robust and honest, with regard to locating the media into playing precisely that kind of role. I'm not suggesting we're going to do another enquiry into racism in the media, but it may well be that the Human Rights Commission needs to look at – okay, I'll stop there, Chair.

Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you very much, Lizeka, Guy and Jody, for your thought-provoking input. I'm sure the points that you have raised are going to elicit a lot of robust debate from the floor here. There are so many points that you have raised, but just to pick out a few that were sticking there. We mentioned the issue of stereotyping in the media, we mentioned the issue of the role of the media in nation building and what it holds for the future of this country. We also talked about the media and business, whether the media is there to make money or to report.

We also discussed about the ideological struggles that impact on race, class and gender, and also we discussed about the issue of transformation and whether the media is contributing to the achievement of the objectives of a country in transition in this country.

Another point was the media in the promotion of a healthy debate amongst itself, and also the media and xenophobia. I think these are some of the sticking points, but there were many other points that came up from the earlier presentations and the discussions that we've had from the three distinguished guests here.

I think now it is time for us to speak our minds as robustly and as frankly as possible from the floor. There are roving mics around here. We will do so until quarter past one, at which time we will break for lunch. May you please introduce yourself before you speak.

## **DISCUSSION**

**MR NTENTENI:** My name is Thami Ntenti, Acting Head, PBS Radio, SABC. There are quite a number of issues that have been raised, as you have just pointed out, Chair, and I am actually very, very pleased that these issues have arisen because one gets the impression most of the time that we, as practitioners, media practitioners are in a state of denial. I want to start off with ideology; ideology, but I want to combine that with culture and with language.

Guy said that we are in a state of ideological struggle. Now the question that arises for me is, why is it that most of the time, when you discuss with media practitioners, they would want to convince you that theirs is an ideologically neutral reporting, that it has no ideological connotations whatsoever. If we talk of it as an ideological struggle, what is this struggle and who are the protagonists in this struggle? The example of the Daily Sun was quoted here, and we can go further and use the other tabloids that we have, weekend tabloids, Sunday Sun, Sunday World, whose ideological approach seems to be also PHD, what has come to be known as PHD, Pull Him Down or Pull Her Down syndrome.

Now are these not in themselves aspects of a particular ideological approach, the manner in which these tabloids are reporting? The manner in which the Daily Sun is reporting – Guy, you raised that question but you did not go and answer it. You just raised it as a question. But the manner in which it is reporting, and the issues that it is choosing to report on, are these not in themselves part of an ideological approach to the issues in this country? Is it not an attempt to divert people from the serious issues that have been mentioned here and trivialise and direct them to those issues that are of a trivial nature or an escapist kind of attitude towards the reality that confronts this country, which Joe has mentioned? Is that not in itself – I'm asking that question, that the manner, outside of the money part of it, is that not in itself a particular

ideological approach to the issues facing this country?

The second aspect that I want to touch on, and again, Guy stole my fire here, stole my thunder, the watchdog aspect. I want to ask the question whether it is in the nature of the beast to be in direct opposition to government. And I refer to Prof Sibanda there, who says that he does not believe in self-criticism to the point of suicide. Is this not what we are doing in terms of the reporting in our media? And Guy also says that – he asked the question whether it is always necessary to be at loggerheads with government. I'm posing these questions because it seems when we define credibility, it is defined in terms of the extent and degree to which you are opposed to government positions.

The last thing that I want to mention is this independence and ownership. To what extent does it influence the manner in which we are reporting? There is an editor, whose name I have forgotten, and I use this quote because he always stays with me, this editor says you write what you like because I like what you write. At a certain point, I think one editor who is here may not have written or was not expressing what the owners liked, and therefore he found himself without a job.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you.

**MR MOLOKELE:** Thank you. I'm Daniel Molokele from the Southern African Editors Forum. I just wanted, as we continue to interrogate the subject matter of the conference, also to celebrate and appreciate that in the context of the democratisation of our continent, South Africa is being used as a role model to a large extent by many other African countries. And to such effect that as we gathered this afternoon, most of the freedoms which you enjoy or we enjoy here in South Africa are not necessarily present in the rest of the continent, to the extent that some of the gains which we had seen in the media in the early '90s, in the past decade we have actually lost ground and Africa has not opened up, as we had expected about 10 years ago. It is actually closing down.

I was privileged to be part of the African Editors Forum over the weekend, and you can sense that the media, in terms of an Africa in transition, in terms of South Africa in transition, the rest of the continent, things are not growing to the positive. To a large extent they are going down. A good example is Zimbabwe. I have lived most of my life in Zimbabwe and to a large extent I can sense that in 1995 and 2005, today, the media in Zimbabwe, things have declined, not from good to better but from bad to worse, to such an extent that it's very important for us to take cognisance that South Africa is being appreciated. If you cross the Limpopo to the north, you'll realise that in Zimbabwe the kind of media environment here in South Africa is being appreciated and is being valued. That is the other issue we need to take into cognisance.

And then the other factor I needed to highlight is that you need to appreciate that in the past ten years, South Africa has also played a key role, not only at a national level but at a continental and a global level, especially through the leadership of Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki. South Africa has become a world player in terms of societal perspectives, in terms of the globalisation process. So the media in South Africa should also transcend the processes which are occurring in the rest of Africa, where Thabo Mbeki has been at the forefront, especially in the peace building processes across the continent.

So these are some of the issues we should take into cognisance, and to that extent I also want us to appreciate the role which the SABC has been playing. One of the important channels in Africa today is SABC Africa, and I believe it is one important vehicle we can use and develop to help us identify ourselves within this continent, and also as South Africans, define ourselves in the rest of the continent. So these are some of the issues we need to unpack as we continue this discussion.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. There's a lady in front here, please.

**MAKHENI:** Thank you. I'm Makheni, I'm with Lucy, we are from the Child Abuse Action Group, we are the toyi-toyi people. I must say firstly, before we get to the point of the Child Abuse Action Group, I was most heartened by Guy and Lizeka, to hear media practitioners addressing the Deon du Plessis disgrace head on. I'm heartened as a non-media practitioner.

The main issue we would like to bring forth is, we are firstly most concerned that women and children's issues are not seen to be as big as the race issues. They are not put on the same level. Since we started today, no children's issues were mentioned and women's issues were like glossed over in passing, as if we don't make up more than 50% of the population. I would like to address myself to Mr Kollapen. We are concerned, as the Child Abuse Action Group, with the sleaze that our children get exposed to. We are very concerned that women and children are portrayed as sex objects, and whenever they are treated as such, the whole population seems to be shocked. I don't know why we get shocked.

Now we would like to say, since the SABC and ETV and all TV stations go with Deon du Plessis on this issue that money is the main thing, sex sells so let's sell it, I would like to – in case there are people here who are not aware, the lower the LSM is of the people, especially in the black community, TV viewing doesn't get monitored. So this watershed nonsense is just an excuse to say sex should be foisted on our children. I would like to know from your perspective, what is the Human Rights Commission thinking on that, on the fact that our children are being sexualised? We are told that L means this, V means this, X means this, when children are brought up by grandmothers who are hardly literate, because their mothers are looking after other people's children as domestic workers. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you very much. We'll take two more questions, then perhaps we'll have some responses from the Panel here, and then we'll go on.

**MR MNGUNI:** Thank you very much. I think one of the things that is very conspicuously absent here, as well as in the programme, is language. Media transmits whatever message it does in language. By the way, my name is Buzani Mnguni from the University of Limpopo. And I see that what is happening, especially after ten years of democracy, there's an increase in wanting to learn things in English. And even if you look at the broadcasting community there's an exodus of young people who are coming in, in spite of what the Act says, that local languages must be used, they actually don't understand why the local languages must be used in those broadcasts because English is the thing to talk. If you speak very eloquently, then it means you are smart. I suppose that all of us here in this conference are regarded by society as the cream because we come here and speak in this language that I'm speaking of.

But who are we talking to? Who is the media talking to? And what percentage of educated people do we have that speak the language that we use in government, in everything? Yet if you look at the statistics here, it shows that language is the least; the statistics show. Who are we talking to? Who is government talking to? Who is media talking to? You're writing in English and language is one of the things that we don't talk about. Language is one of the things that legislators themselves have not considered as the most important thing. If you look at the upheavals that happened in Europe a long time ago, those nations, the first thing they did when they attained their political freedom was to convert to their original indigenous languages, and they have moved.

I want to pose a question to everyone here, whether those people that consider themselves educated really understand that which they put on paper. Do they really understand the language that they put on paper? I doubt it, because one of the speakers here actually raised the issue of the quality of academics or graduates that come from universities and are coming to write. Their ability to interpret a situation and give a context to that, I doubt.

I think language plays a very important role. We speak in English but we don't know what we are

saying. We don't even understand the words that we use, whether they are serious or what. We also can't take those words and put them into – make a desk, make something living. And I think language is very central to media because media is about messages. We need to think about that. We need to actually pose that challenge to the legislators, the politicians because the rest of Africa, the argument is, we can't change from English because we will not be able to understand each other.

Is that true? Is that the fact in the world? Europe speaks one language. I suppose that's why they have a European Union. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you very much.

**MS MOLEPO:** Thank you. My name is Mapule Molepo from the SACP. I want to talk on the issue of the role of the media, because my understanding, according to the presentation that we got, is that what the media is trying to do is to turn the whole of Africa into Europe in terms of the ideology, class and all those other things. The reason I'm saying that is that if you can check the coverage of the media through newspapers, radio and TV, you'll get that issues that are broadcast and published are the issues that are of the interest of a certain class, not the issues that are of a public interest as a whole. And in that case it goes together with the issue one speaker spoke about, that the media is only interested in making profit. Yes, I agree with that, that the media indeed – what the interest is, is on the sales figures, how much money they are making at the end of the month.

And the other issue and the domination of the ruling ideas, we know that the most ruling ideas are the ideas of those of the ruling class. And in our case the ruling class are the capitalists. We know that. So it is not representing the whole society that we live in. Like for instance, the issues that we cover on – media has a certain interest in whatever, they set their agenda. Of course we agree with that, because if you can check, they are focused on whatever issue must be covered because there are certain interests, and most of the things that they have an interest in are those things that are from the European agenda, the capitalist agendas. Like if you can check the issues of Europe, you'll find that there are more countries that are affected by poverty and other civil wars, that their concentration will be – to give an example, Iraq, Zimbabwe.

And you know that there is a certain interest that those people want to do. Whether it's a question of oil or investing in Zimbabwe, but what you'll be told is that there is a weapon of mass destruction. And if you couple with that, that a lie often told, that is that presenters lie lots of times, it starts to become true to you. Like now, if we check the issue of Zimbabwe, the role that the media is playing in terms of those things, it is the role of pushing the agenda of a particular class, which is the capitalist class.

And secondly, on the issue of ideology, the reason I'm saying that what the media is trying to do is to bring Europe into Africa is that even in terms of ideology, in terms of race, in terms of class, anything that is African to me is not covered equally like those things that are European. You check the type of soapies you get, the type of news you get, the ideology you get in the media, there is nothing African in those things; nothing at all.

And you check the balance in terms of class issues, those that you get will be only the capitalist views that are heard more. There's a lot of poverty that is happening. The majority of the working class are suffering on the ground, but in terms of coverage, no one cares about that because what they want to do is, you can't make money out of that. That is why you can't find The Sowetan or Citizen or Sunday Times in the rural areas. Why do you only have it in cities and in townships?

And what I want to raise is that the problem that we don't have an alternative media in the country poses a serious threat to us, and the reason we don't have an alternative media in the country is because we don't own the means of production. You can't control all those things. So

shouldn't we have a media, for instance a public broadcaster? Shouldn't there becoming at least an alternative media to the poor people instead of becoming an advocate of the capitalist class? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you very much. There is one last point there and then we discuss. I'm sure the panellists would like to make their inputs as well.

**MR MOGODIRI:** My name is Mogumotso Mogodiri from Mangaung Local Municipality. I would appreciate it if this conference can pursue the issue of the juniorisation of the newsroom. I must confess at the very beginning to say I have a vested interest in the matter, because in our area, the greater Mangaung, which includes Bloemfontein, for those who are not familiar, we have a media which has positioned itself as really an opposition to government, the two spheres, which are the provincial and the local municipalities.

And every time there's a developmental story it never sees the light in their pages, simply because they are really peddling propaganda from the opposition parties. Attempts have been made to engage with journalists, engage with the editors, but what comes out clearly is that there is a particular mindset, a paradigm where media is seen not to be sharing a common vision with the rest of South Africans, and not really understanding even the national agenda, because people shy away from talking about a national agenda which includes, among others, non-racialism, nation building, democracy and so forth.

Now this conference, for me, provides us with an opportunity to engage with these issues, because as long as we have in our newsrooms, journalists or reporters who don't understand where we come from and where we are going, and also don't necessarily appreciate the efforts that are being made, we'll always have a hostile relationship between the media and the government, not because it is natural that they must be on opposing sides but simply because people tend not to appreciate what, as government, we are doing.

So in my own view, we need, especially now that SANEF is also a stakeholder in this conference, to begin to understand what practical steps are being taken in ensuring that the newsroom begins to produce journalists who are clued up in current issues, who understand the context, but also who are able to add value to a public discourse. Because as we have now, we have a situation where the public discourse is such that issues are simply vulgarised when they are raised through our pages or our screens and so on and so on.

And we are finding it difficult, as government communicators, to come through, because we are simply seen as propagandists. And we do not want that view to persist because my role is not to churn out propaganda but my role is to provide information which assists people to develop themselves. Now the media must also see its role as a partner in empowering people with information so that they can develop themselves, and the national agenda is taken forward. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you very much. I must say here that I'm sure that some of the views will come from the floor. It does not necessarily mean that the panellists will have to answer all the questions because the intention of this meeting is to have a comprehensive and inclusive debate about issues, where we come from, where we are, where we're going.

I recognise the lady here in front.

**MS LUTHULI:** Pearl from the SABC. I'd like to ask the panellist who addressed the issue of objectivity; what I gather from what all the speakers and everybody up there has been talking about is the fact that the media is very much a part of society, and people who work in the media, or journalists, are not necessarily people who operate outside the paradigms of the society. However, in the past or recently we seem to be addressing the issue of objectivity as if it is a homogenous concept. We forget the fact that people are really shaped by their societies,

their communities, their families and so on, and therefore how we look at any given issue will be influenced by where we come from.

And therefore what I've heard from everybody else is that objectivity is subjective. In fact, Lizeka went on to say you can't write positively about what you hold in contempt. Therefore to me, it questions the issue of objectivity. Is there anything like objectivity in a country like ours?

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you very much. A very valid question there. Can we have the last two questions before comments from the Panel.

**PAT:** Thank you. My name is Pat. I come from Vryberg. Ja, I'm a community media practitioner. I tried to look through your outline and I see that the community newspapers are not represented in this conference, and that, I think, will reflect negatively on what this conference can provide in terms of experiences. I just want to comment that in my opinion, community newspapers are giving another face of South Africa, especially in the small towns. They are telling the story of how the government is investing in people who do not necessarily have a journalism degree from some university, and are actually doing well in becoming government mouthpieces when the SABC is trying to become not a government mouthpiece. And because there is a commercial agenda there is another story being told from the experiences of ordinary people on the ground.

And I also want to say that media organisations like MESA, FXI, like organisations of journalists are very important in the future of the media, and these are not well-represented here. Maybe we need to look at personalities in organisations and how they influence the current status quo, because faces – that is, the editor – shape the ideology as well. So maybe we need to look at biographies and how these personalities shape the current status quo.

I'm conscious of the fact that we are at this place, and I would just like to make the point that generally The Sowetan, in my opinion, is no longer pushing the nation building project because of the nature, the way things have happened. Maybe it is the challenges of the new economics, but I think there are also opportunities that are emerging from small publications, small community newspapers. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you very much.

**MR KHOLISILE:** I'm Gospendule Kholisile from the SACP. I would want to talk about a few things, Chairperson. One is the question of the mindset. And in doing this, I would want to refer to a few stories, the story of Leigh Matthews and the story of Constable Rasuga, that if it wasn't because of one newspaper that picked up the story of Constable Rasuga, she would have disappeared without anyone in our society knowing about that thing. And I regard that incident as equally important to that of Leigh Matthews.

The manner in which the story of Leigh Matthews was publicised in the whole media in South Africa was such that it was more important than any other incident that ever happened here. And you begin to ask yourself as to what drives this? What is the mindset of our people? And what informs this reporting such that some stories of equal importance are being reported differently, and with an aim of trying to instil a particular thinking to our community, such that some stories are more equal than others, whereas in fact – we would argue, for an example, that the story of Constable Rasuga is even more touching than that of Leigh.

Now I'm still addressing the question of the mindset here to say, what is it that we want to instil in our people, because I regard media as one important tool and an instrument that if really, it drives a revolutionary agenda, it will take our country forward and in a very positive manner. But you read the stories that are being told. Despite the dirty things, for example, that the government of Zimbabwe is doing, if you read from the newspapers today, when Mugabe spoke about the two unholy men, and Condoleeza Rice talking about the tyranny, you get a sense that

Mugabe was more insulting than Condoleeza Rice. And that he was more disrespectful and he needed not to be there.

And who says this, is the European Union, and the media profiles this that, indeed - and I've heard other radio stations making mockery of this, and you begin to ask yourself, what informs this thinking that once something is being hated by America, it's being hated by Europe, and our own people become so much taken by that, and even the manner in which they report, the manner in which they try to influence us, they repeat that. They make sure that that goes deeper and deeper into our minds, such that we buy into that, and they try and convince us that that is a correct thing.

I think, to repeat, that the media can play a very, very important role in the society, but I think there is a lot that we need to change in our mindset. We understand that when some of the journalists joined the media fraternity, they found a particular culture inculcated already there, but I think there is a lot that needs to be worked out so that we've got a product that is of the interest and representative of the will of our people. Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you very much. In the interests of time, ladies and gentlemen, we've got about seven minutes left. I will only allow two speakers, and then we'll have some responses from the – actually three. And I'm sure, as communicators, we can be as brief and concise as possible. I recognise that lady first.

**MS MADIBA:** Phumla Madiba. ... (Comment in mother tongue). I'm really happy that all the speakers touched on something that is close to my heart, that of human rights and democracy, and more importantly, that of dignity of African personality. I just want to pose a question, whether in this changing environment the media couldn't, rather than looking at stories and history, focus more on heritage. And my understanding of heritage is about whom we should be and which direction we should be going.

I couldn't agree more with the speaker that said when are we going to factor in the languages that we keep on referring to as official languages, the nine over and above the two, so that the media can contribute constructively and effectively to the dissemination of information to people who will understand the nature of that information, and the content, the media that should also be contributing to transformation and education of people, and the excavation of what was lost.

We shouldn't continue to believe that intellectuals are intellectuals because they can speak and read English and Afrikaans. There are intellectuals who have never been to school because they have a wealth of information. Isn't it possible that we can have newspapers such as what used to be *Umtunya* or *Ilanga* in Natal, and the many, many languages. Language is very important. It is also a pity that in this conference we promote one language, and we talk about media that is there to communicate with people, and we can hardly even interpret or translate so that those of us who may not be quite articulate in English, then can understand in our own languages. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you.

**MR DE BEER:** Mr Chairman, thank you very much. I'm Ari de Beer from Journalism at Stellenbosch University, and also the Institute for Media Analysis. Chairman, I have to qualify my three or four very short questions by saying that I'm not necessarily supporting everything a particular newspaper is doing, but I do want to ask the Panel some questions. The newspaper in question was typified by Prof Anton Harber, the Head of the Department of Journalism, as perhaps the most important newspaper right now in South Africa. He also added that it will most likely have the greatest influence on the next election in this country.

Obviously I'm talking about not the small newspaper with 30 or 40 000 circulation, which we all can call a quality newspaper, I'm talking about a newspaper that is selling, not by people reading

it but selling 800 000 copies a day. Also a paper that the publisher says he can up another 100 or 200 or 300 or 400 000 if he can find a printing press that can actually print all those newspapers. So my quick six questions, Chairman, are the following.

First of all, I would like to know from the Panel why are 800 000 people buying this awful, terrible, sleazy, miserable piece of s-h-i-t? Secondly, are we looking holistically at this newspaper, or do we have one or two or three stories from this newspaper that we remember? Like, "I was impregnated by a snake", or something. Because, Chairman, I have a problem with people taking that particular point of view. For one, I'm teaching international journalism, and there is no newspaper in this country that publishes on a daily basis a full page of news from Africa. I use that page in my class each and every day for students in international journalism.

Also, the way stories are portrayed in an holistic way when you skip all the x-x-x-x out. For instance, stories - and I know there are colleagues over here who say this is just nonsense I'm talking, but I'm a diabetic, and the very, very best information, the very, very best article that I've ever read on diabetics that I could understand was published by The Sun. So why are these people buying this newspaper?

Also, it's very interesting to me that the Panel and everybody else on the floor is not saying anything about the fact that the same awful publisher has also put out a new newspaper called Nova, which is an extremely interesting new newspaper, for another market.

And then lastly, what are we going to do with 800 000 or a million or a million and a half people going to the next elections with their basic newspaper being The Sun? Thank you, Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. This gentleman over here.

**KHAYA:** Good day. My name is Khaya. I'm coming from an organisation called UDM. We touched on a lot of numbers of items. I'm pleased to be part of the discussions. I'm looking at all of us here. We are all beautiful. The society of South Africa has changed. That's what worries me and that's what worries us. When I was born in the early '70s, the journalists, I was made to understand, were the champions of the society. It was a struggle, of course, but the journalists were not just reporters, they were comrades. The journalists were freedom fighters.

I've learned from Soweto incidents, Alexandra, Themba, Hammanskraal, and I was also informed about around the country that incidents are happening, journalists are busy fighting against the system of that period. We are now asking ourselves what has changed? Is it the high level of capitalism? Are journalists now having no longer interests in the society, in the development of the society? It's all about money. Is the industry of journalism itself no longer considering the building of the society? Those are concerns that we are having as the society leaders.

I was looking also at the issue of unemployment. Young as I am, I won't market myself that I'm not employed but leading the students particularly who are graduates, unemployed of course, who do we blame? Whose responsibility is it to employ these graduates? I was made to understand by one of the panellists today that the graduates cannot grasp. I ask myself a question; whose responsibility is that? Those qualifications are from the Department of Education. Are we blaming these graduates or are we blaming the source or the supplier of these qualifications?

If we look at this, what do we do to make sure that we rectify and make sure that those qualifications are upgraded, are up to standard? Whose responsibility is that? I've been looking and questioning myself with a lot of questions, but unfortunately I don't know whom do we ask, or whose responsibility is it to answer my questions. Fortunately enough we've got professors here who are from the universities, and I believe that they can assist us, because it's them who are giving us these qualifications today that are not useful in the working industries.

I'm disturbed by the morality within the society. The society is coming out of morals. The young generation. I've been looking from Pretoria to the Western Cape, crossing my mind. Young people today are no longer interested in themselves. They don't even consider their self-identity. The young people are out of control. I believe that we are all parents here, except myself. How do you feel when your kids or your children get out of your house wearing nothing, of course, to cover the body? And we speak of rape and we don't look at the causes of rape.

There's a lot that I can speak about, but it's just that time doesn't allow us. I'll just pass a message to request the industry of journalists to be not just creative in stories that don't assist the community, but to be innovative enough to look at what is needed currently to make sure that the society that we are living in is being assisted, especially in the socio-economic status. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you very much. I particularly do not want to be part of starving people. I'm sure people want to have their lunch now, and we have only ten minutes to do so. Reaction from the panellists, please. If we can all be brief so that we allow each other time to air our views.

**MS MDA:** If I can speak to The Sun and the questions that were being raised by a few people. I think people misunderstand. When I talk about The Sun – well, I didn't talk about The Sun, some people put a name to a newspaper – I was talking about a particular direction that we are taking. What The Sun has done is to find a gap in the market. Those people who are reading The Sun – I don't know where the research was done but there was some research which showed that the majority of people who read The Sun were people who were not reading newspapers at all before. So these were people whose needs were not being catered for, and good for Deon du Plessis for catering to those people.

Where I have a problem is when the whole newspaper industry thinks every newspaper now must become The Sun, because now there is a gap being created where people do not want to read about Tokoloshes amongst diabetics. Why are we all wanting to go in that direction? The problem is that because of these big numbers that The Sun has got, everyone now is pursuing the 800 000. There are 40 million people in South Africa, and I think we need to cater to all of them. Good for him and the people that he's catering for, but there need to be alternatives, and the media that is there, that has been serving the needs of the people should not be, I feel as the consumer of those media, abandoning us, just to pander to that 800 000 only of people that are there.

That is fine, they must go on, but my personal feeling – it may be wrong – is that if we tackle poverty in this country, if we dealt with the challenge of education and we had a well-educated populous, people would find – if people have lives that are worth living, they wouldn't find time or money to waste, money that comes from us in forms of grants that they go and pay to buy those things. People would have better things to do with their money. They would lose interest in that and they would also lose interest in all kinds of other anti-social activities that we see.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you.

**PROF BERGER:** I don't agree with my panellist here that it's good for Deon du Plessis, and I don't agree with that speaker who said that he thinks there are good things in the Daily Sun, because I think it's clear that overall that newspaper really promotes values that are not in accordance with the Constitution. Of course, they are free to do so because it's freedom of expression, but I don't think we must therefore suddenly start celebrating them.

For every time they have a map of Africa and then some almost meaningless snippets from different countries, they have stories like in this week, which said, "Illegal immigrants are coming over the Limpopo River and they have one goal in mind: corruption". This was the genuine

headline. So I hope my colleague on my right here will take cognisance of that. I don't think we must celebrate that newspaper at all, and I don't think we must say that it's simply everybody else must do their own thing and give them alternatives.

I think we have to wage this ideological struggle even with that newspaper, and I'd say, if you look at popular television, SABC has been very successful to take tabloid television but to put progressive values in it, and it's popular. So why can't Deon du Plessis take a popular tabloid but put progressive values in it? That's the challenge there.

But I want to just conclude by saying one thing; that clearly, there are some people who like that newspaper. Just to get the facts right, it's not 800 000 copies that are selling, it's 650 000, which is important. 650 and probably six readers each, that means every day more than 2 million people are reading this newspaper. Now what they read, we need to do more research on. What exactly do they read? Are they reading the nice educational stuff about diabetes or are they reading the illegal immigrants coming to cause corruption? We need to check that.

But it's a serious thing, and when we're looking at the role of the media, we need to say that different media are playing different roles. The SABC is playing a different role to ETV, the community media is playing a different role, etc, etc. We can't talk about the role of the media like it's one thing. And from the point of view of the audience, again it's different. Those people buying that Daily Sun, or reading the copy, the six who read the one copy, for them it plays a certain role. We need to understand that role. That role is very different to what other roles other media are playing.

And then as a total, we need to say how do we prosecute this ideological struggle that all the media, actually, can begin to be something that we are proud of. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thanks, Guy. Professor?

**PROF KARIKARI:** Thank you. I think there are some things we cannot do much about, especially when we accept to live in a democracy, and that includes bogus media, highbrow media, relevant media and so on. And having said that, it's not to say that therefore anything goes. I'm saying that once we say we want freedom of expression, then we must accept that there are wise people, fools, jesters, and they're playing provocateurs. Newspapers that operate on the lower denominator always sell all over the world. Perhaps there is something wrong with human beings themselves in wanting the lowest denominator of things. I suppose there is something like that. Besides, it doesn't challenge your intellect, and really, who wants their intellect challenged?

So we like entertainment, we like the frivolous. My concern, as Guy Berger was saying, is if a newspaper lowers the denominator, the important thing is, what is the damage it is doing to the self-perception of the people of that society? If a newspaper like that is perpetuating viewpoints, information and so on that paints Africa as something to South Africans, then there is a real problem. It is a dangerous job it is doing, and it is the same as the racial dichotomy that we are all trying to fight against and build a more equalitarian society. The debate over pornography, for instance. I don't have a position, I don't understand the intricacies, but we're going to have this. If we go on the website the debate is even much more intense.

This is why my personal view is that in all of this debate about the media, I think the premium – that's me – should be placed on the public service media. And again, whatever you say about the BBC, every average British citizen, that is the first call they go to. Of course they have other choices. And you cannot deny the fact that the BBC serves the British well, and in fact serves the entire globe very well to a very large extent, because it has carved a particular standard of journalism.

It has problems, ideological problems. It's a human institution so it ought to have some

problems. But if you take the BBC, and if you take, say, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation also as an example, these are institutions that serve their societies very well. The BBC operates on an ethos and value system that no Briton, no English, no Scot would disagree with, to the extent that it is half government supported and so on and so forth, for me, this is the model that we should demand. In fact, we in our societies that are developing, need public service media much more than anything else to serve the questions of language. I don't expect some private entrepreneur operating a TV or radio station to broadcast in all of our languages. Perhaps they could make money but they may not do that. But we should insist that the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation does that, and we should insist that the SABC, the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation and so on recruit the best among the journalists in the society.

So that again is not to say that we should not keep discussing the morality, the ethics and the objects of all media in society. We have to, it's our responsibility that any product that is on the market comes under the microscope. Just as we will examine every food item that goes on the shelves in the supermarkets, we should also examine every newspaper and every radio station. But at the end of the day, we must build a particular institution that the businessman, the Prime Minister, the labourer will swear by, or can swear by.

The SABC is coming into Africa. I think it's a very, very good idea. I was just telling Mr Hassen from the airport that among people of our calibre, the middle-class, educated people, people are beginning, around the continent, to discern a difference between SABC News and other international news agencies. I'm not saying this because I'm in Johannesburg. No, I come here all the time. There are subtleties that people are pointing to, subtleties of a certain sense that, ah, even the questions that people are asking about Africa are beginning to be much more not sympathetic, no, but much more African grown.

I think that that's a line that we should keep hitting on and helping the SABC, because it's perhaps the TV/Radio system on the continent that you get more information about Africa from. Sadly, from Ghana, to Togo, to Senegal, to wherever, what you will read about Kenya or other African countries is still coming from BBC, Reuters and so on. That is why we need to emphasise on our own institutions with a sensitivity that you and I can agree with. And for me, I find the BBC model something very useful to emulate, something we can all wake up in the morning and tune to, because you know it's articulating a certain direction of vision that you also share. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you very much, Professor. Indeed, the debate continues. As you can see, the programme is still quite packed. There are several subjects that we'll be dealing with, specifically on the various issues that we are raising here. Professor?

**PROF SIBANDA:** Just one minute to summarise ideology, juniorisation of the newsroom, and just to put one different angle to The Sun debate. Nobody has told us how much it costs. That's very important. It's fashionable to carry a newspaper. Perhaps it's the cost which encourages people. We don't know, that's a different slant. But people have an insatiable appetite for rubbish, for sex, for things like that. Voyeurism, we all know when we are privately somewhere we want to watch, so that you cannot stop.

Juniorisation of the newsroom, I want to ask those of us who are championing this to start stopping to do this because it's getting to a level where we are stereotyping. Where people are in denial, it's a way of blocking young journalists from coming in and so on. When I first read this in one of the theses of my Master students, I thought perhaps it was something. Then in everything conference I hear 'juniorisation', then I'm beginning to say, hey, hey, hey, watch it. It's stereotyping and it's really denying young people an opportunity.

How many of us old people can operate this new media? I rely on my son. So I think, let's be very, very careful. The young people are coming with new ideas and so on. Let's give them the chance. There is no juniorisation, there is nothing like that. There is only a stereotype in us old

people trying to block young people. Let's stop it, it doesn't work. I've read it everywhere. A lot of research about it everywhere, juniorisation, juniorisation. It doesn't work.

Finally, ideology. I did say – I ran out of time – ideology is fluid. You start from libertarian views, freedom of the press, freedom of the individual, capitalism and so on, and you move to socialism. And if you move along that continuum, you end up with perhaps fascism and stuff like that. There are certain things which are good in the social responsibility media, there are certain things which are good in the libertarian press, there are certain things which are good even in fascism, which have to do with who are we, as South Africans. So let us not be confused. Let's be able to select.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you very much.

**MR KOLLAPEN:** Just briefly in relation to the question here, I do think that maybe one of the problems in our society is that the rights discourse has developed without reference to tradition, to culture and to other aspects, and that's what prompted, I think, former President Mandela to say that perhaps we need the RDP of the soul. I don't know if the Moral Charter is going to help us, but if you just look at the dispute that's already developing around virginity testing, where Parliament has passed a certain law but substantial sectors in parts of the society are challenging it because they're saying these rights don't –

With regard to some of the material that you see, I have a 13-year old daughter as well, and I see things on TV and I wonder, am I conservative? Have I changed? But I don't think so. And I see things there that make me quite uncomfortable. I'm not sure if the solution is greater regulation, or whether it lies elsewhere, but I do think it indicates how some developments in our society have been almost disjointed from, in a sense, how communities feel, and we need to interrogate that more carefully.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you very, very much, ladies and gentlemen. Is there any other issues that we need to do? I think we have done enough. All that remains for me now is to thank the panellists here, and also everybody who's been participating in this very exciting first session, which somehow has set the tone for this conference. I'm sure that we're going to debate further the issues that are contained in the programme.

I thank you very much. We are breaking for lunch now.

**LUNCH BREAK**

**SESSION TWO:**

**THE MEDIA AND THE COLONIAL PARADIGM:  
AFROCENTRISM AND EUROCENTRISM IN THE PRODUCTION AND REPRODUCTION OF  
KNOWLEDGE, IDEOLOGY AND IDENTITY IN POST-COLONIAL SOCIETIES**

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CHAIRPERSON: FADILA LAGADIEN  
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**CHAIRPERSON:** I'd like to start by welcoming you back to the second session of today. We're going to try and make up time and get you out here on time, because I don't want people to start leaving and the room gets empty and we sit up here like stooges. I don't want that to happen, so let's get started please.

I don't have to introduce the two gentlemen next to me. Their names are in the front, you know them very well, but nevertheless, Mr Barney Pityana is going to be our first speaker. I'm told that he's Vice Chancellor of UNISA and former Chair of the Human Rights Commission. And our other speaker is the former Deputy CEO of SABC News, and I should have known that if I did my homework. But he's currently Editor of the City Press, Mathatha Tsedu. Welcome, gentlemen, and over to you.

**PANELLIST  
Dr Barney Pityana,  
Vice Chancellor, UNISA**

Thank you very much, Chair. Talking to Mathatha, we were trying to cover our territory between ourselves. We looked at the topic and found that it was a mouthful: The Media and the Colonial Paradigm: Afrocentrism and Eurocentrism in the Production and Reproduction of Knowledge, Ideology and Identity in Post-colonial Societies. It sounds like the sort of stuff that academics write to confuse the rest of us who are normal people.

The way I'm going to approach this, I don't know how what I'm going to say is going to link with this, but I want to say it anyway. First, I want to just depict two stories from media in our country these days. The first is: A freelance journalist attends a political gathering, sends a report back to the SABC, and the rest is history. Because then there are stories that the journalist had deliberately declined or selected in a manner not to embarrass the Deputy President, who, it was reported, had been heckled by some participants at this meeting.

Another television station believes that it was typical of the SABC because it reflects and represents the government viewpoint. The Group CEO, who was a couple of days in office, if I recall, decides that he is going to call a commission of inquiry, and he brings a former journalist, who is a professor in another university, and an advocate, who I don't know much about, and they investigate this. They decide that there was just something wrong here. What was wrong is that it appears that the journalist had made a decision, according to the journalist's explanation, not to film that particular episode, because in his judgement, that episode was not worth reporting. It was not newsworthy. He thought it just was something that was confined to a few rather robust young people and it wasn't newsworthy.

It appears that the commission didn't seem to think that the journalist was right to make that kind of selection, and somehow the selection should have been made in any event by the editors back in the newsroom or in the editorial offices.

The second report I want to give you is one that is current right now. The Judge President of the Western Cape is accused of racism. On what is that based? It apparently is based on the fact that – the allegation being that he called a lawyer in his chambers "a white shit", and somehow that constitutes racism. Now all of this is reported in the newspapers almost as if it is fact, almost

as if it is founded, almost as if to call somebody a white shit is itself racism. I see very little examination of what actually constitutes racism.

And a whole story and its history is being built around an allegation, although denied by the person concerned, the idea that this person is guilty of racism is reported as if it is almost founded, it is almost true, it is fact. And that, without a proper examination of racism, what actually constitutes racism. I tried to look in the media, including the Sunday media, anybody who was trying to examine racism from calling somebody a white shit, what of that is racism? I see nothing. But I see everything that suggests that this judge is guilty of racism.

Equally, you would expect me to be interested in this because it's clear that the journalist had applied his mind and decided that for himself – it appears that from the report that he had applied his mind to this thing - and applied his mind and decided whether this was worthy of news or not, whether it was just some naughty children doing some silly things, and somebody who was not there decides that that was newsworthy. The question I'm asking, what does that then say about the ideology of news making and news collection?

Because if I was that journalist, I would have said, by the way, I'm supposed to be able to exercise a certain degree of autonomy and make certain decisions and make certain selections about what is happening around me. In everything that I do I make choices in life, and those choices are founded on certain bases of context, of politics, of sociology. I would not deny that I've actually made a selection. Everybody makes a selection, and just about every selection that we make is borne out of a social context in which we work, an intellectual paradigm, a political orientation.

Whatever it may be, at the end of the day I take responsibility for the choices that I make, and if those choices that I make happen to hurt or do whatever to somebody else, it's something that we need to decide and to debate. But it seems to me that this journalist should never have been caused to lose his job, as I understand happened, just because he made a particular selection that was not in keeping with somebody else's.

I give those two examples because I basically want to say that in fact, news and media are not by themselves independent and unaffected by certain political and social contexts in which we live and operate. It's not unaffected by ideologies that we operate with and stand by. It's not unaffected by our view of society. It's not something that is neutral or independent in any shape or form. Actually, it is also not true that the media merely reflects social reality, but in fact it is true that the media interprets and mediates social reality. And that act of interpretation and mediation of that social reality, that sieving of that reality, itself suggests that certain suggestive and intellectual paradigms are almost always at work.

But it also suggests something else. I say this because this is the main point I want to make. It also says to me that, therefore, who you decide to be the interpreter and representer of social reality is itself a choice that says something about what you actually believe is or can best be represented. The journalists, the columnists, the editors that we have around us, the language that we use is a language that almost always is loaded. The choices that are made by editors about who the columnist will be are political statements, ideology loaded statements that they actually make. Why? Because they want to represent and interpret reality in particular ways.

Of course, it's not just about interpreting reality, it's also about what do we need to do in order to drive and shape the future in particular ways, because whatever you do about the representations of fact and reality that we have, at the end of the day it's also intended and designed consciously or unconsciously.

It's also designed to shape the future, to shape the way in which people are to understand intellectual discourse. So one of the issues that one has in our country at the moment is really about who is it that represents and interprets what goes on? There's a class issue, there's a

race and a colour issue, but much more than class, race and colour issues, there's an ideological paradigm about it. And that ideological paradigm is about what do we think media and newspapers actually are about, and indeed represent. I think that we need to interrogate some of that in a very serious way.

And thirdly, I think it's about hegemony of ideas. Who has control of the production of knowledge and the construction of ideas in our society? And where do people in our country actually get their most persuasive understandings of society and reality? And who actually fashions that understanding, if at all? Is it our media, or is it the Internet and all the Americanisms that go with it? Is it song and dance from the pops in the United States and elsewhere? What role does culture, if at all, play in the way in which we form and create and socialise the nature and the kind of citizenship that we want to have in our country? And indeed, what part, if at all, does the Constitution play in interpreting and helping us to understand the rules and the rights that we actually have as a society?

And therefore my point, as I stop this and open up the discussion, is to say that the amazing thing about South Africa, which many people find truly amazing, is that the intellectual formation and the formation of ideas actually takes place in different places. I find that the ideas and the formation of ideas take place by the intellectual capital that exists, for example, in our public institutions and in government. And I think to many people it always is surprising that our government, by and large, relies very little on outside people to form and fashion its policies and its ideas and their development. And very, very often it's a political orientation, a political idea that they wish to be formed and created.

There are others also who are in the private sector. Usually they are in the private sector in order to maximise a particular orientation about the economy of this country and the development of capital, hopefully for the future of our country and its economic stability and prosperity. But somewhere in the middle, almost unrecognised or unrecognisable, are professional intellectuals or professional academics, who sit there in an unknown terrain and try to make sense of what happens all around them. But actually I think my suggestion would be the contribution of academics in the construction of knowledge in our country is actually very limited, I think. It's very limited. It's a terrain that probably is contested.

But I'm saying to myself, what kind of society would we be creating if we're not able to draw from the intellectual capital that exists to those who set themselves up as professional thinkers and intellectuals and philosophers, who have got the opportunity to actually research and study and advance ideas, and push them to the very, very, very limits of understanding. What would we be doing if we can't get a truly independent, although mediated thinking and thought processes that some of them might well have? How do they actually critique society and what goes on in the society around them, and what is the destiny of the thinking that goes on there? And how does it affect the way in which our society is shaped?

I think at the moment in South Africa, I would say, as somebody coming from an academic institution, there's very little evidence of what academic institutions and academics actually are doing to shape and form the construction of knowledge and ideas and thinking in our country, and indeed to provide a critique of the way in which society actually shapes itself.

Where does that happen? I think where it's happening, it's happening in the media; however contested, but it's happening in the media. But when it does, it happens generally in a very jaundiced manner, in a manner that actually doesn't and cannot, I submit, provide a full perspective of the different contestations that actually happen in our society and shape our reality. That's where it happens. And some tell me, my colleagues tell me that it happens also because we've, by and large, sought to Americanise our society, Europeanise it in a way that is even more than it ever was before under apartheid. We could not be more European and American today than we've ever been, I'm told.

And that is the case because we try almost successfully to suppress a part of ourselves and a part of who we are as a society, as people. We have no way of actually shaping our own identity, and very, very often we are passive recipients or receptacles of identity formations that actually are constructed in a different social context and political environment. And somehow we're not contesting these ways in which pervasive ideas come to shape the way in which we see ourselves and we see our societies.

And so I think that there is an enormous responsibility on the publishers and those who control the media to do two things. First, to recognise that the nature of our society and the beauty of our society is a society very much where there is a contestation of ideas, and that in itself is not bad. And therefore there is an additional responsibility to seek to find ways of representing and presenting those ideas in a manner that is meaningful, and that will open up as many sites of the South African reality to scrutiny. And also to provide mechanisms for critiquing the ideologies on which so many of our assumptions are founded.

And that seems to me, and somebody told me, that that can't happen because there are other considerations that you are not factoring into it. I expect somebody will say that you are not factoring the consideration that at the end of the day, we need advertisers for our papers, we need to make sure that we make money, otherwise Mathatha would still be the editor of Sunday Times today. But somehow Mathatha threatened the viability of the Sunday Times and they got rid of him. But the fact of the matter is that there's a political statement that gets made all the time.

There is equally a statement that is made about what does it take – and we're not examining enough – what does it take to be beholden to so many other factors about what it is that we think we're trying to represent, as the media.

Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you very much for that. Before I go on to the next speaker, I forgot to mention on your programmes you've got Prof Swartz as one of the speakers. Unfortunately he's not going to make it. His house was broken into last night and he had to go back, and he wasn't able to make it back here. After the other speaker we're going to open up to the floor, but let's first go over to the next speaker. Thank you.

**PANELLIST**  
**Mr Mathatha Tsedu,**  
**Editor: City Press**

Thank you, Madam Chair. I spent the last three days in another conference with about ten other people who are also here, so I'm beginning to feel like a serial conference attendee. And when I looked at this paragraph that is supposed to be the topic that we are supposed to talk about, I realised that there were two professors here who are heads of very serious academic institutions, and my name is right at the end, I worked it all out that there won't be any need for me to say anything. The professors will deal with everything and I can then just come in and say I think I agree. But the other professor is not here, and I tried to say to Barney, say it all.

Well, I'm a journalist, so I think I'll cut through to the chase here and just deal with the real things. I think the issue that we are grappling with here is the issue around transformation in the media particularly. From around '93, '94, coming this way, the debate around transformation had centred around who owns the media. And the assumption was that once you change that, everything else would also happen. And to a large extent a lot of the ownership issues were dealt with. There are areas like where I work, where the company is wholly owned by white people. There is not even a shred of BEE there.

But by and large the issues of ownership were also dealt with in other areas but that did not

necessarily change anything. Because I think, as Barney was saying, the change must not happen at the control of the means of production. It must happen at the control of the production of knowledge. So unless you change the interior also, if you just change the ownership, it is not going to happen.

We have to also accept that we are dealing with a legacy of our own colonial past, and it is not something that just affects us here in South Africa alone. The colonial masters created the means through which we were able to communicate with each other within the nation states, and between the states. And when colonialism ended and the downsizing of the Reuters and the AFPs started kicking in, there was very little communication that was going on. But we were still, our communication line was still with Europe, and that is why somebody else was saying here earlier on, if Princess Diana dies we almost all go into mourning, but we don't even know who the wife of the King of the Baganda in Uganda is.

So the challenge then is how do you create a new reality that is focused on who we are. If we are concerned about Eurocentrism and think that the answer is Afrocentrism, how do you actually go about it? There are two challenges that I think I'll talk about today. If you look at SABC Africa, and speaking as someone who once worked at the SABC and who understands some of the dynamics inside, there was a time when we offered, as the SABC, that the SABC Africa feed can be taken by any of the national broadcast services overnight as a free feed to run, for nothing. Nobody took it, because those governments in those countries were saying, SABC Africa is too militant, it's pushing the South African agenda, and they are not going to allow their airwaves to be used to propagate a kind of Mbeki-ism or Mbeki ideology and those sorts of things. And so nobody took it up.

Namibia today runs China overnight. They will not take SABC Africa because it pushes a South African agenda, but they will take China, because China pushes a Chinese agenda and it doesn't really matter in Namibia, I suppose. The China-centrism is better than South Africanism.

So that's, I think, one of the key challenges. If we are ever going to be able to break the mould of the CNNs and the BBCs, we need to actually get an institution like SABC Africa accepted within the continent, because it is presently the only model for a continent-wide communication mechanism that can allow us to understand each other. But it faces the politics of nationalism, which then almost kills whatever it is that is being attempted.

The second thing around moving from Eurocentrism to Afrocentrism is that if you look at the booklet from Media Turner that is part of your packs, there's research that has been done, and you look at who are the people who are being quoted, who are the experts that are being used and all of that, you will find that it says males are the most quoted people, and whites. And you would say to yourself, if you take the SABC as an example again, why would the SABC continue to use white experts on issues that black people should be available as experts to make those viewpoints?

Last night I was on Lerato Mbele's show at 10.00. I know the producer quite well, Kedibone, and I was saying to her, why are you coming to me? Didn't you find your normal white people today to interview? And she told me what I knew. I was saying it purposely because I know her, it was not a serious accusation that I was making. But she said to me, each day they sit there and they try and find black experts to come in, but because of the nature of their programme, they will only be able to start phoning people between two and three in the afternoon, asking them to be in the studio at 10.00. Black people don't want to come at 10 o'clock, so they end up with the experts from the South African Institute of International Affairs from Wits, that they will phone at six or seven, and those guys will be ready to come.

Now, what is the lesson here? I think there is an inability or refusal by black experts to understand that they have a key role to play in the arena of public opinion in a way that is actually shameful. I'm in a better situation now because I work for a weekly newspaper, so we

can talk to people on Tuesday and say we'll want the piece on Thursday afternoon.

But I worked on daily newspapers where you want the piece, you want a comment here and now and the guy will say, I need to go and look up the book. And somebody will say to you, that piece can only be ready in two weeks. This is a newspaper. In two weeks time I'll be dealing with a different issue altogether. That issue that you want to bring me your opinion on in two weeks, it's dead. So there's an absence of servingness around the people who should help us turn away from Eurocentrism to Afrocentrism, that makes life extremely difficult.

As I was saying earlier, I spent the last two, three days at another conference, the African Editors Forum. We were grappling with the same issue. How does it come that despite all the positive things that are happening on the continent, it's only the bad ones that continue to dominate the imagery of this continent. To what extent are we, as African editors, responsible through our own inability to do our work? And we committed ourselves to at least three things that I will name here in order to play some role in changing this.

One is an exchange programme, where I'm hoping that I'll go and edit some paper in Ghana one day for a month, while the Ghanaian editor comes and edits City Press for a month. And hopefully when I come back, I will be a better man.

But the second thing is that using the database of the Forum itself, the Forum's membership, stories will be commissioned, not through AFP and Reuters but through the membership. If I want a story about why President Wade in Senegal is locking up his former Prime Minister, and what is the real story there, I'm not going to pick up an AFP copy but I'll ask an editor in Senegal to do that story for me.

The third thing is in order for that to actually happen in an effective way, you need the political space that recognises the importance of freedom of journalists to do their work. There are too many places on our continent where that space is either too limited or non-existent. So part and parcel of the process that the African Editors Forum is committing itself to is lobbying for governments to observe the protocols that they have signed up to at the AU and the United Nations and wherever else.

And I want to say, as I conclude, that unless those things happen – Thami was saying this morning that this conference is going to be annual – unless those things happen, we'll sit here next year and speak like this again.

Thank you very much.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you, both the speakers. I now want to open up the floor to discussion, questions, debate, and as before, it's not just towards the two people sitting on the Panel in the front here. Can we take about four speakers first. Ihron, and then Thami. Do I see anymore hands? Okay, let's go to four.

**DR RENSBURG:** Thanks, Chair. I was somewhat taken aback, addressing both Barney and Mathatha, this morning when one of our professors made the observation that the public broadcaster is somewhat confounded by a kind of civil service journalism. I'm raising this issue because I think that if we are going to be able to make the kind of progress that we need to make, then it is necessary for us to understand where we are right now. It's not only for theoretical purposes that we need to understand it, I believe, it's also for strategic reasons that we need to examine where we are. What is the state that we are in at this point in time. And the question that I have really is, if you could perhaps do a preliminary teasing out of this state that we are in.

Let me just throw out some of these pointers. As I said, one of them being a kind of civil service journalism. By that I assume that the Professor meant a kind of government reporting

journalism, as opposed to a state broadcaster journalism, as opposed to what I call a narrow nationalistic journalism, by which is meant the kind of Rwanda journalism that preceded the genocide, the kind of war on terror journalism that sits in the US, which is angry, inflammatory, narrowly patriotic. And perhaps fourthly, a kind of patriotic journalism, which is, in my view, about providing context, about depth, about balance, about fairness, about presenting the case of the state and the antagonists of the state, if I could put it that way. So I'm just throwing those out to ask if our comrades up there can assist us in assessing the state that we are in.

I wanted to throw in another one, a fifth category for purposes of completeness, at least in my head, which is a kind of narrow, aloof, western journalism, which is always anti-state. I'm not speaking about the bizarre and the frivolous kind of journalism, I'm speaking about the so-called serious-minded journalism. One typology clearly which could be this aloof, this narrow perspective on society and on change.

And the reason I'm raising it, and I'll finish here, is I'm suggesting both to Barney and Mathatha that it's not for theoretical reasons. I think the question that we are asking here is, where are we? What is the state we are in, in order for us to look at the measures that we can take as the media, to push on and to play the kind of role within the Constitution that Jody has spoken of earlier this morning that we're expected to play. Thank you.

**PROF BERGER:** Thank you. I was a speaker earlier and I don't want to take too much time, but I just wanted to make two comments that I think are important, because I think, whether journalism is Eurocentric or Afrocentric, it should be an exercise trying to establish facts on a timely basis, and the importance or the meaning of those facts. So there were a few factual mistakes, I think, in Barney Pityana's presentation which I just wanted to correct, and I think it's important.

This Women's Day Rally that he referred to, the person who was there representing SABC TV actually did film the protest, and then later made the editorial decision not to send it. He was not a journalist and he wasn't fired. He was a cameraman as opposed to a journalist, and he was a freelancer, and SABC have decided not to use him anymore after this. Basically he lacked the news judgement which would have allowed him to say, this thing is significant. And in fact the SABC Radio people who were at that event, they judged it as actually significant and they filed on it.

So I think the question we have to ask of that incident is, is it important for the South African public to know that Jacob Zuma supporters had a protest at this rally where the new Deputy President was speaking? I think it is important and I think it's a fair assumption, and I think journalism should have actually done that. This particular individual was not trained as a journalist and he didn't actually understand. It was only the next day when he watched his footage, after receiving criticism, that he actually realised this toyi-toyi had some significance.

Now how you report such a thing becomes important, because one TV station, ETV, then reported that the Deputy President was booed. Now it depends on what you mean by booing. In fact, this incident took place in a separate marquee where these people were chanting 'JZ, JZ, Zuma, Zuma, Zuma'. They were not saying *Pansi Pumzile*, which to me would be booing. So it was a protest, but I don't think it should be construed as booing. Nor was it clear to us when we were watching the footage that she had to cut her speech short, as ETV was claiming. So there's a question of how do you report these things, and I think ETV hyped the thing, and SABC didn't cover it.

Now, why did SABC not cover it? Why did this cameraman not cover it? Because he was a cameraman, not a journalist. The radio journalist did cover it, as I said. But why was he not briefed to cover it? And that's because the people who were managing him didn't see that this was a possibility that this kind of story could arise. Why did they not listen to their own radio bulletin to hear that there was a story here? Because they were working in a silo, only looking at

what TV footage they had.

And just to make a final quick response to Ihron Rensburg, when I was saying a civil service mentality or civil service journalism, I was not meaning a pro-government journalism. I would not accuse SABC of being the government broadcaster. I think SABC is non-partisan in that respect. I think it's neutral but it's not proactively journalistic. Now whether one says a proactively journalistic organisation that is anticipating stories is Afrocentric or Eurocentric I'm not sure, but it seems to me this is an important story, and SABC journalists, we should encourage and develop them so that they actually become competitive on this level.

Because in this particular instance, it was a failure of the journalistic vision, I think, to anticipate the story and then manage to cover it, and mobilise the resources to cover it. As a result of which other organisations, who have a certain interpretation of journalism, that is TV journalism, managed to kind of steal the thunder in a way, and then SABC was left with a bit of egg on its face at the time. Thank you.

**MR NTENTENI:** Thank you. I just want to share some observations insofar as this topic is concerned, and some of these observations are actually directly provoked by what Prof Pityana – some of the statements that he made. To me, these are complex issues, these are complex issues and we need to go a little bit deeper in terms of our understanding of these complex issues. I would just briefly – for example, Prof Pityana says the interpretation of reality. Who interprets that reality? What is the reality of the South African situation? Do we understand that reality? And who interprets that reality?

We're talking about the future, Prof Barney, the shaping of the future. How do we want to shape that future? Are we all in agreement that the direction we say we are charting is the direction that actually we need to be going in this country? I think one needs to go back a little bit in time insofar as discussing the question of the media is concerned. Before now, before 1994, during the days of struggle, the media represented two strengths. That was the Afrikaans media, which to a very great extent supported the status quo, or supported the apartheid regime in terms of the philosophical approach, or the ideological approach that that government had at the time.

You had the English media, which at certain times vacillated. It vacillated between a liberal point of view, and also at the same time, when the government fell hard on them, they then reversed and they engaged in self-censorship. There is a third strand during those times, which strand was not represented, and that was the strand of liberation. The voice of liberation in this country was not represented in the media, with the exception of maybe what you could call the alternative media at the time.

The situation in this country has changed. We're talking transformation. Can we say that the media in this country has really transformed? And if it hasn't transformed, can it then drive an agenda of transformation, if itself it has not transformed? Because transformation, I understand it to mean a deep and thorough-going change which affects all institutions of society. And I don't want to believe that the media is itself immune from this process of transformation. Has it transformed, and can it drive that agenda of transformation?

What do we mean by transformation? Do the people in Sandton understand transformation in the same way as the people in Alexandra understand transformation? Do we want the same thing in this country? The fact of the matter is that, yes, apartheid is gone. Some people may say the struggle is over. But to me it would seem that the form that the struggle has taken has changed. We are now in the terrain of the contestation of ideas, which Prof Barney Pityana – and it is now a question of the hegemony of ideas – whose ideas prevail in this South Africa, which will then determine in which direction this country is going to go.

If you take by way of example the question of the changes in name; Tshwane. When that question is raised – because the name 'Pretoria' is itself representative of a certain power

grouping. That name came as a result of the defeat of the people, and then Pretoria became the name of that city. It represents the fact that a particular group of people are in power. That is why it became Pretoria. Now when another group is in power and it wants to change and say Tshwane, it becomes a problem. And that is why, again, we get into culture, which is in itself a terrain of struggle.

It is a false argument to say that when you change the name of Pretoria into Tshwane, it entails millions and millions of Rands. It is about our identity, it is about who we are. That's why the only paper that I know, and I read something about this, is a paper that says it is distinctly African. I read that kind of analysis in that paper but not in others. And therefore you want to say, are these things contextualised in our media? Can the media truly, truly interpret the reality of South Africa, if itself it remains untransformed?

Finally, I would like to say that it is through whose eyes that the reality of the South African situation is being interpreted? Is this idea of nation building, building democracy, a non-sexist society truly represented in the mainstream media? Let me conclude by just saying categorically, I think the argument about the Daily Sun is again a false argument, that it is about money or anything. It is about alienating people from the reality of this South Africa. It is an interpretation of another reality. The black people are superstitious, the black people don't want to think deeply about issues, black people are okay with the kind of thing like "impregnated by a snake", etc, etc. It is a clear ideological position which is intended to alienate our people and force them, or at least not make them think about those issues that are pertinent in this country.

What is pertinent in this country, and are we really, really getting to grips with what is pertinent? Bra'Joe quoted the poverty in this country, he quoted LSMs, etc, etc, all of those things. In this democracy, do we all want to see the people of this country emerging out of the levels of poverty in which they are? Do we want to see the transference of wealth in this country? And considering where we come from, the history of this country, is the media representative of that? And is the media then playing a role in terms of transforming this society? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Can we have the next speaker please. Can we just try and be shorter so that we can give more people time to speak, and, more importantly, so that we can give our Panellists time to answer.

**MS LUTHULI:** Prof Pityana, before you came in here, I did pose a question to the past Panel regarding issues of objectivity. And I find it quite amazing that journalists will never want to deal with the issue, but you have dealt with it. In my mind you are literally saying what I was saying, that objectivity is subjective, and it really is shaped by where you come from and who you are. So, Mathatha, you mentioned something about black people or black intellectuals not wanting to participate in being quoted in some of the stories.

I must say I'm not surprised. I'm not surprised that they do not want to be part of this. If you look at the level of journalism and the kind of publications that we have, people get scared of being quoted in the publications because they do not know what the agenda is, number one. Because first of all, journalists come to you to interview you when they know exactly what the outcome is supposed to be, that they want to see in their story. But it is also about today they see you in a nice story, and the next time you are in *Shwashwe* because we are about - you know, the PHD syndrome.

But also the fact that when people are talking about juniorisation of the newsroom, it is not only about young people. It is also about the level and the quality of people that you send out to interview other people. Half the time they do not know the issues, they will not tell you they do not understand, they go back and write and misquote you, and I'm not sure if it's even the editors that are responsible for that. But I think we have a serious challenge, as journalists, and especially black journalists in the country, in deciding what our agenda is. Are we going to be part of the development of this country, the shaping of this new nation, or are we going to be

part of the destruction of our society?

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. We will come back to the other people who had up their hands. To the Panellists, thank you.

**PROF PITAYANA:** Guy, I can't resist coming back at you. You should have known that. I'm not a journalist, I'm a critical observer of what I see happening around me. And quite frankly I was amazed that this particular issue seemed to have been accepted with equanimity around the country, in political and other circles, because it was actually very problematic for me, the way this was handled.

You talk about establishing facts and the meaning of facts. The truth of the matter is that facts have got a kind of reality of their own, but when they are projected, they are no longer the facts that were there when you saw them, they are productions of somebody's mind, they are something else by that time. Because the moment you see something and you're going to represent it, it's not what you saw that you represent, it's what you actually have taken through yourself. And so I do think that it is important that we recognise that the reality that we see is represented as a product of the people who actually see.

I was telling you about what I was reading in the papers as a critical reader, if you like. For me as a critical reader, what I think I saw happening was the operations of a liberal paradigm about journalism. I didn't interview the man at all but I could imagine, I could imagine the man, whether you call him a cameraman or a journalist is neither here nor there for me, but I could imagine the man could have said, I actually don't believe that any actions of naughtiness by a group of young people is something that I want to represent. That would be an honest position. You may disagree with it but it's an honest position.

But it may well be a paradigm that arises out of one's political orientation, but it could also be one that arises out of a cultural orientation, a cultural understanding of people who are in authority, or people who are older, or how you actually deal with certain people in a particular environment. It amazes me that in presenting what happened, there was not sufficient presentation of why the journalist – in fact, the integrity of the decision that the journalist or cameraman actually took at that point, because I do think that the integrity of that has a value of its own, even if that person's employers thought differently.

And when they do, they're using their power of the manipulation and management of the ideology and the ideological makeup of the institution, which they may well be entitled to do. You may well say that the man lacked judgement, but I don't think so. I think the man exercised judgement. You just didn't like his judgement. It was a judgement that was there, you just didn't like it. You just didn't think that it fitted with what the SABC should be. But he did exercise a judgement.

And that's the point, that actually there was a process here that was at work that says that the only way in which we perceive and understand the SABC and the journalism of the SABC must be that which actually follows everything that may be perceived to be against the government, or harassing the Deputy President or something like that. But that man did exercise judgement, you just didn't like it. But you have a right to say, as the SABC, that actually we expect our journalists to reflect their judgement in a different way. But I think you should tell that person, that actually we like your judgement to be something else.

Then I think that you have a problem if you say that, because you'll be saying to your journalist that he mustn't actually use his own intelligence, his professional integrity, his independence of mind and what he wants to happen. So I think that was problematic, personally, and I think that at the end of the day, whatever happened at the end of the day compromised the integrity of your journalist at the SABC. Because it says whether they are cameramen or journalists, whatever you call them, it says to them that actually wherever I am, there is a particular way in

which I'm expected to exercise my judgement.

And it may well be correct that the journalists need to be aware of that in terms of the ideology of the SABC, and that brings me to the point that Ihron has raised about so-called what state are we in. I think the state we are in, in South Africa is very, very fluid. What is the state we are in? I think that the best way of representing what we believe about this country and its future is to realise that in an amazing way, South Africa today is a cauldron of a whole range of ideas and political contestations that are at work. That's not bad but it's just a reality.

But I think the comrade over there said so correctly, that in fact there are various efforts at shaping the future of this country. You may not like it, you may disagree, but in fact there's a contestation about how the future of this country should be shaped. And there is a role for the media in this, and indeed, it may well be the case that the media are playing a role in the shaping of that consciousness that is taking place at the moment. And I don't believe that I or anyone is asking or believes that the media can ever be a faithful representer of what they see around, because we know that's not happening, that's not what is happening. We're not even expecting that.

At the very least what we are expecting is to present to us equally, in equal terms, because I find more and more these days in the Mail & Guardian and places like that, I never really quite know where I'm being presented with the news, even if it's filtered news, and where I am presented with opinions and views. But I think we need to be more, or attempt at least to represent the diversity of this society more than what we see at the moment. We need to represent the diversity not just of the culture in a very narrow sense but the diversity of the ideas and knowledge that arises from the differences of our cultural understandings in a lot more, which I think could have been the case with this cameraman as well.

Because much of our cultural orientation does shape us to behave in particular ways, to express ourselves in particular ways, to respond in particular ways to the things that we see around us. I don't think there is a simple answer to the question where are we today, because by its nature, this country at the moment, thankfully, is very complex, it's not simple, and you'll find different answers from different of us who try to respond to that. Thank you.

**MR TSEDU:** Ihron, I think we must accept that you're never going to be able to please everyone. I think when Guy was talking about this civil service journalism, there was a time, too, when I felt like when I'm watching the bulletin, maybe it is indeed civil service journalism, what I'm seeing. I do not believe that there should never be a Cabinet Minister or the President in the bulletin. I don't subscribe to that kind of school that thinks Cabinet Ministers and the President don't belong in a bulletin. But when you string five ministers together at the top of a bulletin of 18 minutes, you are into something else, you have crossed the line, because that bulletin is no longer really reflective of what is happening or what happened during that day. The majority part of that bulletin is just representing what happened within government on that day. So you run into the issue of balance.

But as I was saying, there are people who think maybe you shouldn't even have one single Cabinet Minister, especially your own Cabinet Minister, but they won't mind if you have George Bush night after night. For example, I've not seen anybody complaining to the SABC about the fact that SABC Africa takes African Journal, which is recorded in the offices of the State Department of Condoleeza Rice, and it's run on SABC Africa. Nobody says you're taking American propaganda and using it here. But if that programme was being run from the Tanzanian Foreign Ministry, it would have been an indication of how you've gone into civil service journalism on a continental basis.

There was a time when President Mbeki – I think he was still Deputy President at the time - there was this thing about whether there should be 30 minutes every week where he could do a programme. It's not a new thing. George Bush does that every week. But there was this whole

thing that, no, it is wrong to actually do it. Now he writes his online column, and all the newspapers on Friday go and check what he's writing about and then write their own stories from there. But it is wrong for him to do that on SABC. But if he does it on a website and the newspapers can pick it up there, it is actually wrong; and there's a difficulty with that kind of logic.

But you have to then make up your mind about what it is that you want this corporation to do and do it correctly. As I was saying, for me, when you string five Cabinet Ministers, one after another, I move. Pearl was saying that the reason why the people who should help us turn our media into some level of Afrocentrism are unwilling to do so, it's because of the level of journalism that they encounter. Maybe it is true but I don't buy the argument. But let's say, for argument's sake, you're right. So what?

Whose ideas then must get into these publications and shape the destiny of this country? Whose ideas, then, if those who should, will fold their hands and sit back and say, no, you send a little boy to me, so I'm not going to talk to this little boy. We're not talking about sending somebody to go and interview, I'm talking about picking up a phone and saying: Judge Hlope is under attack. Is there a black lawyer out there who understands the issues, who wants to contextualise it for me? I'm not sending a little boy to you.

If we were to pick up a phone now and phone any editor around the country and say, is anyone there sitting with a piece from a black lawyer, who has sat down and just produced a piece and sent it to somebody and said, can you publish this, I really think this is a view that needs to get out there, I can bet my last little Rand in my pocket now that there isn't a piece like that out there. But the people who think Judge Hlope should move are commenting day in and day out and creating an atmosphere in which Hlope cannot continue in office. Who defends him? Are we all going to say, no, we're being sent little boys and little girls who don't know what question to ask me? I think that attitude is irresponsible, personally, given the challenges of changing the paradigm in which we live.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Can I just check with Bra'Thami, is it a speaker or do you want to give input to those who spoke just now? Okay, can we give Bra'Thami two minutes to give input, and then we go to the two speakers at the end there. Bra' Thami.

**MR NTENTENI:** Thank you, Chairperson. First of all, let me say I'm very sorry to come in midstream. I was at another meeting, so some of the points I may mention might have been raised earlier. I'm very sorry about it. But I think that when we talk about Afrocentrism, and I'm taking it from the issue raised by Mathatha and Pearl, on the extent to which black professionals and black experts are prepared to come forward and be quoted in the media, and also to participate in the public debate.

I'm going to give two examples here. A few weeks ago there was a debate, a very hot debate on radio, SAfm, and it involved some black experts and so on. After that I met somebody who was very impressed with this debate, and was also putting his view across. I said to him, look, why did you not put your view across while the debate was going on, instead of keeping quiet? Then he said, honestly – that's why I'm not mentioning his name – look, I'm still discussing deals with these white people. Now if I express this view, I am going to interfere with those deliberations. He was very honest about it and straightforward, and I'm not going to tell you what his name is because it's not important.

The second example I'm going to give is when Prof William Magoba was under siege from the liberals at Wits, we went to certain people because it was tiresome to have Thami Mazwai and John Quelane on radio and writing articles defending Magoba. So we went to certain people and said, look, why don't you participate in this debate, because this is not an issue of Magoba having altered his qualifications, but Magoba has challenged the status quo at Wits and he has said that this must be an African university, and the powers that be are appalled just at the mere

mention of this. So shouldn't we really address that issue as the black intelligentsia? There was a lot of ho humming, and some medical people even said, no, it serves him right. When he was abroad he was asked to go and be principal at Medunsa. He refused to be principal at Medunsa and instead went to Wits, so these Wits people are fixing him up, and so on.

Now you have that type of rationalisation within our intelligentsia. And I have also been involved in a lot of debates, and people would come to me and say, I agree with you. You've made a very good point. And then when I say, look, why did you not join the debate and agree with me in public - I am not saying that Pearl is wrong, but what I'm saying is that I tend to be more sympathetic to what Mathatha is saying, because we interact with the black intelligentsia on a day to day basis. Even the President himself has complained and said why are there not enough black voices in the public debate? The President himself has complained, and various other Cabinet Ministers have complained.

And the issue is, when are we, as the black intelligentsia, going to participate in this debate? Now sometimes I think, and I'm getting to the next point, what we should not forget is that what we are dealing with here, the whole issue of Afrocentrism and Eurocentrism, has got to be viewed in context with the power balance, the global power balance and the power balance in South Africa. For as long as the economic power is wielded by certain people, each and every person says, it's in my interest to agree where wealth resides, because you want a piece of that action, you want a piece of that wealth.

And you find that even when you look at the whole issue internationally, it is not easy for smaller powers to disagree with the bigger powers, even if they've got a far better debate. Because the bigger powers wield the type of resources that the smaller powers will wield (*sic*). So I suspect that this is the same situation that we find. So you find that the whole issue of objectivity, to round off, is going to be influenced by the power balance in the country, because the people who wield power share this view.

You are going to look forward to being affirmed by those people in everything that you do, rather than to be affirmed by people who, in your view, do not wield power. These are some of the issues that I believe do impact on the whole issue of whether we are going to have an Afrocentric media or we are going to have a Eurocentric media. Thank you very much.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you.

**MS MAGAPE:** Thanks. Media is one of the most influential institutions in the world, and if used correctly it can assist very much in the development of African countries. But the problem with our media is the fact that it is not reflecting what is happening in African countries. The transformation of the media will be difficult, and the reporting system will always be very radical, very reactionary to the African countries. Because firstly, if you don't deal with the syllabus, the syllabus that you use, when you go to tertiary and you study for journalism, the things that you learn there, the system of reporting, the way you have to identify what is newsworthiness and what is not, it is very, very European and very reactionary.

And there is no way that that can transform the media institutions of our country. That will leave us with having very controversial issues instead of developmental issues reported in our media. Like for example, the African reality, we know, is poverty, is under-development, is crime, is hunger, is diseases, but then if you go to – if you can take all the newspapers that have been produced since January until now, all that you get will be the Jacob Zuma saga, you will get a person raped, but there is no solution around those issues. There is nowhere that you speak about how do you resolve the issues of poverty in Africa, how do you deal with unemployment.

The other example I want to give you is that you'll get journalists going to the NGC of the ANC, for instance, and there will be many issues that will be resolved in those NGCs. But what they will concentrate on is the succession debate, as if the whole three days of that conference were

concentrating on the succession debate. You'll get the SACP having a Red October. It will be covered just for five minutes in the media, and in the newspaper it will be given a very short column.

Those are the things that are dealing with poverty and those are the organisations that are reflecting what is happening in African countries, in the poor people's environment. But because it's not of the interest of the capitalist, and it is not bringing anything to them, like money and all those things, it is not helping, transformation will take a very long time unless we deal with the syllabus. Because our journalists need to be trained to report in a way that reflects our environment and the things that are affecting us.

The second thing is around SABC Africa. I think whoever came up with the concept of SABC Africa meant well, but it needs to be revisited, because what SABC Africa is doing, it just wants South African ideologies and South African things dominating the entire Africa. I watch SABC Africa every day, but most of the things you get there is what is happening in South Africa. You don't get anything from Liberia, you just get little coverage from other African countries, and you can hardly call that SABC Africa. To me, it's just a South African – another SABC3 programme for South Africans. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you.

**COMMENT:** Mine is about multiparty democracy. We know that there are no such things as free and fair elections anywhere in the world, and we can say a lot about that, but what I want to find out is what is our agenda in South Africa in creating a multiparty democracy? I'm saying this from my experiences, having worked as a spokesperson for the PAC in the last elections and I found out that most of the time, advertising revenue determined which party was going to win elections, and the ruling party got most of the attention in terms of the SABC and the print media generally. And somehow we are creating a one-party state in this country.

The ideological orientation – I mean, the people who are currently on the Board of the SABC come from these political traditions of PAC, Azapo and so on, but now we have created a kind of scenario where we all seem to think like monolithic – and there are no differences of a black opinion. It's almost like we're all members of the ANC, and I'm worried about this. It doesn't seem like we are creating - we are aware that we are creating a Hutu/Tutsi situation in South Africa. So I'd like you please to comment on that.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you.

**MS ARNDT:** My name is Korina Arndt. I'm a post-graduate at UCT. We've talked a lot about the whole debate Afrocentrism in the media versus Eurocentrism, and I feel that we haven't really touched on the implications this has for the day to day work of journalists on the ground. This whole debate, to me, has two dimensions. The one is what do we actually cover? We need more coverage of African issues. Fine, that can quite easily be done if we really want to do it.

The second dimension actually refers to the way of reporting. To me, the question is: what is African reporting as opposed to European or North American reporting? Are there different news values? And what do we tell the guy on the ground how to cover stories on a daily basis? Which news values is he supposed to adhere to? Let's take the booring incident that Guy Berger doesn't like to call the booring incident. I think Barney Pityana was right, that that cameraman or journalist exercised his right. He actually did his job. He made a decision, and at that moment he said or he thought that Women's Day issues were the issue of the day and not party political infighting. Now did he adhere to African news values? I would like to pose that question to the Panel. What are African news values as opposed to Western news values? Thanks.

**COMMENT:** Prof Pityana asked what academics are studying. Well, one of the things we're studying is whether there is one SABC News and it's all equally Afrocentric, and I just want to

say I don't think it is. You've got very different news channels and they're at very different stages of Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism. Just to give a small example, we studied systematically three months of news on Zimbabwe last year, between Nguni News and SABC3 News. Only 60% of the stories were the same. And in those 60% of stories that looked the same, the ideological slant is often very different.

So I think the question the SABC needs to ask itself and that we need to ask the SABC, is this a good thing, that we have within one organisation quite different newscasts and in a sense, the marketing of news, Afrocentric news, maybe for a more African audience and Eurocentric for a European audience.

So I think that's a kind of worry. Shouldn't we all be asking whether we shouldn't be getting the same news and the same debates on our news? I think that's quite an important debate that we haven't had. Why are we getting such different news? It hasn't been studied, there are no academic studies on this and I'm not sure that the people of the SABC even know the extent to which their own newscasts are different.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Yes, that side.

**MR LOUW:** Raymond Louw, Southern Africa Report. We've heard a lot about objective approaches to news reporting and about influences, ideology. A question that has been worrying me for quite some time, particularly in view of the declamation by certain people in the SABC, particularly, but I think it also applies in certain newsrooms, that they are members of the African National Congress. Now if you are a member of the African National Congress, you have signed the following declaration:

"I solemnly declare that I will abide by the aims and objectives of the African National Congress, as set out in the Constitution, the Freedom Charter and other duly adopted policy positions. That I am joining the organisation voluntarily and without motives of material advantage or personal gain. That I agree to respect the Constitution and the structures and to work as a loyal member of the organisation. That I will place my energies and skills at the disposal of the organisation and carry out tasks given to me. That I will work towards making the ANC an even more effective instrument of liberation in the hands of the people and that I will defend the unity and integrity of the organisation and its principles and combat any tendency towards disruption and factionalism."

And then it lays down, when you join, that you have certain rights and duties, and I'll concentrate on the duties:

"An ANC member has the duty to (and I'll only read two or three) take all necessary steps to understand and carry out the aims, policy and programme of the ANC. Explain the aims, policy and programme of the ANC to the people. Combat propaganda detrimental (I wonder if that's shouting at the Deputy President?) to the interests of the ANC and defend the policy, aims and programme of the ANC."

I say, how can any journalist who's dedicated to independent, impartial, objective journalism carry out those duties for the ANC? Or, alternatively, how can any ANC member carry out the duties of free, impartial and independent journalism, if he has subscribed to carry out those duties? It's a conflict of interest of major proportions and it may explain why five Cabinet Ministers appear on a broadcast programme. It may also explain why the cameraman decided not to send a piece of film in, although one report said that he sent all the film that he'd taken on that day in and maybe somebody else took the decision.

I think this is a very serious situation, because in the Broadcast Act there is a specific clause which says that there shouldn't be any political influence in the selection of Board members or of members of the staff of the SABC.

The difference, incidentally, in terms of Afrocentrism and Eurocentrism, is that when I put this point to a British journalist, he said: "Oh, no, I'm a member of the Labour Party." I said: "Do you have duties like that?" He said: "Oh, no, no, in the Labour Party I've merely got to affirm to uphold the principles of the Labour Party." This goes much further than just affirming the upholding of certain principles, it is, in fact, carrying out duties. I think that that is something that has to be thought about.

Incidentally, of course, it conflicts with another Constitutional principle, that is that the person may form associations with anybody that he wishes to form associations with, which means to belong to any political party. But I think there is a conflict of interest. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Can we take those five names, I said there'd be five. Can I identify the next, please? Starting with Christine, the gentleman right at the back, here's number three, number four and number five. Okay. Or anybody who has anything to say in response to what came from the floor, whether from our Panel or from the floor.

**COMMENT:** I thought you were going to bring these issues that were identified and then allow us just to summarise.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Alright, do you want to do that? Okay. Can we then start with you, Christina.

**MS QUNTA:** I want to raise an issue with regard to the question of a value system in shaping our perceptions of our reality in this country and on the African continent, because the two are interlinked. And I raise this issue in the context of the discussion earlier this morning around the Daily Sun and Deon du Plessis story. I noticed that Guy Berger, who's normally very phlegmatic, seems to get quite worked up about it and to some extent I understand why. I have had the fortune, or maybe the misfortune of never having read one single copy of that newspaper.

But what I do hear about it is that every issue, I don't know if it's every day, but every issue has a half-naked young African girl in it. I'm not sure if it's on a Sunday or if it's during the week days and if they still have it. But some time in the middle of last year I was approached to go on the Tim Modise Show on 702, to denounce that from the perspective of being a female and being a role model, and I refused. The reason why I refused, I was then copied, faxed a copy of a page full of these young girls, some of their breasts were exposed, there were various states of undress, and next to them was a telephone number which audiences were asked to call to choose which one was the sexiest.

Now if that was my daughter, I would have been very angry with her and done something about it. So the first issue is, how do we, as parents, allow our children? Because those children seemed to me no older than 18 years. What value system allows us, as parents, to abdicate our responsibility and allow our children to be photographed in that state of undress?

I refused to go on radio for two reasons. The first was that I don't read this newspaper, it clearly is something that muddles somewhere in the gutter. The second reason why I objected, is that I cannot become the fighter for every single cause that exists in this country. The reason why I had that attitude is that the woman who contacted me, who was so outraged about it, was herself not prepared to go on radio. And like Thami mentioned, she said no, you know, I'm a businesswoman and it might affect my business. But I'm a practising lawyer and me sitting and talking about everything that is wrong in this country could affect my practice but I still do it.

So in a sense, the value system that informs someone like Deon du Plessis, in writing the sort of stuff that he allows to go into that newspaper, is clearly at odds with the community that forms his main target. I don't know what we can do about that because clearly it is very popular. But then, as someone said earlier on, if you put pornography on a newspaper and you have naked women and people having sex there, that will probably sell 2 or 3 million copies. The issue then,

for me is the value system, that is the value system of the majority of the people in this country, is not reflected in the media.

I mean, there's been many criticisms of the SABC today and I think no one here minds that, from the SABC, because I think it's important to have these things aired in a public debate. But I do think, and Dali can probably say this more, is that the SABC, as a public broadcaster, does try to attend to some of the issues and, in a cultural sense, try and represent, at least to some extent, the cultural values that inform the majority of the people in this country.

But I think the emergence of the tabloids is as much a problem as the predominance, or as someone called it, the hegemony of the white liberal discourse in this country that creates a situation where even though black people constitute the majority of the people in the country, their points of view, their cultural values and their voice is absent. We've seen this in the Media Tenor Report about the quotations being white and male. We've known that, the BLA have known that three, four, five years ago, when it launched an investigation of racism in the media.

But the issue is, we can talk about it, what is it that we do? Because in spite of the fact that the majority of the major newspapers in Gauteng are in fact edited by black people, the content and the products of those newspapers have not changed significantly. For me, that says something about black journalists and the value systems they have, or the lack of courage they have to assert their value system and their interpretation of reality. So in this country, with the exception of maybe one newspaper, what is reflected, the reality of South Africa and the continent that is reflected in the print media is the perception and the conceptualisation of that reality by a minority of the people in this country.

So the liberal ideological perspective becomes the default perspective and occasionally the black perspective gets through. Certainly, I think that is the problem that we deal with. So when we talk about Eurocentric and Afrocentric, I think in a sense, the black perspective is the minority perspective and the reasons why this is are manifold. But I think we should, as black journalists, as the black intelligentsia, we must take responsibility for that ourselves.

**CHAIRPERSON:** At the back there.

**KHOLISILE:** Thank you. I just want to find out, this question of transformation, who is responsible for transforming media? Because we all talk about that media is not transforming, but who is responsible for driving that transformation? Is media merely a mirror or a messenger? Then there is a question also that the economics actually determine what gets published or the views, whether the views can come or not, then the economic interests are central in bringing the views that are reflected here as the minority. Then is there any need for this debate because we know the distribution of economics. If that is what counts, in terms of the views that mirror the South African society, then is there a need for this debate and where is this debate taking us?

Maybe I need more clarity on this thing called Afrocentrism and Eurocentrism. Who are the people that are writing? Are they from Europe or are they from Africa? Who are they? Is it a question of colour or what exactly are we talking about? Maybe if I could get some clarity on that, because I never see people jetting in from another continent, coming to reflect the South African society. Then what exactly is this debate about Euro and Afrocentrism and where are we going?

**CHAIRPERSON:** Can we get a mike to the gentleman in the front here, please.

**PROF SIBANDA:** Just some quick reflections. I think hegemony, when we are talking about the media, we need to be a bit precise. In its clinical sense, used by Antonio Gramsci, it meant that people assimilated ideas of the oppressor and made them their own. So it's very important that when we are critiquing this, we understand that the people are actually, they themselves, the

journalists and the editors, are actually propelled by their own inertia through the concept of hegemony. It's very important to understand that. I was going to talk about it but unfortunately I didn't have time.

And secondly, I want to invite Barney to go a step further. I was very happy that he mentioned that the camera person had a right to choose what pictures to use and so on. In fact, I was rather hurt when I heard that the SABC were trying to defend why they did not show the Vice President being booed. I really clapped and thought that the SABC were correct to have deliberately left the story out. I was so sad that I heard that perhaps somebody was apologetic about it and eventually fired one or two people. I hope they reinstate them if they were ever fired. But anyway, this has been corrected by Guy.

I'm saying this very, very seriously on a matter of principle in terms of the social responsibility of media. This is what South Africa is about, the media has a social responsibility. Who, in their best of minds, can forget what used to happen in KwaZulu-Natal? Okay, given we can claim that it was the third force and what have you, but I think it is important in Africa to be very sensitive to things like that, because it can happen. One of the speakers in the morning actually warned us that things like that are just bubbles and showing the Deputy President being booed perhaps could trigger some of the things perhaps which we are seeing and so on. So I really believe that the SABC was correct by default.

Finally, I think it is also important that we keep these principles. Libertarian press and what have you, which we were talking about in the morning, you have a situation where the actual foundation, the actual founders of the libertarian press, the United States, have lost compass. I will congratulate ETV for showing what our libertarian press was doing to the soldiers in Iraq, coaching them and telling them what to do and what to say when they were being interviewed on global media by the President, George Bush. None of our media cried about this. There was only one newspaper which wrote about this on Sunday, the Independent, it actually downloaded the picture which was shown on ETV which actually depicted the President of the United States and the Communications Officer coaching the United States troops what to say in the media.

I think we must be having some lessons here, those of us who thought perhaps America was the bastion of freedom, which we thought it was. I think it is important that debates like this continue where we begin to find our own ideology.

Finally, Ma'am, there is a question of objectivity which keeps coming up and is very critical and I thought Mathatha tried to deal with it slightly. I think it is important then when we are dealing with issues like objectivity and so on, we also look at principle. There are levels of truth. If I asked any of us about how many people are in front there, one would say there are three and one would then go further. But with somebody who was listening at the beginning, when the Chairperson was talking, would say, there are three but one is missing, their house was burgled. Now in terms of levels of the truth, who is telling the truth? Mathatha.

**CHAIRPERSON:** The lady in red on the side that had her hand up.

**COMMENT:** Thank you. Mine is just a concern on the issue of globalisation and information society. Since media is conceptual participation, if we talk of globalisation, which language should we use to express ourselves, as South Africans, since South Africa is a rainbow nation? While I'm asking this question, you should not forget that we are an information society that is jointed by technology. So in order for us to be engaged in globalisation, which language should we use to cater to all these nations in South Africa.

**CHAIRPERSON:** You're going to be the fifth speaker, but because you've spoken twice already, can I give this gentleman a chance and then we'll come back to you? Thank you.

**COMMENT:** Thank you, Madam Chair, for eventually being given this chance to speak. Right, I

want to address myself to this question of the colonial paradigm. You know, I'd also like to just maybe point out that the colonial paradigm goes beyond the Eurocentrism, I think there is also the American part, and there is also the Asian part, and maybe also the Japanese part, I don't know whether it's also Asian. Now, when we speak of the colonial paradigm I think we really have a mountain to climb here, as media practitioners. It does not just confine itself to the news, but it also goes onto other things like the representation of values. In our newspapers how do you represent values, what do you put on page 3? When you put pictures of little girls with ill-fitting swimming costumes, which values are we putting there? Is that an African paradigm or a Eurocentric paradigm? Those are the type of things we need to look at.

Now in the promotion of the representation of culture, which culture do we represent in our newspapers? There are these type of cultures which are said to be hip cultures, usually taken from the streets of London and the streets of New York. When we put those things in our papers, are we being Afrocentric, Eurocentric or where are we going? We also need to answer those kind of questions. It would also show that we really have a mountain to climb here.

And then, on the question of having Afrocentrism in our media, there is also the question of how to go about it. Are we going to be creative about it or creationist about it? I think just to give an example of what happens here. Some years back, I can see three or four journalists here who were part of that experiment. They came up with something called commitment journalism in which they tried to push a certain way of thinking into their reportage. Now what I'm trying to find out here, especially from Mathatha there, is that when we try to create Afrocentrism in the media, are we going to follow the line of - are we going to have a commitment journalism to Afrocentrism or is it going to be taken in another vision? Thank you very much.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. The mike is there, but can I ask that we cut your time in half so that we can give that gentleman a space to speak as well, so that we count the two of you as one. Thank you.

**MR MAZWAI:** I'll try to be very brief.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you.

**MR NTENTENI:** I just want to intervene here and take issue with some of the things that have been mentioned by Raymond Louw and not from the party political point of view, but from the point of view of principle. I think the approach that Mr Louw is using of reading a policy document of the ANC applicable to members of the ANC and therefore saying that because of these objectives and they're what members of the ANC have agreed to, therefore does not then allow them to be in certain institutions of society, I think it is incorrect. Because I think what Mr Ray has read is policy pertaining to members of the ANC in their activity as members of the ANC.

Are we saying that members of the ANC are incapable of rising above their party political affiliations and becoming professional in dealing with certain institutions of society? Are we saying that members of the ANC, who are also South African citizens, can be limited insofar as certain institutions are concerned? Because then that would apply across the board, it would apply across the board. Is it only those people who are either members of the ANC or who are sympathetic to the ANC who only have agendas; other people don't have those agendas? I think it is a very wrong and divisive approach because members of the ANC have every right to participate in the South African discourse and to be employees of any institution in this country. Their membership of the ANC is a separate matter. In as much as you have members of the DA who are at the SABC, you have members of the IFP who are at the SABC. Why should this be applicable to the SABC? I think it is divisive and dangerous.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you.

**COMMENT:** Thank you. I'm confused, I'm actually a student from the university, I will not mention which one, and I don't know whether I can say I'm a future journalist or I'm a journalist now, I'm doing media studies. Because really, I'm getting confused, I don't know at what point can I say I'm a journalist, what constitutes a real journalist? But I think in our discussions here, for us to really facilitate the process of transformation, I think maybe it is important for us to start looking and redefining on how we package our news and how we write our stories, because that could be also one of the things that hold us back.

For example, when I go to the library to do references or to check books that can guide me to write and also understand how the media operates, I still find books from Europe, you know, the European, the British books. So in South Africa, in Africa, there are still few. And then now, when we are talking about transformation, how is that going to help whereas I'm still guided by the books from Europe? So maybe we need to have, uMathatha said, *Ubabanche*, who will start writing books and also defining what is African journalism. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Can we come to the Panel, are you ready?

**MR PITYANA:** Chair, thank you very much. I'm glad that we allowed those further discussions to take place so that we can take the opportunity at what I think is the end of the session, to summarise some of the key points. I'm also glad that at the end, some very important points have been raised.

I think the first one that came and that's very, very important, is the whole understanding of values and, it is said here, African values and issues around Afrocentrism.

I think the first point to make is that when I think we're talking and I didn't use those expressions when I was speaking but now that they've come up, I think what we need to say about African values, Africa-centred values, has to do with being rooted in a history and a culture and a way of knowing and understanding, and a moral system that actually is generated from the continent of Africa. But I don't think it means, it should never mean isolation from the rest of the world. The standpoint that you take means that you have the tools to interrogate the rest of the world and the rest of the reality. Because you must engage, from an African perspective, engage all reality. That is how I like to believe.

In terms of values, I think it's fair to say that South Africa is a society in formation. We are seeking to shape the new South Africa and that has to be an ongoing task. And I'd like to believe that in doing so, we have a basis in our Constitution and the values that the Constitution sets and that those values must forever be interrogated from the perspective of what it is that we want to become, as people in the African continent and how we relate to the rest of the continent. And those values, as I recall them, are human dignity, the achievement of equality and social justice. They are universal values, but they are values that Africa itself has produced out of its own culture and out of its own systems of knowledge and understanding. And interrogating those values becomes a means whereby any other systems around us are interrogated.

So the questions that Christina raises about the value system are a lot more challenging for us today in South Africa because the nature of us aspiring to be the society that we are, that is both African, but that is also universal, does mean that from a menu of values and systems and knowledges, somehow we are bound to have to make certain choices, that we cannot live in a world where choices are made for us by some other place else. And that the idea is to present to us and to our people, to some extent including our children, some of those possibilities for life that our people need to make in order to make choices and hopefully to make informed choices. And that system which shapes our reality, in fact we take some responsibility for that reality ourselves.

And then, what about transformation, who's responsible for transformation? I think

transformation, having started with a discourse on systems of values and how values work and function - and having said that, I think that we in South Africa are a society in formation. By that nature we are a society that is transforming and society transforms itself through a whole range of impulses that operate within society; cultural, intellectual, scientific, historical and otherwise. All of those impulses actually go towards shaping the kind of society we want to be, that is in fact transforming, because society can be a very diffused concept.

But I think equally it is shaped by government and the values that the government presents, that's why we vote for certain governments and not for others, if we may say to the comrade over there. It's that certain choices are made, the people of this country made certain choices and they believe that a certain government represents, to a larger or a lesser degree, what it is that they believe about the future and about the country.

But, secondly, transformation is also shaped by an informed society, civil society, an engaged civil society. That is why the colleague over there said it was important to be honest about the engagement of journalists, even, of the media that is engaged. Often the question we have to ask is: engaged in what direction, engaged about what, and whether we agree with that engagement. The chances are that just about every media or journalist is engaged in something, Raymond Louw, it's just a question of whether we agree with what they're engaged about or not, or whether we understand it or not. So all journalism, in fact, I've said before, is certainly not as independent as all of that.

I agree with colleagues who have said - I also don't agree with Raymond Louw. I think that it will be just impossible and unacceptable to begin to interrogate everybody who is in a media house or even at the public broadcaster, for them to declare their political views and orientation before they can be trusted with any professional practice of journalism. If that is the case, then whether it's written in a document like that or not, whatever political view you believe in actually shapes and informs how you perform your work, how you view the work that you do in one way or another. So we'll have to do it, not just to those who have openly and honestly made a commitment of that sort, but also to others who do it, even though they haven't made that kind of commitment. Thank you.

**MR TSEDU:** There was the question about what the African news values are. I would have been interested in hearing in what you think they are, instead of just posing the question. Because I want to assume that you are grappling with it as an issue and you must have some idea in your own head. It would have been very interesting to hear you define what you think it is. It may not necessarily be what I may think it is, but what you think this is.

Essentially, I would think that you start from a basis that says that this continent has been misrepresented over a long period and part and parcel of our responsibility, as journalists, is to undo that damage. So, for example, if you take, on any given day there are a zillion fundraising dinners that are being held around Johannesburg, Pretoria, every evening people are buying tables for 10 000 or 300 000, there was one where the table was 500 000 three weeks ago in Pretoria and the money that was being raised was for Timbuktu. Three years ago the President took R3 million of state public money and gave it to the Government of Mali to try and create an environment in which the Timbuktu manuscripts would be housed better than they were.

Now you could take a position that says, well, that 3 million could have bought maybe antiretroviral drugs for a thousand people that would have been saved, instead of taking the money and throwing it into the desert in Mali. But the Timbuktu manuscripts represent an important instrument in the redressing of the misrepresentation of African people and the African continent. So what do you do with a story of a fundraising dinner in Pretoria where the President stands up and he says, he's worried about people who are dying in Morocco as they try to get into Spain or, you know. You can go there and do that as that story or you can see it in its broader context and when you see it in its broader context it is no longer just a podium story. You bring the context so that people can understand why the President would ask people to buy

a table for R500 000.

I sat at one of these tables and had this little meal and I was asking myself, is this what I'm eating here worth R50 000. I wish there was a camera, somebody who could really just capture this historic moment for me, eating a meal for R50 000. But I'm saying that there's a need to actually understand those kind of dynamics and when you tell that story correctly, that, for me, is the African News value coming through.

I think Barney dealt with the rest of the questions. I would just want to say that Ray is my friend. We agree and sometimes we don't agree and there are different ways of saying things. And sometimes you may say something in a way that projects you as continuing a battle that you may have waged many years ago against an organisation. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you to the Panel and thank you to everybody who stayed, but please don't run away, I want to give the floor over to Ihron for some closing remarks. Thanks.

### **CLOSING REMARKS** **Dr Ihron Rensburg**

Firstly, on behalf the three partners, and I'm told to say it in full Mathatha, South African National Editors Forum, University of Limpopo, and the SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation, instructed by the CEO), on behalf of all of the three organisations, please accept our appreciation. Firstly, to the Panellists, and the other Panellists who shared with us their views and their thoughts and who made the preparations that they have made for us to be able to engage and have this encounter that we are continuing to have.

Also to the Chairpersons, but most importantly, I think we have heard so many voices here this morning, civil society, political society and of course, practitioners, media practitioners, as well as editors and so on and so forth; really, we want to express our appreciation to you.

This morning we started out as about 130 participants, we're down to about 80, it does show, Mathatha, we saw the pictures last night on SABC News that there were many empty chairs in the last session as well. And my appeal really is for us, at least the 75 who are remaining here and I want to mention that we had 173 confirmations, we started with about 120 this morning, so lost 50 already at the beginning, we've lost 100 in total so far, but of course, in the biblical sense, Mfundisi also over here, even the few that we are, we must continue that dialogue and that conversation.

I do believe that we have begun that conversation again afresh this morning and this afternoon. We have a very full day tomorrow, we started, as we saw this morning, an hour late. My appeal, our appeal as the collective is if we can be here at 08.30 so that we start on time at 8.50 tomorrow morning. There will be coffee, of course, available as you arrive.

It's a packed day, if you look at it, we begin tomorrow morning with Mondli Makhanya from SANEF introducing us to the SANEF Media Freedom Campaign. After that we then go into Session One and I'm not going to read through it, we have a full Panel there. Regrettably Helen Zille has pulled out, we're still going to try and convince her to come, but she had just called this afternoon to indicate she's unlikely to make it.

We then go into Session Two, Three and then go into the Conference Conclusions. And so the intention at the end is really to draw out some of the key themes that we need to pick up as we go forward, such as my favourite one, today is civil service journalism. I think it's a serious point of engagement, but that's my own view.

And so tomorrow the intention is to pull out some of those key themes, we have been making notes, I also see Dali has been making or taking copious notes as well as we make preparations

for that final session tomorrow at 4 o'clock. We will close at about 5 o'clock with the Deputy Chair of the SABC and we will then invite you at 5 o'clock to some cocktails. As we probably will be extremely exhausted at that point, but at 5 o'clock tomorrow, we will have some cocktails around the pool as we make our way home.

Thank you very much again and our appeal is if we could be here from 08.30 so that we can start sharp tomorrow at 08.50.

Thank you very much, all the best.

**END OF PROCEEDINGS OF DAY ONE**