



Standard Bank
Sikuvile
Journalism Awards 2025

Guardians of Democracy:
Upholding Integrity in a
Changing World



JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR
Kyle Cowan

FOREWORD:

Guardians of Democracy in a Changing World



REGGY MOALUSI
SANEF'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In an era defined by rapid transformation and unprecedented challenges, the journalist's role as a bastion of truth and a pillar of our democracy has never been more critical. It is with immense pride that the South African National Editors' Forum (Sanef) welcomes you to the 2025 Standard Bank Sikuville Journalism Awards (SBSJA), a ceremony that stands as a testament to the courage, tenacity, and unwavering integrity of South Africa's press corps. South Africa's journalists remain brave, and these awards recognise and honour them.

This year, we gather under the theme, "Upholding Integrity in a Changing World," a profound call to action that resonates deeply within the media industry. This theme honours our journalists as the Guardians of Democracy, celebrating their pivotal role in navigating a landscape fraught with misinformation, economic pressures, and increasing threats to press freedom. It captures the urgent need for journalists to remain resolute, anchoring their work in the unshakeable principles of ethical conduct and a fearless pursuit of the truth.

As the world shifts, the profession's fundamental duties to act with integrity, to give voice to the voiceless, and to hold power accountable do not merely remain relevant; they become our most vital shield.

Sanef is privileged to present this third distinguished instalment of the awards since inheriting their stewardship. We honour the legacy of the Publisher Support Services (PSS), which partnered with Standard Bank to establish this platform in 2012. We are profoundly grateful for our enduring partnership with Standard Bank. Their steadfast commitment to a free, fair, and independent media is the bedrock upon which these awards are built. Standard Bank's unwavering support for the SBSJA is a powerful affirmation of our shared belief that rewarding journalists who publish the truth, often under difficult and threatening conditions, is essential for a healthy democracy.

We embrace the opportunity to forge this partnership and guide the awards because we believe they represent the pinnacle of journalistic excellence in South Africa. The SBSJA is more than just an event; they are a benchmark. Covering the key beats that shape our national discourse, they showcase the most incisive, impactful, and inspirational work produced across all media platforms. For veterans and rising stars alike, winning a Sikuville Award has become a cherished aspiration, a recognition of reporting, writing, and investigative work that has genuinely made a difference.

To win an SBSJA is to earn one of the most prestigious achievements in the South African journalism industry. It is a hallmark of excellence that confers significant recognition upon both the individual journalist and their media organisation, enhancing their reputation and amplifying their credibility. More than this, it serves as a powerful source of inspiration for the next generation of storytellers. The national accolades and the deep respect earned from peers and future employers are a reminder that this profession, this calling, is indispensable.

Tonight, we celebrate those who have risen to the challenge, who have upheld their integrity in this changing world, and who continue to stand as our Guardians of Democracy. Your work matters. Your courage inspires. Your integrity fortifies our nation.

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JOURNALISM AWARDS





SANEF LETTER



MAKHUDU SEFARA
CHAIRPERSON

On behalf of SANEF, I'm honoured to welcome you to the 13th Standard Bank Sikuvile Journalism Awards. This gathering celebrates journalistic excellence and affirms our collective commitment to truth and integrity.

Earlier today, editors met to discuss the state of journalism, the impact of billionaires on truth, information integrity, and how to future-proof our noble sector. We agreed that information integrity has never been more important. It's the vignette of our service to democracy. When powerful figures spread misinformation, like the false "genocide" against Afrikaners, it highlights journalism's vital role.

Regardless of what social media billionaires and other merchants of misinformation want us to believe, we must tell the South African and African story as honestly as possible. Journalism is a force

for good, but it's under siege like never before. We must use our platforms to push back against those who profit from misinformation, doing so robustly but fairly. We must distinguish ourselves from wayward podcasters who rely on misogyny, exploit stereotypes, and violate ethical codes for quick profit.

Enoch Sontoga, Nelson Mandela, and Thabo Mbeki all used words to shape our nation; today's generation has the same opportunity to impact society positively, for posterity. We must never let billionaires and misinformation merchants imperil our democracy with distortions and lies.

Tonight, we celebrate excellence in print, digital, radio, and television journalism. Our theme, 'Guardians of Democracy: Upholding Integrity in a Changing World,' is fitting as we mark 30 years of South African democracy. For three decades, our media have held power accountable, uncovered truths, and shaped the nation's conscience. You, the storytellers, are our guardians, upholding transparency and justice, giving voice to the voiceless, and shedding light on uncomfortable truths.

Across the globe, the landscape for journalists is perilous. From June 2022 to June 2025, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) reported 129 journalists and media workers killed in 2023, and 122 in 2024. Nowhere is this starker than in Gaza, where over 170 Palestinian journalists have been killed since October 7, 2023. These brave individuals were targeted, labelled partisans, and often died with their families. Their deaths are an unbearable loss to our profession and to the world's understanding of that devastating conflict.

Beyond Gaza, journalists face grave dangers in war zones across Africa. In Sudan, nine journalists have

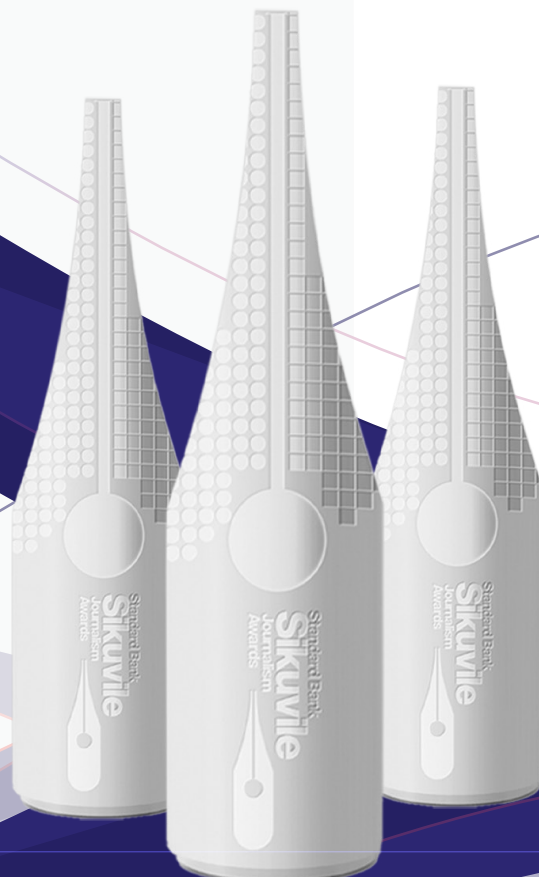
been killed since April 2023. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, we lost Tabita Fabiola in August 2023 and Yoshua in October 2024. This grim reality underscores our fundamental obligation: reliable information is vital, and it is unacceptable for journalists to pay with their lives. As UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay states, "Reliable information is vital in conflict situations... It is unacceptable that journalists pay with their lives for this work. I call on all States to step up and ensure the protection of media workers, in accordance with international law." We echo this call.

Let us continue serving the public interest through fearless storytelling, safeguarding our integrity, and holding fast to the ideals of our craft. Let us raise our voices against impunity, demand accountability, and advocate for stronger protections.

While South African journalists may not face bombs, they confront existential challenges: disrupted business models, physical threats, and cyberbullying. We know you care deeply about our country. Never tire from fact-checking and the muck-raking that produces great investigative stories.

Tonight, we recognise stories that challenged the powerful, amplified marginalised voices, and provoked policy change. You embody journalism at its best: ethical, courageous, and impactful. You are why democracy not only survives but thrives.

Thank you.



MESSAGE FROM STANDARD BANK GROUP CEO

Good evening, everyone. Looking back at my files, I see I haven't been at a Sikuvile Awards since 2017 – far too long. Although Margaret will do a better job than me this evening, I still wish I could be there with you.

Tonight I'm on my way to Seville, wearing my B20 hat, to represent South African organised business at the UN Financing for Development Conference. I mention this partly because it's a cast-iron excuse for my absence. But mainly I mention it because I want to say that this B20-G20 year has gotten me thinking - in more detail than ever before - about how information is spread, how opinions develop, and how, ultimately, policy can change.

My colleagues and I on the B20 Finance and Infrastructure Task Force have spent an enormous amount of time and energy developing our policy suggestions. Even if I say so myself, they're well-considered, well-expressed, and would do a lot of good for South Africa and Africa if adopted. That 'if' is doing a lot of work. How do we get our ideas out there? It's not like technical opinions about credit ratings, or about the mandates of development finance institutions, naturally leap onto the front page.

And even if we can get people's attention, how can we shift the famous 'Overton window' of public opinion? The answer, of course, is mostly through the media. For the kinds of serious ideas we are discussing, 'paid for' media is irrelevant, and social media is unhelpful. What we need is the real thing – the independent, serious press – staffed by brave and critical thinkers like yourselves. If we can get your time and attention – and maybe even your cautious approval – well, then we are on our way.



SIM TSHABALALA

STANDARD BANK'S GROUP CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The jobs that you do are very hard. You have to compete against the aforementioned other forms of media and, increasingly, against content that isn't even generated by humans. Your budgets are too small, and your deadlines are too tight. And yet, here you are, doing deeply necessary, socially vital work.

In my view, South Africa – and the world at large – needs a conversation about how to maintain an independent high quality media in the age of X and ChatGPT. Standard Bank wants to be a constructive part of that conversation.

Tonight, though, all I want to say is 'Thank you. Congratulations. The work you do is so important, and we recognise and value you for it.' So have a great evening – and thank you.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Guardians of Democracy: Upholding Integrity in a Changing World Good evening,

I'm delighted to be among individuals who carry the weight of truth on their shoulders – our journalists, editors, producers, photographers, and storytellers.

Tonight, I'd like to leave you with three reflections: first, on how the rise of digital platforms and AI is reshaping the media landscape; second, on why South Africa's global standing in press freedom should be a source of national pride; and third, on why your work remains essential to democracy — now more than ever.

1. A Shifting Landscape: From Newsrooms to Newsfeeds

As Nobel Peace Prize-winning journalist Maria Ressa so powerfully said: "Without facts, you can't have truth. Without truth, you can't have trust. Without trust, we have no shared reality, and it becomes impossible to deal with the world's existential problems."

These words are especially relevant as we reflect on the state of journalism today and the immense responsibility that rests with those who inform, challenge, and protect the truth.

This evening is about honouring your commitment, not just to information, but to integrity. Not just to headlines, but to the health of our democracy. And yet we must acknowledge the shifting terrain beneath your work.

Newsrooms are shrinking. Revenue models are fragile. Journalists are being asked to do more with less — often at great personal risk. Then there's the digital flood. Social platforms like Facebook, TikTok, WhatsApp, and YouTube now command more than 11 billion global users. In South Africa,



MARGARET NIENABER
STANDARD BANK'S GROUP CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

43% of people consume news via free platforms, with 20% on TikTok and 21% on YouTube. The impact is seismic. With this reach comes risk.

In just the past year, we've seen fake news cause real harm. The rise of generative AI adds yet another layer of complexity. Content can now be created at scale — believable, fast, and dangerously misleading. At Standard Bank, we've seen a concerning rise in sophisticated fraud attempts, a reminder of how vital accurate, timely information is in protecting our communities. In this environment, the media plays an essential role not just in informing, but in safeguarding the public interest.

In the face of all this, South Africans still turn to you. Because even in a sea of noise, it is your voice that brings clarity. Even in an age of speed, it is your integrity that brings trust. Because journalism isn't just about reach, it's about responsibility. It's about asking the hard questions, telling the hard truths, and standing firm when it matters most.

2. South Africa Leading the Way in African Press Freedom

In a global landscape where press freedom is under relentless pressure, South Africa shines as a beacon of hope for the continent. This year, our nation was ranked 27th out of 180 countries in the 2025 World Press Freedom Index, leaping 11 spots from last year, the fastest rise in Africa and securing our position as the number-one press freedom country on the continent.

As Reporters Without Borders remarked, “South Africa guarantees media freedom and has a well-established culture of investigative journalism.”

This recognition reflects not only exceptional journalism but also the strength of our legal protections, vibrant public discourse, and institutional independence.

Even more encouraging is the level of public trust you continue to hold. According to the 2025 Edelman Trust Barometer, 46% of South Africans trust the media, higher than trust in government (39%) and business (43%). In a world where misinformation spreads fast and confidence in institutions is declining, this level of trust is no small feat. It underscores that, here in South Africa, journalism remains a vital and valued force.

We commend you, not only for global recognition, but for continuing to earn and defend public trust through truth, transparency, and tenacity.

3. Why Journalism Still Matters — And Always Will?

The theme of this year’s awards, “Guardians of Democracy: Upholding Integrity in a Changing World”, is more than a banner. It’s a challenge. Because journalism today is not just about information, it’s about survival. The survival of facts, of trust, of democracy itself.

At Standard Bank, we have supported these

awards for more than a decade because we believe a free, ethical, and independent press is not just good for society — it is essential to it. And this belief is also reflected in how we choose to show up on the global stage. It is part of our purpose: “Africa is our home, we drive her growth.”

That growth is not just economic. It includes the growth of our democracies, the protection of our freedoms, and the strengthening of the institutions, like the media, that keep societies open and accountable.

In an age of AI, deepfakes, and endless scrolls, the temptation will be to match noise with noise. But I urge you, and all of us, to resist that urge.

We don’t win by being the loudest in the room. We win by being the most trusted, through clarity, through honesty, and through being truly human.

Let me close with the words that Nelson Mandela reminded the world of in his 1994 address to the International Press Institute — words that capture both the spirit and the responsibility of journalism:

“The media are a mirror through which we can see ourselves as others perceive us — warts, blemishes and all.” And more than that, he reminded us: “A critical, independent and investigative press is the lifeblood of any democracy.” Thank you for being that lifeblood. Thank you for shining light, for telling the truth, and for holding power to account. And thank you for proving, day after day, that journalism doesn’t just report the story; it safeguards our democracy

Enjoy the evening

Thank you

CONVENER JUDGE'S REMARKS



LIZEKA MDA
CONVENOR OF JUDGES

The year 2024 marked 30 years of our democracy. Entries for the Standard Bank SikuVile Journalism Awards reflect that while our media is under considerable pressure, it continues to both celebrate and hold accountable this hard-won democracy.

Officially, there were 437 entries this year, a decline from last year's 573. However, given that many submissions were bodies of work, the total number of items viewed, read, and listened to reached 638, slightly down from 655.

Despite the slight decrease in submissions, the overall quality of entries remained high, with many outstanding examples of journalism across

all categories. One such standout category was Columns/Editorials. While we understand the pressures behind the decline in entries, we urge newsrooms to continue encouraging column writing. These opinion pieces play a crucial role in shaping public discourse and engaging with matters of national interest.

Community Media Platforms

Regrettably, 13 entries in the Community Service Reporting category were disqualified for not meeting the revised criteria. The rules now state that qualifying entries must be journalistic work produced for and published exclusively by community media platforms, in any language, and not by commercial or publicly owned news entities. While five of these entries were reassigned to other categories, the disqualification of the rest was disappointing for the judges.

We believe SANEF needs to provide clearer guidance and education regarding the criteria for this category. Several entries were submitted by the SABC and other public or commercial entities, which did not qualify as "independent" community media. This significant change to the criteria was introduced this year but was not adequately communicated to prospective entrants.

This is the only platform-driven category, unlike the others, which are content-driven. An explanation is needed to clarify why this distinction exists and why only entries from community media platforms are eligible.

Although the number of entries in this category declined, especially after the exclusion of submissions from larger media houses, the quality of those that remained was promising. This gives us hope for the category's growth. Community media continue to produce meaningful journalism, and we must encourage more journalists from these platforms to participate in the awards going forward.

Indigenous Language Reporting

This category continues to grow, reflecting increased recognition of our linguistic diversity. However, challenges remain in evaluating submissions in all of South Africa's official languages. Some entries included English subtitles or transcripts, which greatly facilitated access and evaluation. This raised the question: why did others not do the same?

The judges propose amending the rules to require all non-English entries to include English subtitles or transcripts. Many Afrikaans entries already do this. Subtitles would not only aid judging but also broaden the reach of these stories, promote inclusivity, and help break down language barriers.

Features Category

For several years, judges have requested that the Features category be split between broadcast and print. This year, that request was finally granted. For the first time, radio, TV, and multimedia documentaries were judged separately from print and online entries.

Although most technical access issues were resolved, some entries still lacked working links or did not include PDFs showing where work had been published. In some cases, judges had to search online to find the content, something that should not be necessary. If an entry is difficult to access, it risks being overlooked.

We urge the organisers to consider a more reliable submission system with a checklist to ensure quality work is not lost. At the same time, we appeal to journalists to be more deliberate and thorough in how they present their work.

Unfortunately, some entries did not meet the standards expected of a journalism excellence competition. There remains a tendency to assume, "I wrote it; therefore, it should be

entered." Editors must share responsibility, both for publishing subpar work and for approving it for award submission.

Photographers

The judges were pleased to see increased participation from photographers this year and hope this trend continues. They also recommend revisiting the rules for Feature Photography, specifically by expanding the allowable number of images in a photo essay from three to ten. This would enable photographers to tell richer, more compelling visual stories aligned with industry norms.

Special Awards

The judges were gratified to receive several high-quality nominations for both the Manager/Publisher of the Year and the Allan Soga/Standard Bank Chairman's Lifetime Achievement Award. In both cases, multiple finalists were strong contenders. It may be worth exploring whether more than one recipient can be honoured in future for the Allan Soga award.

We remain deeply grateful to Standard Bank for their unwavering support and commitment to quality journalism. SANEF also deserves sincere thanks for organising both the awards and tonight's ceremony.

Special thanks are due to our dedicated panel of judges: **Tyrone August, Kim Cloete, Ryland Fisher, Pippa Green, Portia Kobue, Thabo Leshilo, Nomsa Mdhuli, Ruth Motau, Andile Ntingi, Neo Ntsoma, Sue Olswang, Mary Papayya, Bulelwa Payi, Gus Silber, and Beauregard Tromp.**

It has once again been a privilege to convene the judging of the Standard Bank SikuVile Journalism Awards.

ENDS

JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR



KYLE COWAN - NEWS24
"MURRAY MURDERS"

Kyle Cowan's excellent investigative journalism work earns him the title of **Journalist of the Year**.

He showed remarkable ability and tenacity in uncovering the story of the 18 March 2023 murders of Cloete and Thomas Murray, a father-and-son team of liquidators. They were assassinated in broad daylight on the busy N1 North, from Johannesburg to Pretoria.

Although police had obtained CCTV footage clearly showing "a person of interest" who followed them from the Melrose Arch mall, they had not interviewed him a year later. Police sources revealed the identity of the man to Cowan. This underscores the critical role good sources play in investigative journalism.

Cowan showed the man was linked to Rushin and Nishani Singh, the siblings from whom the Murrays were working to recover over R200 million owed to Investec Bank. Cowan also exposed shoddy police work: he saw a folder with the name of the Singhs' business on it, possible evidence, lying on the floor of the Murrays' Toyota Prado at a yard where police keep impounded vehicles. Using good storytelling, he made light work of understanding the intricate details and kept the reader invested.

His second story relayed how police turf wars may have contributed to the failure to resolve the case, delaying justice for the murdered pair. The last piece showed how the Murrays also had their sights on the Singhs' and their associates' dubious business dealings in Ghana.

JUBY MAYET RISING STAR OF THE YEAR



WINNER:

Buyeleni Sibanyoni

AmaBhungane Centre for Investigative Journalism

"Joburg awards R263-million water tanker tender to two 20-somethings"

RUNNER-UP:

William Brederode

News24

"Prepaid fraud: 40% of metres aren't vending power"

JUBY MAYET RISING STAR CITATION

This year saw several impressive entries in the **Juby Mayet Rising Star of the Year Award category**, which recognises young journalists with fewer than three years of experience who demonstrate exceptional potential in journalistic excellence, accuracy, story development, and compelling storytelling. Many past winners of this award have gone on to establish themselves as leading voices in the media landscape.

After careful deliberation, the judges unanimously agreed that the 2024 Juby Mayet Rising Star of the Year Award goes to **Buyeleni Sibanyoni** of the **AmaBhungane Centre for Investigative Journalism** for his exposé titled *"Joburg awards R263-million water tanker tender to two 20-somethings."*

Sibanyoni's investigation uncovers how two little-known companies, Nutinox and Builtpro Construction, were awarded a R263-million contract by Johannesburg Water at the height of the city's crippling water crisis. His reporting flagged multiple red flags, including possible price manipulation, collusion, and the use of suspicious addresses to gain an unfair advantage during the bidding process. The story exemplifies investigative journalism at its finest — rigorous, courageous, and in the public interest.

While Sibanyoni is the deserved winner, the judges also wish to commend William Brederode of News24 for his outstanding entry, *"Prepaid fraud: 40% of meters aren't vending power."* In a tightly contested decision, Brederode emerged as a strong runner-up for his exposé on widespread fraud involving prepaid electricity meters across Eskom and major metro municipalities. His meticulous reporting shed light on systemic failures costing the country millions.

These emerging talents are a promising sign for the future of South African journalism. Both Sibanyoni and Brederode exemplify the values of truth, accountability, and public service that this award seeks to honour.



Buyeleni Sibanyoni

HARD NEWS CATEGORY



WINNER:

Norman Masungwini

City Press

"South Africa's worst City Manager"

RUNNER-UP:

Ziyanda Zweni and Sino Majangaza

Daily Dispatch

"Dying of thirst in democracy"

COMMENDATION:

Lisalee Solomons and Nicole McCain

News 24

"Please help us get out': Trapped survivor speaks from beneath rubble of collapsed George building"

HARD NEWS CATEGORY CITATION

The Hard News category recognises journalism produced under pressure—urgent, breaking news developed on tight deadlines across all media platforms. Entries in this category are expected to demonstrate fresh, comprehensive, and accurate reporting, supported by vivid graphic description and a clear sense of newsworthiness. This year, the category attracted a significant number of entries, showcasing a wide array of compelling stories that reflect a news landscape that is dynamic, diverse, and highly skilled. The overall standard of submissions was exceptionally high, making the judges' task particularly challenging.

The winning entry by **Norman Masungwini** of **City Press** reads like the script of a blockbuster thriller. Masungwini exposed serious allegations of corruption and maladministration involving Ratlou Local Municipality's manager, Lloyd Leoko. The investigation revealed that Leoko—appointed through cadre deployment orchestrated by senior ANC provincial leaders—did not complete matric and lacked financial experience. Despite this, he held a powerful public-sector post and is accused of authorising questionable expenditures, including the purchase of 22 laptops for nearly R1 million, only three years after the municipality spent almost R2 million on more than 70 laptops. Other reported irregularities include paying R26,000 weekly for bottled water and spending R1.2 million on high-mast lighting that has not functioned in two years. Masungwini's reporting raises serious concerns about governance and accountability while highlighting the consequences of unqualified appointments in public service.



Norman Masungwini

RUNNERS-UP

Ziyanda Zweni and **Sino Majangaza** of the *Daily Dispatch* were awarded runner-up honours for their powerful body of work exposing a water crisis in the Eastern Cape. Their reporting shows that, three decades into democracy, over 1.4 million people in the province are still denied access to clean water—a basic human right. Their series exposes the consequences of government negligence: vandalised and abandoned multimillion-rand water projects, dried-up funding, and desperate communities forced to return to dirty streams and stagnant water sources. Meanwhile, water vendors profit from the suffering. The stories are a harrowing reminder of state failure and the human cost of corruption and inefficiency.

SPECIAL COMMENDATION

Lisalee Solomons and **Nicole McCain** of *News24* receive a special commendation for their exceptional coverage of the building collapse in George, Western Cape. Their story focused on Delvin Safers, a construction worker trapped beneath the rubble. What set their reporting apart was exclusive access to Safers himself, secured through his father, who shared his son's cellphone number while anxiously awaiting rescue. This rare and raw insight enabled the journalists to deliver a gripping, real-time account of Safers' ordeal. Their work combined compelling visuals, powerful narrative, and emotional resonance to offer a deeply human portrayal of the tragedy. By centring one individual's experience, Solomons and McCain not only informed but also moved their audience, creating journalism that is both impactful and empathetic.

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE REPORTING CATEGORY



WINNER:

Cleopatra Jones

SABC's Cutting Edge

"Human Dumping Site"

RUNNER-UP:

Dennis Tshetlhane

SABC's Leihlo la Sechaba

"Love Scams"

COMMENDATION:

Raymond Mojapelo

SABC's Leihlo La Sechaba

"Moretshe"

Vukosi Mathonsi

SABC's Ngula ya Vutivi

"Sassa R350"

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE REPORTING CATEGORY CITATION

The Indigenous Language Reporting category seeks to celebrate and encourage storytelling in South Africa's indigenous languages. It aims to preserve cultural heritage, foster diversity and pluralism in the media, and empower communities by promoting stories told in their own voices. Unlike breaking news, this category recognises stories that are journalist-initiated and driven by deep investigation, insight, and impact.

This year, the competition was notably strong, with entries increasing from 14 in 2023 to 20 in 2024. This growth signals a rising confidence among journalists to report in their own languages—engaging audiences, raising awareness about critical issues, and deepening public understanding through culturally resonant storytelling.

The standard of entries improved significantly from the previous year. The judges faced a difficult task selecting a winner from a shortlist of six outstanding, well-produced, and enlightening stories. In fact, many of the submissions would have held their own in the Hard News category, underscoring the growing strength of indigenous-language journalism.

WINNER

The winning entry, “*Human Dumping Site*” by **Cleopatra Jones** of **SABC TV’s *Cutting Edge***, is a powerful 24-minute documentary that exposes the harsh realities faced by a community in Delft, Cape Town. The story focuses on the settlement known as TRA6, where victims of shack fires and other disasters have been placed in one-room structures for over a decade—structures initially meant to be temporary but now permanent sites of human suffering.

Jones follows the life of a mother who is both a cancer patient and a stroke survivor, forced to share a deteriorating room with her eight adult children, including a severely disabled 32-year-old son. Through intimate storytelling and carefully selected supporting voices, Jones illustrates the desperation of a community living with disease, dirty tap water, and government neglect. Her sensitive and dignified portrayal of the residents’ struggles is a compelling indictment of the failure of local authorities—the City of Cape Town and the Housing Development Agency—to uphold the basic rights and dignity of their people.

RUNNER-UP

Dennis Tshetlhane of **SABC TV’s *Leihlo la Sechaba*** is the runner-up for his body of work, “*Love Scams on the Rise in SA*” and “*Arrested Scammer*”. These documentaries trace the emotional and financial devastation suffered by a government employee who lost her entire retirement savings to an online romance scam. Tshetlhane unpacks how scammers exploit vulnerable South African women, promising love and security in exchange for trust and money.

His subject’s story is one of pain, recovery, and ultimately empowerment, as she overcomes depression with the help of her family and church, and now dedicates herself to educating other women about the risks of online scams. The story culminates in the arrest of the scammer, who now faces charges of fraud and money laundering. Tshetlhane’s work stands out for its strong research, compelling human interest, and a hopeful, action-oriented conclusion.



Cleopatra Jones

SPECIAL COMMENDATIONS

Raymond Mojapelo of *Leihlo la Sechaba* is commended for his story “Moretshe”, which showcases the entrepreneurial spirit of the Ga-Kibi community in Limpopo. Despite facing economic hardship and limited opportunities, the community has turned to the invasive Moretshe tree, converting it into charcoal for local sale. Mojapelo’s reporting highlights resilience and innovation in the face of adversity.

Vukosi Mathonsi of *Ngula ya Vutivi* is also commended for his investigation, “Sassa R350”, which uncovers fraud involving the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant. Mathonsi’s report details how criminals use an illegal app to obtain the identity numbers of young people as they turn 18, submitting fraudulent applications for the R350 grant. His meticulous investigation, persistence, and direct questioning of SASSA officials exemplify accountability journalism at its best.

COMMUNITY SERVICE REPORTING CATEGORY



WINNER:

Tammy Jane Fray

GO! & Express

“Maternity ward mayhem”

RUNNER-UP:

Thembi Siaga

Limpopo Mirror

“Unregistered school in Mpheni may soon be closed”

COMMENDATION:

Shanti Jafta

UD Express

“Lapland residents demand liveable homes”

COMMUNITY SERVICE REPORTING CATEGORY CITATION

The Community Service Reporting category in the Standard Bank Sikuville Journalism Awards shines a spotlight on hyper-local issues that are reported from a community-interest perspective. These stories aim to inform, educate, and build resilient communities by amplifying grassroots narratives that matter. Entries in this category typically comprise community features and creative journalism driven by a deep understanding of local sentiments and concerns.

This year, the category received 43 entries. However, several submissions from mainstream media outlets had to be reassigned to other categories. The criteria for this category state: “Qualifying entries must be journalistic work produced for and published exclusively in community media platforms in all languages, and not in any commercial or publicly owned news entities.”

The judges commended the overall quality of the entries and strongly encouraged more journalists working within independent community media platforms to participate in future competitions.

WINNER

The winning entry, “*Maternity Ward Mayhem*” by **Tammy Jane Fray** of the **GO!&Express** community newspaper, highlights stark inequalities in South Africa’s public healthcare system. The story exposes the appalling conditions in the maternity ward at Frere Hospital in East London, largely due to chronic understaffing. Fray earned the trust of expectant mothers who shared their experiences and even allowed themselves to be photographed during their final hours of labour, bravely documenting their vulnerability in substandard conditions.

The story captured public attention and prompted action from the authorities, leading to the long-overdue appointment of additional nursing staff. This powerful example of community journalism not only brought about tangible change but also gave a voice to those too often unheard. It perfectly embodies the spirit of community service reporting: to make a meaningful difference in the lives of underrepresented communities.

RUNNER-UP

Thembi Siaga of the **Limpopo Mirror** is recognised as runner-up for her investigation “*Unregistered School in Mpheni May Soon Be Closed*.” The report centres on a rural school that had been operating illegally for years, serving approximately 150 learners. Through persistent and courageous reporting, Siaga exposed the dangers posed by the lack of law enforcement and oversight in rural areas. Her reporting led to the eventual closure of the unregistered school, ensuring the safety and educational rights of the affected children.

SPECIAL COMMENDATION

Shanti Jafta of **UD Express** receives a special commendation for her story, “*Lapland Residents Demand Liveable Homes*.” This piece highlights the struggles of Kariega residents who continue to fight for adequate housing and basic services. The story captures the residents’ resilience and ingenuity in the face of harsh economic conditions and high crime rates, offering a moving portrayal of a community determined to survive and thrive against the odds.



Tammy Jane Fray

INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM CATEGORY



WINNER:

Kyle Cowan

News24

"Murray Murders"

RUNNER-UP:

Pieter-Louis Myburgh

Daily Maverick

"Ghost company bags R428-million Oxygen plants tender for state hospitals"

Devi Govender

eNCA

"Boys and Girls Town" (1 and 2)

COMMENDATION:

Dewald van Rensburg

AmaBhungane

"The #Laundry: City of Gold"

Nicky Troll

Carte Blanche

"Black Gold"

INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM CATEGORY CITATION

The Investigative Journalism category attracted 52 entries this year—an encouraging indication of strong interest in this essential genre, which plays a critical role in upholding accountability and transparency in our democracy. The entries reflected a broad range of important societal issues, reaffirming the necessity of shining a light on the diverse and complex challenges facing South Africa.

Submissions covered topics including large-scale fraud in the social grants system, schoolchildren deprived of access to water, extortion syndicates in the Western Cape, illegal mining, and the unfolding sewage crisis in Mogale City. The overall quality of submissions made the judges' task difficult, as many were worthy of recognition. Ultimately, however, the judges were unanimous in selecting the winner.

WINNER

Kyle Cowan of **News24** was named the winner for his compelling investigative package titled "Murray Murders." This three-part series delves into the assassination of prominent liquidators Cloete and Thomas Murray, exposing glaring failures in the police investigation and the broader implications of the case.

The first piece, "Revealed: Key Person of Interest Not Interviewed a Year Later," is a masterclass in

investigative reporting. Cowan details how police failed to interview a central figure in the case for over a year. Through the use of CCTV footage from Melrose Arch and highway toll gantries, he traced the movements of the person of interest and an accomplice, who had followed the Murrays to the site of their murder, doing what the authorities had failed to do.

The second story uncovers the debilitating impact of turf wars within the police. It reveals that the Hawks, who were close to making arrests, were abruptly removed from the case at the request of Brigadier Pulane Gopane, head of the Organised Crime Investigation Unit, an intervention that stalled the investigation.

The third article, “The Singhs’ R1-Billion Ghanaian Empire That the Murrays Threatened to Destroy,” follows the trail of a transnational crime syndicate allegedly linked to the murders. Cowan connects the dots between the Murrays’ liquidation work and powerful figures in Ghana, exposing the far-reaching tentacles of organised crime.

FIRST RUNNER-UP

Pieter-Louis Myburgh of Daily Maverick receives runner-up honours for his two-part investigation into questionable tenders for hospital oxygen plants. The first article revealed how a company lacking accreditation from the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority was awarded a R428-million contract to build oxygen facilities. The follow-up piece implicates the Director-General of Health in soliciting a R500,000 bribe in another transaction, while also clearing the way for oxygen tenders totalling R836 million. The exposé prompted the Department of Health to terminate the project.

SECOND RUNNER-UP

Devi Govender of The Devi Show is recognised as the second runner-up for her disturbing exposé on conditions at Boys and Girls Town in Magaliesburg and Kagiso. Her investigation revealed shocking abuse of boys housed at the institution, including severe deprivation and physical mistreatment. Equally distressing were the findings at the girls’ facility, where some minors were allegedly forced into prostitution due to a lack of basic resources. Following the broadcast, the Magaliesburg campus was temporarily shut down, and the boys were relocated to other schools.

SPECIAL COMMENDATIONS

Dewald van Rensburg is commended for his powerful three-part series, “City of Gold,” which unpacks how billions are siphoned from the South African Revenue Service and the Treasury through elaborate money laundering networks. His investigation exposes how Krugerrands are illegally melted and passed off as scrap gold, and how fake mines are used to disguise criminal operations. Van Rensburg also names key players driving the illicit gold trade.

Nicky Troll of Carte Blanche also receives a commendation for her undercover investigation into criminal syndicates in the coal industry in Mpumalanga. Her report reveals how high-grade, export-quality coal is illegally swapped for substandard material that ends up in Eskom power stations, causing extensive damage and compounding the energy crisis.

BUSINESS JOURNALISM CATEGORY



WINNER:

Kabelo Khumalo

Business Day

"Mystery of former Remgro director's elusive PhD"

RUNNER-UP:

Lyse Comins

Mail & Guardian

"SABC's Manas is 'heartbroken' over deepfake adverts"

COMMENDATION:

Mpho Lakaje

eNCA

"Recycling - From Trash to Treasure"

BUSINESS JOURNALISM CATEGORY CITATION

This year saw a significant resurgence of interest in the Business Journalism category, with 41 entries submitted—nearly double the 26 received in the previous year. Submissions spanned across print, television, and online platforms, reflecting the continued relevance of business reporting across all media formats.

The judges noted the overall high standard of the entries, which covered a diverse range of topics with depth and rigour. Selecting a winner was not easy, but one story ultimately stood out for its impact, originality, and meticulous research.

WINNER

The winning entry is *"Mystery of Former Remgro Director's Elusive PhD"* by **Kabelo Khumalo** of **Business Day**. In this groundbreaking investigation, Khumalo uncovered how economist and business figure Thabi Leoka falsely claimed to hold a PhD in Economics from the prestigious London School of Economics, a fabrication that went undetected for over 15 years.

Leoka's fraudulent credentials earned her widespread acclaim and positions on the boards of some of South Africa's most prominent companies, including MTN, Anglo American Platinum, Remgro, and Netcare. She also served as an economic advisor to President Cyril Ramaphosa. Khumalo's exposé highlighted systemic failures in the verification of academic qualifications by leading corporates and even the presidency itself. The impact of the story was immediate and far-reaching: the Johannesburg Stock Exchange barred Leoka from serving as a director of any listed company for five years. This was investigative business journalism at its finest, holding power to account and prompting institutional reform.

RUNNER-UP

Lyse Comins of the *Mail & Guardian* is recognised as the runner-up for her article, "*SABC's Manas is 'Heartbroken' Over Deepfake Adverts.*" Comins investigated the use of AI-generated deepfake videos linked to the Banxso trading platform. The videos falsely featured high-profile individuals, including Leanne Manas, Patrice Motsepe, Elon Musk, Johann Rupert, and Nicky Oppenheimer, in an attempt to deceive the public into investing in what appeared to be a legitimate financial opportunity.

Promising high returns for an initial investment of R4,800, the scheme ultimately proved to be a scam that cost investors millions of rands. As a result of Comins' reporting, the Financial Sector Conduct Authority (FSCA) withdrew Banxso's licence, effectively shutting down its operations. Her story underscores the urgent need for media literacy and regulatory vigilance in the age of AI-driven financial scams.

SPECIAL COMMENDATION

The judges also gave special commendation to **Mpho Lakaje** for his documentary, "*Recycling – From Trash to Treasure.*" The piece highlights the economic potential within South Africa's waste management sector. Lakaje opens the story by following two waste pickers who earn their livelihoods by collecting recyclable materials and selling them to recycling centres. He then traces the value chain upward to entrepreneurs who are transforming waste into valuable products.

One such entrepreneur is Phumudzo Muthanyi, who repurposes landfill plastics into fashionable handbags. Another is Blessing Ngobeni, a visual environmental artist who creates striking artworks using old magazines. Lakaje's storytelling is empathetic and inspiring, offering a fresh take on sustainability and economic empowerment through innovation in the informal sector.



Kabelo Khumalo

FEATURES CATEGORY - PRINT



WINNER:

Sean Christie

GroundUp

"Follow the Water"

RUNNER-UP:

Giulietta Talevi

Currency

"The great Joburg art gift"

FINALIST:

Don Pinnock

Daily Maverick

"Hunting the Joule"

FEATURES CATEGORY - BROADCAST



WINNER:

Luke Daniel and Marvin Charles

News24

"No Place to call Home"

RUNNER-UP:

Taryn Crossman

Carte Blanche

"Kidnapping Crisis"

FINALIST:

Cleopatra Jones

SABC

"Victims of Hope"

FEATURES CATEGORY CITATION

This year, the Features category received 90 entries, many of which comprised multiple elements. The submissions spanned a wide range of topics, violent crime, rural poverty, mental health, environmental issues, and reflections on 30 years of democracy, offering a textured and nuanced portrait of South Africa and the region. For the judges, reading and viewing these entries was as enlightening as it was humbling.

For the first time, the print and broadcast submissions were judged separately. Across both mediums, the quantity and quality of entries stood as a powerful testament to South African journalism, its flair, empathy, and unrelenting commitment to exploring society's complexities. The judging process was therefore difficult, but also deeply rewarding.

PRINT FEATURES

The print section presented a number of outstanding entries, from investigative journeys into environmental degradation to cultural reflection pieces steeped in nostalgia. After rigorous debate, the judges selected three finalists and several honourable mentions.

WINNER: SEAN CHRISTIE – “FOLLOW THE WATER” (GROUNDUP)

Christie's lyrical and timely piece follows his journey through the catchment areas of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, which supplies one-fifth of South Africa's water. But as Christie demonstrates, these areas are far from idyllic, both environmentally and socially. Quoting American ecologist Garrett Hardin, he warns of ruin brought about by unchecked self-interest in a shared ecosystem. Christie's narrative powerfully combines environmental reporting, personal observation, and sharp socio-political critique. It is a story about today, but also a warning for generations to come.

RUNNER-UP: GIULIETTA TALEVI – “THE GREAT JOBURG ART GRIFT” (CURRENCY)

Talevi delivers a biting exposé on the collapse of the Johannesburg Art Gallery, unearthing a painful saga of mismanagement, neglect, and outright theft. Through crisp storytelling and vivid anecdotes, she documents how this once-proud institution became a symbol of urban decay, yet does so with a sense of urgency and clarity that elevates the piece beyond mere lamentation.

FINALIST: DON PINNOCK – “HUNTING THE JOULE” (DAILY MAVERICK)

Pinnock resurrects the forgotten story of South Africa's first electric vehicle, The Joule, a project led not by Elon Musk, but by local engineers and visionaries. The story traces the car's conception, brief moment of promise, and eventual decline, with the wreckage now hidden away in a corner of Nelson Mandela University. It is a story of innovation, failure, and faded dreams.

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Luke Feltham of the *Mail & Guardian* for “*Breathing Life into Joburg’s Dying Cemetery in Brixton*,” a poignant exploration of memory, decay, and Johannesburg’s layered history.

Charles Leonard, also of the *Mail & Guardian*, for “*Long After Tonight’s Over... Farewell to Kitchener’s*,” a richly evocative piece on the closure of a legendary Braamfontein music venue and what it symbolises for the city.

BROADCAST FEATURES

The broadcast section was equally rich, offering compelling contributions across television, radio, and multimedia.

WINNER: LUKE DANIEL AND MARVIN CHARLES – “NO PLACE TO CALL HOME” (NEWS24)

This powerful documentary investigates homelessness and urban displacement in Cape Town. Focusing on Blikkiesdorp near Delft and the forced removals of residents from inner-city Woodstock and Salt River, the piece uncovers the complexities of gentrification. With balance, compassion, and cinematic sensitivity, the story includes moments of resilience, such as long-term tenants who succeed in remaining in their homes. It is investigative storytelling at its most human.

RUNNER-UP: TARRYN CROSSMAN – “KIDNAPPING CRISIS” (CARTE BLANCHE)

Crossman’s gripping investigation into an organised kidnapping syndicate in the Eastern Cape offers chilling insight into a growing national problem. The production team took serious risks to document this underworld, giving the public access to a terrifying yet crucially important story.

OTHER COMMENDABLE BROADCASTS

Cleopatra Jones of SABC for “*Victims of Hope*,” an intimate portrayal of poverty and hunger in rural Eastern Cape, told with powerful visuals and emotional resonance.

Tara Penny of *Hot FM* for “*Derailed*,” a 58-episode radio series on mental health. These short, two-and-a-half-minute segments offered a comprehensive and destigmatising perspective through interviews with celebrities, experts, and everyday individuals.

John Webb of *Carte Blanche* for the 71-minute documentary “*30 Years of Democracy*,” which provided a reflective look at South Africa’s political and social evolution since 1994.

Mia Spies of News24 for her poignant and sensitive interview with a terminal cancer patient who opted for euthanasia in Switzerland, raising important ethical and emotional questions.

EWN's multimedia team, led by **Abigail Javier**, for their investigation into children who died after consuming poisoned snacks from a Soweto spaza shop. Their reporting exposed the deadly availability of terbufos rat poison and its devastating consequences.

AmaBhungane for *"Tell No Lies, Claim No Easy Victories"*, a probing documentary exploring why prosecutions related to state capture have been so slow, through insightful interviews with current and former prosecutors.

HONOURABLE MENTIONS: SABC'S STORIES UNTOLD

This SABC segment offered several moving features, including **Faith Manzini's** piece on a Soweto dance studio and aftercare centre transforming young lives, and Nonhlanhla Mthembu's story of a grieving mother who founded South Africa's first female-owned laboratory in Klerksdorp as a form of healing.

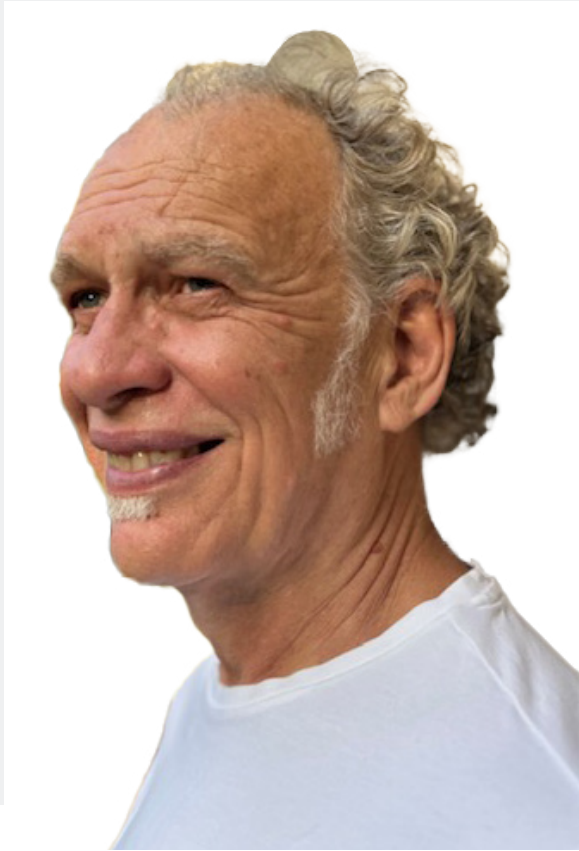
Congratulations to all the finalists and winners.

The judges salute the passion, empathy, and excellence demonstrated across all entries in this category.



Luke Daniel & Marvin Charles

LIFESTYLE JOURNALISM CATEGORY



WINNER:

Charles Leonard

Mail & Guardian

"The Islamic roots of Afrikaans"

RUNNER-UP:

Mervyn Naidoo

IOL Daily News

"Warrior in the Comrades 'bus driver' seat"

COMMENDATION:

Theunis Strydom

Currency

"Grazing through Uruguay's beefy heritage"

LIFESTYLE JOURNALISM CATEGORY CITATION

The Lifestyle Category in the Standard Bank Sikuvile Journalism Awards recognises excellence in writing and broadcast packaging that focuses on lifestyle-related topics such as travel, human interest, trends, reviews, and cultural reflections. These stories, while often deeply insightful and beautifully crafted, differ in nature from the news-oriented features category and deserve a distinct space of recognition.

This year, the judges were impressed by the overall improvement in quality, describing the field as "top-notch." The entries demonstrated originality, depth, and flair, deciding to select a winner, runner-up, and commended entry especially challenging.

WINNER: CHARLES LEONARD – "THE MUSLIM ROOTS OF AFRIKAANS"

Charles Leonard's article is a masterclass in thoughtful, well-researched storytelling. He uncovers the lesser-known origins of Afrikaans, tracing the language back to Cape Town mosques in 1862, where it was first written for Islamic ritual purposes. The piece challenges commonly held beliefs that associate Afrikaans solely with apartheid and white Afrikaner nationalism.

Through a powerful interview with black Afrikaans scholar and activist Hein Willemse, Leonard revisits the roots of Afrikaans as a creole language shaped by enslaved and Muslim communities. He deftly

critiques how history was distorted during the apartheid era, when Afrikaans was politicised by the National Party, portrayed as a purely European language, and used as a tool of cultural dominance.

Leonard, with 38 years in the media industry, blends historical insight with vibrant storytelling. The article resonated widely with readers, evidenced by extensive sharing and engagement online. It is a standout example of journalism that informs, challenges, and captivates, perfectly aligned with the spirit of this category.

RUNNER-UP: MERVYN NAIDOO – “THE HEART OF A COMRADES BUS DRIVER”

Mervyn Naidoo’s deeply moving human-interest piece centres on Shahieda Thungo, a Soweto mother and widow who has run the Comrades Marathon seven times, six of them as the beloved “bus driver” helping fellow runners meet the gruelling 12-hour cut-off. Naidoo writes with sensitivity, respect, and warmth about this cancer survivor, who overcame immense personal hardship, including three suicide attempts, to become a beacon of strength and resilience.

His story is not just about endurance in sport, but about courage, healing, and community. Naidoo’s ability to connect authentically with his subject is evident throughout, marking the work of a seasoned and compassionate journalist.

SPECIAL COMMENDATION: THEUNIS STRYDOM – “URUGUAY AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN LINK”

Theunis Strydom receives a special commendation for an entertaining and informative travel piece that immerses the reader from the first sentence to the last. His colourful narrative transports readers through Uruguay, weaving in historical anecdotes, including the fascinating link between the South American country and South Africa through the legacy of Fray Bentos beef extract.

Strydom’s writing is lively, rich in detail, and perfectly balanced between light-hearted travelogue and cultural insight. It is a delightful example of how lifestyle journalism can be both enjoyable and enlightening.



Charles Leonard

COLUMNS/EDITORIAL CATEGORY



WINNER:

Garth Theunissen

News24

"Mr Kganyago, scary inflation isn't under your bed, it's in the Union Buildings"

RUNNER-UP:

Shirley de Villiers

Currency

"Lesufi's R200bn flight of fancy"

Sisonke Mlamla

Daily Dispatch

"Tragic food poisoning cases demand urgent action"

COMMENDATION:

Don Pinnock

Daily Maverick

"Trading in wild things: Major rethink required, for biodiversity's sake"

Zongile Nhlapo

EWN

"Black women on SA TV – if they're not victims of paedophilia, their private parts are on misogyny blast"

Willemien Brummer

Netwerk24

"Hoekom vier ons nie ons plooi en warmgloede nie?"

COLUMNS/EDITORIAL CATEGORY CITATION

The Columns category received 31 entries this year—noticeably fewer than in previous years. While the reasons for this decline are not entirely clear, it is plausible that the ongoing financial strain in the media industry plays a role. Shrinking newsrooms and resource limitations may be compelling journalists to prioritise breaking news over the more contemplative and time-intensive work that opinion and column writing requires.

Nevertheless, the entries submitted offered ample reason for optimism. The diversity of topics—ranging from politics and economics to crime (especially gender-based violence), health, and environmental concerns—demonstrates that the column form remains an essential space for reflection, analysis, and public engagement.

WINNER: GARTH THEUNISSEN – NEWS24

Garth Theunissen is awarded the top honour for his incisive and witty column, *“Mr Kganyago, scary inflation isn’t under your bed, it’s in the Union Buildings.”* Tackling a complex and often inaccessible topic—monetary policy and the Reserve Bank Governor’s approach to inflation—Theunissen writes with authority, clarity, and flair. His deep subject knowledge is matched by a light, engaging tone that makes the column not only informative but enjoyable to read. His ability to demystify economic issues while subtly infusing humour makes this a standout piece.

FIRST RUNNER-UP: SHIRLEY DE VILLIERS – CURRENCY

Shirley de Villiers is recognised for her well-researched and sharply argued piece interrogating the Gauteng government’s R200-billion plan to construct a new airport at Sedibeng in Vereeniging. Her column raises critical questions around the feasibility, financial viability, and governance challenges of such a massive infrastructure project. The piece is a compelling example of how columns can serve the public interest by probing grand ambitions with scrutiny and insight.

SECOND RUNNER-UP: SISONKE MLAMLA – DAILY DISPATCH

Sisonke Mlamla’s column on the disturbing rise in food poisoning incidents linked to spaza shop purchases in 2024 offers more than just a critique of the problem. What distinguishes his piece is the inclusion of thoughtful, practical suggestions aimed at addressing the crisis. It is a strong example of solutions-oriented journalism—highlighting not only what is wrong but also what can be done.

COMMENDATIONS

Don Pinnock – Daily Maverick

Pinnock is commended for his column on the international trade in wildlife, a deeply informed and expertly crafted exploration of a complex and often underreported issue. His depth of knowledge and clarity of analysis bring much-needed attention to a subject with global implications.

Zongile Nhlapo – EWN

Nhlapo receives commendation for her powerful critique of the negative portrayal of black women in certain local television programmes. Her column blends passion with thoughtful analysis, offering a necessary and well-informed challenge to damaging cultural narratives.

Willemien Brummer – Netwerk24

Brummer is also commended for her column on menopause—an honest, wide-ranging, and deeply reflective piece informed by both personal experience and careful research. Her work makes an important contribution to normalising conversations about women’s health in mainstream media.



Garth Theunissen

VISUAL JOURNALISM CATEGORY



WINNER:

Jeff Wicks, Alex Patrick and Sharlene Rood

News24

"Final Footsteps: the Kirsten Kluyts Murder"

RUNNER-UP:

Themba Siwela

The Citizen

"30 Years of Democracy"

COMMENDATION:

Jonathan Shapiro

Daily Maverick

"The GNU Dawn"

Brandan Reynolds

Business Day

Body of work

VISUAL JOURNALISM CATEGORY CITATION

Does it catch the eye? Does it command attention? Does it cast fresh light on the news and issues of the day?

These are the guiding questions that informed the judges' evaluation of this year's Visual Journalism category at the Standard Bank SikuVile Journalism Awards.

This year, we assessed 40 entries, a modest but worthy collection, with editorial cartoons making up the majority. South Africa's dynamic and often volatile political landscape continues to provide fertile ground for the country's talented cartoonists, many of whom produce work of international calibre. The finest among them combine technical skill, creative insight, journalistic instinct, impeccable comic timing, and a deep-rooted sense of social justice.

Importantly, this category also includes the critical disciplines of graphic design and layout. From this broader pool emerged our winning entry—a shining example of multimedia storytelling at its most impactful.

WINNER: JEFF WICKS, ALEX PATRICK, AND SHARLENE ROOD – NEWS24

The top honour in this category goes to **Jeff Wicks, Alex Patrick, and Sharlene Rood** for “*Final Footsteps: The Kirsten Kluyts Murder*.” This powerful, immersive narrative documents the brutal murder of a Sandton runner, framed within the broader and urgent context of gender-based violence in South Africa.

Through the seamless integration of text, CCTV footage, photography, video, and 3D modelling, the team produced a documentary-like experience that transcends traditional reporting. Their use of digital storytelling techniques enhances both emotional impact and factual clarity, making this a landmark piece in South African visual journalism.

RUNNER-UP: THEMBA SIWELA – THE CITIZEN

The runner-up award goes to cartoonist **Themba Siwela** for his sweeping *end-of-year panorama commemorating 30 years of South African democracy*. Spanning the front and back pages of The Citizen tabloid, his cartoon is a vibrant, detailed composition filled with political and social cameos. With masterful satire and rich visual storytelling, Siwela captures the energy, complexity, and contradictions of our national life, a cartoon so lively, it almost echoes with sound.

COMMENDATIONS

Jonathan Shapiro – Daily Maverick

In “*The GNU Dawn*,” **Jonathan Shapiro (Zapiro)** offers a sharp, humorous take on the new Government of National Unity, cleverly parodying a scene from The Lion King. Featuring a bewildered-looking gnu (or wildebeest) held aloft by multi-party leaders, the cartoon is classic Zapiro, biting, imaginative, and perfectly timed.

Brandan Reynolds – Business Day

Reynolds is commended for his consistently outstanding body of work. With precision, elegance, and a dry wit, he skewers his subjects with visual clarity and political insight. A standout was his portrayal of former President Jacob Zuma as “JAW-ZEE”, a bespectacled shark circling a frantic President Ramaphosa in open waters. Reynolds continues to set the benchmark for editorial cartooning.

This category was a joy to judge. Our heartfelt congratulations and gratitude go to all entrants for their creativity, courage, and contribution to the visual storytelling landscape of South African journalism.



Jeff Wicks & Alex Patrick

NEWS PHOTOGRAPHY CATEGORY



WINNER:

Siphwe Sibeko

Reuters

"Unrest in Mozambique Following Disputed Elections"

RUNNER-UP:

Lulama Zenzile

Netwerk24

"Hoe lank nog?"

COMMENDATION:

Melinda Stuurman

Netwerk24

"Floyd Shivambu quits EFF for MK"

NEWS PHOTOGRAPHY CATEGORY CITATION

The winning entry in this category is awarded to **Siphwe Sibeko** of **Reuters** for his striking photograph titled "Unrest in Mozambique Following Disputed Elections." The image captures a woman in visible anguish, holding used teargas canisters, framed against the backdrop of the Mozambican flag—a powerful visual metaphor for the country's turbulent path to democracy.

Taken during the 2024 national shutdown protests following disputed election results, and published by BusinessLive, the photograph is remarkable for its technical excellence, visual impact, and emotional intensity. The protester's expression of despair is raw and unmistakable, drawing the viewer into the narrative and refusing to release their gaze. The image not only documents a moment of political unrest but also evokes the deep personal toll of such conflict, making it profoundly newsworthy and memorable.

RUNNER-UP: LULAMA ZENZILE – DIE BURGER

The runner-up award goes to **Lulama Zenzile** for his deeply moving photograph taken in the aftermath of the tragic building collapse in George, Western Cape, which claimed 34 lives. The image, published in **Die Burger**, portrays a grieving woman as she comes to terms with the loss—a moment of profound sorrow and vulnerability.

Zenzile's careful composition, technical precision, and empathetic approach allow the viewer to feel the full emotional weight of the tragedy. His photograph serves as a powerful reminder of the human cost behind the headlines.

COMMENDATION: MELINDA STUURMAN – NETWORK24

A commendation is awarded to **Melinda Stuurman** for her compelling image titled *"Floyd Shivambu Quits EFF for MK."* The photograph captures the moment of intense emotional strain as Julius Malema reacts to the political departure of his long-time ally and confidante, Floyd Shivambu.

With a dramatic composition and exceptional framing, the image captures the gravity of the moment with immediacy and insight. Stuurman's technical skill and journalistic instinct are evident, producing an image that is both visually striking and narratively rich.

These entries underscore the vital role of photojournalism in capturing not only what happens, but how it feels. Congratulations to all the photographers for their outstanding contributions.

Siphiwe Sibeko



FEATURE PHOTOGRAPHY CATEGORY



WINNER:

Lulama Zenzile

Netwerk24

"Mens en dier op knieë langs dieselfde damme"

RUNNER-UP:

Felix Dlangamandla

Daily Maverick

"Down in the River to Pray: Good Friday Baptism ceremony at the Klipriver bridge"

COMMENDATION:

Luke Daniel

News24

"ON THE ROAD: No water, toilets and electricity, but Lourierpark occupiers hope they can call it home."

FEATURE CATEGORY CITATION

The winning entry in this category is the powerful photo essay *"Mens en dier op knieë langs dieselfde damme"* by **Lulama Zenzile**, published in **Die Burger**. Zenzile casts an unflinching spotlight on the water crisis affecting communities in Peddie and Mount Ayliff in the Eastern Cape, where residents are forced to share contaminated water sources with livestock to survive.

With exceptional technical precision and emotional resonance, Zenzile's photographs immerse the viewer in the daily hardship, despair, and dehumanisation endured by the people of these villages. The judges were deeply moved by the discipline and passion evident in every frame, as well as by Zenzile's ability to balance light, composition, and emotion to evoke both urgency and empathy.

This photo essay exemplifies the power of visual journalism to hold institutions accountable. It not only raises awareness but actively challenges the Ngqushwa Municipality to address the crisis and fulfil its responsibility to provide clean, safe water. For his outstanding contribution to public service journalism through documentary photography, the award goes to Lulama Zenzile.

RUNNER-UP: FELIX DLANGAMANDLA – DAILY MAVERICK

The runner-up is **Felix Dlangamandla** for his photograph titled “*Down in the River to Pray: Good Friday Baptism Ceremony at the Klipriver Bridge*”, published by **Daily Maverick**. Through masterful composition and impeccable timing, Dlangamandla captures a profoundly spiritual moment: a mass baptism in turbulent waters that conveys movement, devotion, and grace.

The image stands out for its emotional depth and cultural relevance, documenting an important religious ceremony with artistic elegance and journalistic insight. It is both visually arresting and richly meaningful—a powerful reflection of faith in motion. The judges commended Dlangamandla for his consistent ability to translate human experiences into timeless, evocative images.

COMMENDATION: LUKE DANIEL – NEWS24

The judges also commend **Luke Daniel** for his compelling photo essay “*On the Road: No Water, Toilets or Electricity, but Lourierpark Occupiers Hope to Call It Home*,” published by **News24**. Captured ahead of the 2024 national elections, the work documents the lives of residents in the Lourierpark informal settlement outside Bloemfontein, who continued to rebuild and resist following a violent eviction by the Red Ants that destroyed hundreds of homes.

Daniel’s images humanise this marginalised community with remarkable dignity and sensitivity. The essay powerfully illustrates the persistent issues of land, housing, and inequality in South Africa, giving voice to the resilience and determination of those often overlooked. Through thoughtful storytelling and visual compassion, Daniel highlights the broader socio-political context of their struggle.

These works demonstrate the critical role of photojournalism in deepening public understanding, challenging injustice, and honouring the lived experiences of South Africans.



Lulama Zenzile

SPORTS PHOTOGRAPHY CATEGORY



WINNER:

Theodore Jeptha

Netwerk24

"Handre Pollard Flying"

RUNNER-UP:

Lefty Shivambu

Gallo Images

"Flying high to score a goal"

COMMENDATION:

Deaan Vivier

Netwerk24

*"Leeus-breier skud kop
oor besluit om nie in
doodsnikke uit te skop"*

Ettienne van Rensburg

Vaalweekblad

*"SA se beste landlopers
gekroon"*

SPORTS PHOTOGRAPHS CATEGORY CITATION

This year's Sports Photography category drew a rich field of submissions, each bringing something unique and compelling. The judges were impressed by the creativity, timing, and emotion captured across the entries, which made the task of selecting a winner particularly challenging. Yet, one image rose above the rest.

WINNER: THEODORE JEPHTA – DIE BURGER

The winning photograph, titled *"Handré Pollard Flying"* by **Theodore Jeptha**, is a masterclass in sports photography. Published in **Die Burger**, the image captures Springbok fly-half Handré Pollard suspended in mid-air—a moment of sheer drama, athleticism, and grace.

More than just a technically flawless shot, the photograph tells a layered story of motion, balance, and courage under pressure. Every element—from Pollard's determined expression to the intensity frozen in flight—evokes the physical and emotional demands of elite sport. It's an image that resonates far beyond the field.

RUNNER-UP: LEFTY SHIVAMBU – GALLO IMAGES

The runner-up is **Lefty Shivambu** of **Gallo Images** for his dynamic image of Mamelodi Sundowns striker Peter Shalulile in full sprint, attempting to score. With arms outstretched and leg extended, Shalulile's drive and ambition are captured in a split second that embodies the essence of the game. The photograph, published in both the *Daily Sun* and *TimesLive*, is a tribute to exceptional timing and storytelling — a visual celebration of determination and sportsmanship.

COMMENDATIONS

Two photographers receive special commendation:

Deaan Vivier of *Netwerk24*, for his dramatic match-day image published under the headline “*Leeusbreier skud kop oor besluit om nie doodsnikke uit te skop*”. His photograph captures the tension and emotional toll of a pivotal coaching decision — a frame packed with insight and atmosphere.

Ettienne van Rensburg of *Vaalweekblad*, for his powerful photograph of Kabelo Mulaudzi in action during the ASA Cross Country Championships at the VUT Isak Steyl Stadium. Published under the headline “*SA se beste landlopers gekroon*”, the image reflects not only athletic excellence but also the quiet determination of a titleholder defending his crown.

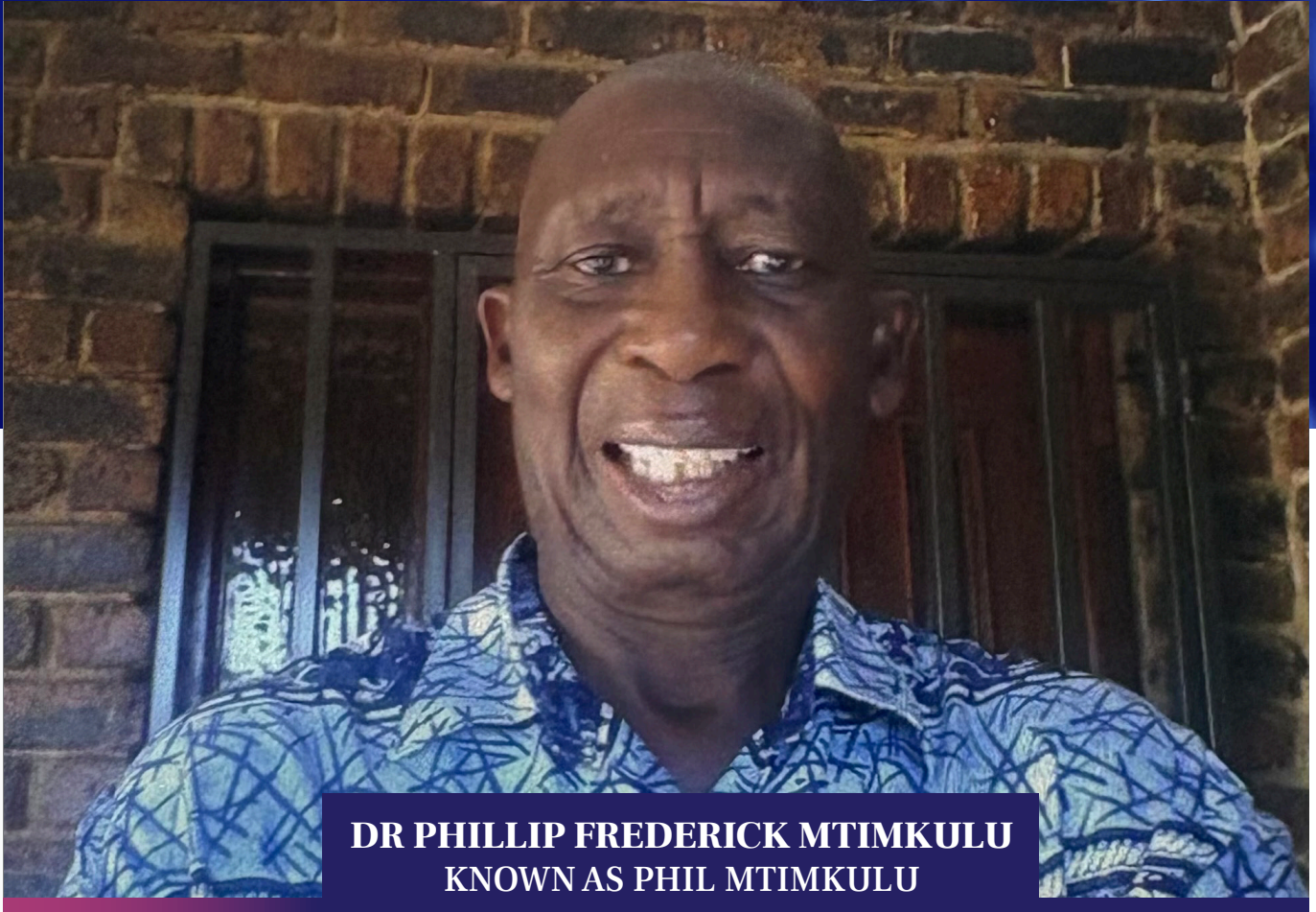
This year's entries remind us of photography's unmatched ability to freeze movement, emotion, and narrative in a single frame. Congratulations to all who captured the thrill and humanity of sport with such excellence.

nk



Theodore Jeptha

ALLAN SOGA/STANDARD BANK CHAIRMAN'S LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT



DR PHILLIP FREDERICK MTIMKULU
KNOWN AS PHIL MTIMKULU

This award recognises a sustained and extraordinary contribution to newspaper journalism on the part of an individual. The winner will have demonstrated impeccable ethics and craft excellence.

Phil Mtimkulu became a journalist during a critical period in the struggle for democracy in South Africa. During this period, he demonstrated an unwavering commitment to this cause, particularly in the fight for media freedom.

His career in journalism began in 1966 as a 17-year-old freelance sports reporter for the Golden City Post. Two years later, he joined World and Weekend World as a reporter, where he stayed until 1977.

Phil distinguished himself as a journalist during this time and joined The Voice as news editor later that year. In 1979, he joined Post as a political reporter.

However, he did not make his mark only in the newsroom. He also participated in various media organisations and was one of the founder members of both the Union of Black Journalists (UBJ) and its successor, the Writers' Association of South Africa (WASA).

The UBJ and WASA were pioneers in rallying black journalists into organised formations that dared to speak out openly and fearlessly for the freedom of black people as well as for freedom of expression.

These organisations believed that there could not be media freedom in South Africa as long as the society in which they lived was not free. Phil was the living embodiment of this commitment to freedom and democracy.

Despite the brutal nature of state repression, he served as the UBJ's secretary-general. Even when the UBJ and several publications and individuals were banned in October 1977, he remained utterly committed to the anti-apartheid struggle.

After former UBJ members launched WASA, Phil represented the organisation (along with Marimuthu Govender) at an International Federation of Journalists conference in France, where they presented a paper on the plight of journalists in South Africa.

Because of his defiant commitment to freedom, Phil was served with a three-year banning order in 1980 and placed under house arrest. Yet, as soon as his banning order expired in 1983, he once again returned to journalism and joined Sowetan and, shortly after, The Star as assistant news editor.

During that period, he also became active in the Media Workers' Association of South Africa (MWASA), which was formed after WASA was banned in 1980 – an indication of his uncompromising bravery and integrity.

Although Phil moved to academia in 1987 – earning a doctorate in political studies in 2006 – he remained active in the media in other ways. In 2009, for instance, he was deputy chairperson of the SABC's interim board, and, in 2011, he served as a commissioner on the Press Freedom Commission, which was appointed to look at the regulation of print media in South Africa.

Now deep into his retirement, he still provides commentary on the media and continues to write occasional letters to the editor – still a journalist at heart, and still a believer in the power of words.

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2025 STANDARD BANK SIKUVILE JOURNALISM AWARDS JUDGES



LIZEKA MDA
CONVENOR JUDGE

Lizeka Mda is a media trainer and editor. In more than 30 years in the media and communication field she has been a title editor, publisher and academic. Her contributions to Journalism in South Africa include being on the Appointments Panel that transformed the Office of the Ombudsman to the South African Press Council in 2007 and afterwards serving on the Appeals Panel as a media representative.

She has also served on the executive board of the South African National Editors' Forum and participated in the African Editors Forum. She is a World Press Institute Fellow of Macalester College, Minnesota (Class of 1993), a Ron Brown Fellow of the National Minority Business Council, New York (1997) and a Nieman Fellow of Harvard University (2004).



ANDILE NTINGI

Andile Ntingi is the founder of GetBiz Pty Ltd, which he established in 2014. He is a media practitioner and economic commentator with 25 years of professional experience, specialising in business journalism and corporate communications. Ntingi has worked for a number of media organisations including public broadcaster SABC, Thomson Reuters, Independent Media Group, and Media24.

He has also written columns for South Africa's leading financial publications such as Finweek, Business Day, and Sunday Times. In 2016, Ntingi graduated from the African Leadership Initiative (ALI) Media Fellowship Programme in New York, USA. The programme, sponsored by Bloomberg Media PL, selected journalists and media practitioners from Nigeria, South Africa and Kenya. Andile holds an honours degree in economics from Rhodes University.


BEAUREGARD TROMP

Beauregard Tromp is an investigative editor and convenor of the African Investigative Journalism Conference. He has won numerous awards for his reporting including being named CNN/Multichoice African Print Journalist of the Year and South African Journalist of the Year. Tromp is a former deputy editor at the Mail & Guardian and a Nieman Fellow. Most recently he was Africa editor for the Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, a cross-border investigative platform working globally. He is also the co-author of *Hani, A Life too short*, a biography of South African freedom fighter Chris Hani.


BULELWA PAYI

Bulelwa Payi has been a print and broadcast journalist and corporate communicator in a career spanning over three decades. She has worked for and contributed to various publications such as the Daily Dispatch, East Cape News Agencies (Ecna), SABC and Channel Africa. Throughout her journalism career, Payi has had the privilege of engaging with different communities and those who wield influence and power. This kind of exposure sharpened her understanding and knowledge of societal issues and fortified her courage to seek the truth in telling stories. She has written stories of human interest, social justice, bringing to the fore challenges of inequality that still confront our society.


GUS SILBER

I am a journalist, author, scriptwriter, speechwriter, and media trainer, with over 40 years of experience. I hold a master's degree in Journalism and Media Studies from Rhodes University, achieved with distinction. I have been a judge and chair of several journalism awards, including the Mondi Awards and the Sikuviles. I have crafted keynote addresses for senior executives and political leaders, including former President Thabo Mbeki. As a trainer and mentor, I have run workshops on journalism, social media, and feature writing. I currently run workshops on the uses of AI tools such as ChatGPT. I work as a scriptwriter and editor for companies at home and abroad and am also working on two commissioned non-fiction books for commercial publishers.


KIM CLOETE

Kim Cloete is a journalist and media specialist with a wide range of national and international experience. She is currently writing and producing for two global public health organisations, while maintaining a sharp interest in news and current affairs. Cloete was a television journalist and parliamentary editor for the SABC. Over the years she has covered a broad spectrum of issues, from economics and international affairs to energy, health and community. She has freelanced for leading print and online news outlets and has been a contributor to Public Radio International's 'The World' based in Boston. Cloete was a Nieman Fellow in 2006 and has received several awards for her work in journalism.


MARY PAPAYYA

Mary Papayya is an awarding winning journalist and editor. She is a certified media trainer and coach. She is a founder editor of Sanef and currently serves as a director of the SA Press Council and is a patron on various media bodies. She has served in senior editorial positions in both the print and broadcast media for over three decades. She has served on many boards including the SABC Board, the GBVF Board and is a patron of several community-based foundations working with women and children. She is a mentor for young journalists and media workers. Mary currently works in the space of strategic communications and media/stakeholder relations. She has an MPhil in Journalism from Stellenbosch University.


NEO NTSOMA

Neo Ntsoma is an award-winning photographer, educator and creative consultant. Her work explores identity, culture, and social justice, featured in international publications and exhibitions. Ntsoma was the first woman to receive the Mohamed Amin Award (2004). She is also a recipient of the National Geographic All Roads Photography Award (2005). She has shared her expertise at institutions such as New York's ICP, Stanford and Yale universities and is a mentor and advocate for young photographers, particularly women seeking to break into the industry.. In 2006 she co-authored with ??? Women by Women: 50 Years Of Women's Photography In South Africa. Ntsoma's leadership extends to various esteemed awards, international selection committees and collaborations with organisations such as Unesco and the World Press Photo Foundation.


NOMSA MDHLULI

Nomsa Mdhluli is the founder and CEO of Tishala Communications, a multi-award-winning PR and digital marketing agency recognised for innovative, culturally impactful campaigns across Africa. A seasoned journalist with nearly 20 years at SABC News and Eyewitness News, she anchored prime-time broadcasts before transitioning to editorial leadership, where she mentored emerging journalists and elevated newsroom standards. Her dedication to nurturing talent continues through her role as a part-time journalism lecturer at the University of Johannesburg. She holds a master's degree in mass communication from Liverpool John Moores University (UK) and has secured admission to a PhD programme in Communication


PIPPA GREEN

Pippa Green has been a journalist, writer, researcher and journalism teacher for more than three decades, working on newspapers, magazines, in radio, and at academic institutions. She is currently managing editor of Econ3x3 and is working on a book. She spent two years as the national Press Ombudsman, the first woman to hold the position. Green holds an honours degree in Economic History from UCT and an MSc from the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University in New York City. She has been deputy editor of the Sunday Independent and Pretoria News, and political editor and head of Radio News at the SABC. She was a Nieman Fellow (1998-1999) and a visiting Ferris professor at Princeton University (2006). She is author of *Choice not Fate: The Life and Times of Trevor Manuel*.


PORTIA KOBUE

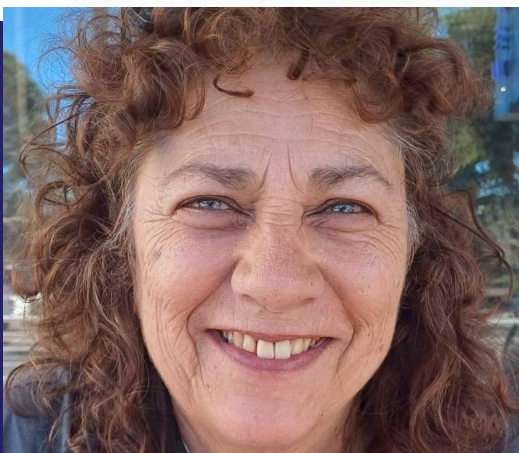
Portia Kobue is a broadcast journalist with a passion for women representation in the media and society. She started her career at Radio Bop in 1993 as a writer on the English news desk, she accumulated most of her radio news skills through on-the-job training. She joined the SABC in 1995, working as a reporter, current affairs producer and presenter in SeTswana. After 11 years as a news reporter and editor at two commercial radio stations – Highveld Stereo and Kaya FM – Kobue re-joined the SABC as executive producer for Morning Live. She has worked as a broadcast news trainer for community radio stations and other organisations. Kobue is a Catherine Fanning Fellow at the Kettering Foundation in Dayton Ohio.


RUTH MOTAU

Ruth Motau is a documentary photographer known for her powerful visual storytelling. Born and raised in Soweto, she studied photography at the Market Theatre Photo Workshop, a pivotal institution in shaping her career. She has been a picture editor at three major newspapers in the country. Motau's work focuses on social issues, particularly life in townships and rural communities, capturing themes of identity, poverty and resilience. Her images, celebrated for their honesty and depth, have been exhibited locally and internationally. In addition to her photography, she is a mentor and educator, nurturing young photographers from disadvantaged backgrounds. Through her work, Motau continues to challenge stereotypes,


RYLAND FISHER

Ryland Fisher has more than 45 years of experience in the media industry as an editor, journalist, columnist, author, senior manager and executive. He is the former editor of the Cape Times and The New Age and was assistant editor of the Sunday Times. His experience in the media industry extends across all media platforms, including broadcast, online, books and events. He works with several media companies, in South Africa and abroad: writing, editing, training and consulting. Fisher is the author of four books and is executive producer of The Arch, a four-part documentary series about Archbishop Desmond Tutu. He is also the host of the Crossing the Line weekly podcast..


SUE OLSWANG

I have worked in media for 44 years, starting as a cadet journalist for South African Associated Newspapers in 1981. Over the decades I have worked as a news reporter, news editor and sub editor for the Evening Post, Weekend Post, Rand Daily Mail, Sunday Times, Supermarket and Retailer (magazine) The Star, Playboy (magazine), Womyn (magazine), Saturday Star, Star Tonight, Sowetan, The Times and TimesLIVE.

I have edited two books (fiction and non-fiction) and have started writing a novel. I currently freelance as a sub editor.


THABO LSHILO

Thabo Leshilo is a freelance editor and writer based in Johannesburg. He has over 30 years' experience in journalism. He spent the last decade working as the politics editor at The Conversation Africa. He is the former editor of Pretoria News, Sowetan, Sunday World, and Business Times. He was previously a night editor and news editor at Business Report. His main areas of interest are social justice, human rights, politics, economy, labour, transport and small business development. He is a past winner of the Sanlam Business Journalist of the Year Award (small business section).

He was a 2008/2009 Nieman Fellow (Harvard University). Leshilo holds a Bachelor of Administration from the University of Limpopo and a master's in Philosophy (Applied Ethics) from Wits University.


TYRONE AUGUST

I started my career in journalism in 1981 and have worked at various newspapers and magazines since then as a general reporter (The Star), subeditor/revise subeditor (City Press), features writer/arts writer (New Nation), arts editor (Tribute), political reporter/features writer/features editor (Sowetan) and editor (Learn & Teach and Cape Times). I am currently a freelance writer and editor. In addition,

I am a member of the board of the news agency GroundUp and a part-time Deputy Press Ombud of the Press Council of South Africa. I am also currently a research fellow in the Department of English at Stellenbosch University and am working on another biography of the former South African poet and political activist Dennis Brutus.

APPRECIATION FOR OUR INCREDIBLE SANEF TEAM

To each and every staff member who contributed to the success of the **2025 Standard Bank Sikuville Journalism Awards** — thank you.

From pre-event planning to the final spotlight moment, your hard work behind the scenes made the vision come alive. Whether you were coordinating logistics, curating content, managing media, designing visuals, or directing production — your efforts were seen, felt, and deeply appreciated.



REGGY MOALUSI
Executive Director



HOPEWELL RADEBE
Project / Administration Manager



DZUDZIE FAITH
Administration



SANEF

SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL EDITORS' FORUM

It's about South Africa.



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