



Concept note

South Africa sees four men for every one woman whose opinion is quoted in the media: during the runup to elections, it's seven men for every one woman. Certain categories of women receive even less media attention: disabled, elderly, poor, working-class, and rural women; women from cultural or religious minorities, and women with different sexual orientations.

Deciding who makes news is a complex juggling act made by journalists, editors and producers daily, in the context of diminishing budgets, few experienced staff, and workloads that have expanded to include the creation of content across increasing numbers of media platforms.

It is hardly surprising that a few, reliable (and overwhelmingly male) sources are quoted time and again. This renders women close to invisible in the current news context. Too often they appear only to reinforce gender stereotypes.

Quote This Woman+ (QW+) is committed to getting more women's voices heard in the South African media – especially right now, in the run up to the national and provincial elections.

We are building a database of credible expert sources from the overlooked demographics: women, and others, who are newsmakers, changemakers, agitators and experts; and who deserve to be quoted in the media in this time when most people are actively consuming news in order to decide who to vote for.

Initially, we are focusing on building a body of women who can speak on three issues – land, education and employment. As we get more resources on board, we will do our very best to promote the voices of women who can speak on issues beyond this focus.

QW+ will actively curate news where we find that women are not habituated to put themselves forward. We're starting to lobby media oversight bodies, media houses, journalists and producers to use our database and our press releases when creating their news – and to give us feedback regarding what works for them, with our database, and how we can improve what we do.

Further, we're encouraging men with high media profiles to sign a pledge challenging the media to find sources from marginalised groups, and we are asking news audiences to engage with the media they consume about making women more visible.

At QW+ we believe that media narratives that are skewed towards men are counter-intuitive to the ideals of an inclusive, democratic free press. Democracy is poorly served by a news media which privileges the voices, actions and views of some over others. Changing this can help South Africa address its core development challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality.

In order to succeed, QW+ needs buy-in from media gatekeepers. It needs support from the public and from mainstream news sources/newsmakers, and it needs women who until now have not had their voices used in making news to stand up and speak out loud.

As a non-profit, Quote This Women + needs volunteers, resources, and funding to make an impact in the short time before the 8 May 2019 elections.

To support Quote This Woman+, contact me on kathy@quotethiswoman.org.za / 0846888980

Kathy Magrobi
Founder and Director.

If you want to read further...

A quick look at our strategy:

WE BELIEVE that the media need to quote as many women as men on all news issues / producers need to line up as many women as men on all news issues.

And to do that, editors/news editors/journalists/ producers need access to lists of quotable women – and they need to be aware that these lists exist. It will also help if they can receive press releases quoting women on topical/news-related issues.

Furthermore:

- People with good networks need to be approached for names for the database
- Twitter/social media/radio/newspapers (opinion pieces) can be used to call for women to contact us
- The names for the database need to be approached and they need to agree to be on it and if they do not have media / public speaking experience, they need to be given a sense of what will be expected of them

Underpinning all of this, there needs to be:

- QW+, as a viable, funded NGO

Some of our underlying assumptions:

- An absence of focus on women+ means diminished decision-making by women+, and by society as a whole around issues pertinent to women+
- Not every expert is someone with a PHD. Sometimes it is someone who has the lived experience of a particular place, time, or issue, Also, that journalists and potential experts will realise that you have to start somewhere – get your foot in the door – in order to be considered an expert.
- That even though we need to deepen our understanding of the current voices and narratives in SA media, we believe we're correct in our understanding that because newsrooms are under-resourced and journalists are busy, they will appreciate a database of women to get quotes from – it will make their lives easier and they will appreciate it/use it/view it as a credible source database.
- Women sources will give us their cellphone numbers or twitter handles, and that we can trust that journalists will not put the info (like cell numbers) of the sources into public domain
- Although some women+ will be wary of sharing private details on a database, or of being contacted by strangers, the women we bring to our database will make themselves available and will be able to speak succinctly/credibly on the matters they are interviewed about - that we will have some way of working out whether or not women are media-ready and will be able to articulate to the sources what will be expected of them
- That we will have resources to turn women's views into press releases – to co-create and curate news narratives related to the database and to both current and emerging themes; and actively identify panels and speaking opportunities for the women+ on the database

We believe that indicators of our success could be:

If some of the media who quoted 0% women in the 2016 elections, do quote women this time round.

If thirty identified women on a database are quoted enough times to bring the use of women's voices from under 15% to at least 18%, in election coverage in the media outlets that come on board with this programme

If we start to call gendered language bias in media coverage of women in the buildup to the elections.