

# The Journalism Dialogues

Transcript of recording of 5th frayintermedia Mail&Guardian Journalism Dialogues, 22 July 2008,  
The Royal Hotel, Durban

The Government's policy of changing a wide range of place-names across the country has provoked a series of debates and contestations over how South Africa's history is interpreted. New academic studies continually enter circulation and challenge how our pre-colonial, colonial, apartheid and post-apartheid histories are understood. And the media have played a significant role in how these ideas are disseminated and popularised. But the political polarisation of these debates has also raised the question of whether our journalists have a firm grasp of the nuances of the issues, or whether they remain crudely partisan.

## CHARMEELA BHAGOWAT (MD frayintermedia):

What I want to do before you start your discussion here today is give you a little background, some context. frayintermedia is also a group of journalists. We are passionate about journalism, we believe that it is critical for our democracy. How these dialogues came about, was that we were training in newsrooms and throughout our training in different newsrooms over the last two years, we discovered that there was quite a disconnection between civil society, the people reporters report on and journalism. We started asking why that was, and what could we do. We also found that structures that journalists use to connect, to talk about issues, to share ideas about our craft, had fallen away. We don't have a union anymore for example, so the result of that is that perhaps journalists are not talking as much as we should be talking among each other and also with people like you, about the issues that matter. Bearing that in mind we got together with the Mail&Guardian and we partnered with them and we asked Joe Thloloe – who is South Africa's Press Ombudsman – to join in a series of discussions that we take around the country, that journalists come to, civil society come to and talk about the issues that matter. How we decided to do this is to take a journalism issue and to explore that issue through the news of the day. This is our fifth dialogues by the way, we had four



Mary de Haas

so far and this is the first one that we've brought to KwaZulu-Natal. Clearly one of the major issues in this province has been name changing. There's been lots of unhappiness about it, there has been lots of reporting on it over the last six months, a huge amount of reporting on it. What we are here to discuss today is how that reporting has taken place. Is the IFP being airbrushed from history? Are people being ignored? Is there enough contexts? How is the media reporting this issue, which is such a critical issue. So, what I want to say today before I hand over, we invited so many different people, you can see that we invited the IFP, ANC, we invited the Minority Front, more than anything we invited journalists. As you go through this discussion today I want you to think about, how these issues affect society.

**“We don't have a union anymore for example so the result of that is that perhaps journalists are not talking as much as we should be talking among each other”**

Off course it is a political issue, but it is an issue that we are not going to resolve if we politicise it. So the things that we need to be thinking about as we have this discussion today, what is wrong with the media? What is the role of the journalists in this fragile, emerging democracy we have? How do we report on the issues of transformation of which this is a major part, the name changing? How do you see the media responding to the challenges in this conference?

## JOE THLOLOE (Press Ombudsman):

Let me start by explaining my role in these dialogues. There are three reasons why I take part in these dialogues. The one is – I need to keep in touch with the big debates in our society and with the major role players in those issues, I will come back to that. I also need to get a feel for what the general public thinks about these issues. It is easy reading about them in the newspapers, watching on TV, but it is much easier, I get a better feel once I am with people. I'm also keen to know what the general public thinks of the way these issues are covered in the media.” The third reason – a very selfish one, I need to promote press self-regulation and the South African press code. I need to remind you that it again came under attack from comrade Gwede Mantashe yesterday, but that is besides the point. Let's start this conversation in another way, if I said something wrong, please raise your hand and lets talk about it.

At this point I think it is appropriate that I quote the South African Press Code (SAPC), and it says very clearly, *“pictures shall not misrepresent or mislead nor be manipulated to do so.”* That is what the SAPC says, but this particular section carries the same



**Dr Zweli Mkhize, Mary de Haas, Cyril Madlala and Dr. Lionel Mtshali**

ethical values as a section that talks about reporting news. *“The press shall be obliged to report news truthfully, accurately and fairly. News shall be presented in context and in a balanced manner without any intentional or negligent departure from the facts whether by distortion, exaggeration or misrepresentation, material omissions or summarisation.”* These are the obligations of the media and our topic today is a metaphor taken from what this code says. I have a very eminent panel here, starting from the left. We are talking about Dr. Lionel Mtshali, former premier of KwaZulu-Natal, who is now a member of the Provincial Parliament, and next to him we have a very well-known editor in KwaZulu-Natal, Cyril Madlala, editor of *Um Afrika* and next to him, Mary de Haas, you probably all know, she runs what is now called the KwaZulu-Natal Monitor. She has done extensive research in this province and finally we’ve got Dr. Mkhize who is the MEC for Finance and Economic development in KwaZulu-Natal and who is also a leader of the ANC in KwaZulu-Natal. Having introduced the speakers, I will ask each one of them to make a three to five minute presentation and from there we will take it up. We start with the speakers in the order I’ve introduced them.

**LIONEL MTSHALI:**

I would like to kick off in the following manner, I will make reference to Joe’s comments about recent political developments which indicate that the IFP is being airbrushed out of South Africa’s history and the issues are the renaming of places, particularly the Mangosutho highway in Umlazi and secondly the mass distribution of a controversial grade 12 history text book in search of

history. As far as the renaming process is concerned, we in the IFP hardly acknowledge the need for the rest of KwaZulu-Natal and the citizens of South Africa, to transient the trauma of their past. We have always contended since the early days of the struggle against apartheid, that the names of buildings and places directly associated with the worst acts of our colonial apartheid past, we have to change to allow a process of healing and reconciliation. We’ve always maintained that the symbols of our past oppression of resume will have to give way to appropriate symbols of democracy. The IFP is aware that the current wave of renaming can be misconstrued as an attempt by the ruling party to divert attention from the real task of transformation. The IFP therefore demands that the ruling party honor transformation and refocuses their attention on finding initiatives that will bring changeable development to the poorest communities. The IFP is concerned about the given prominence to ANC evaluated freedom fighters over everyone else involved in the struggle for liberation. The renaming process is a deliberate effort to rewrite the history of the province in the country. If I’m correct this process will reopen the many old wounds in KwaZulu-Natal which we all have driven to heal for years. The IFP therefore calls for the honouring without prejudice, of the heroes of all political parties use who contributed

to the struggle against apartheid. We least expected that in the past 14 years, we would be looking at irrelevant, insensitive material being banded about. I’m moving to the history text book and we disagree the departments commitment in principal to the learning program guide of the national curriculum statement for grades 10 to 12, which dates back to January 2007. I would like to quote “a reckless/curicueless process of historical enquiry and encourage analyses, constructive debate, through careful evaluation of a broad range of evidence and diverse points of view.” Incidentally the text book in question was nationally approved and placed on the list. The point I like to make here, is that this text book is causing concern and it is being regarded as insensitive. Very much like that Zapiro cartoon depicting the IFP leader Mangosutho Buthelezi signing up to South Africa’s first democratic elections with the blood of the victims of the internecine violence which claimed thousands of ANC and IFP supporters live in this province. The cartoon therefore leaves the reader with very little doubt as to

who is responsible for the violence. Secondly I would like to highlight the issues raised in that history book. I want to quote the book which states: “The events of the 28th March 1994, at the ANC headquarters in Johannesburg”, and it reads: *“a month before the elections let us reach the crisis point when thousands of INKATHA supporters carrying traditional weapons, marched through the streets of Johannesburg, near the*

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*of INKATHA supporters carrying traditional weapons, marched through the streets of Johannesburg, near the*

*ANC headquarters. There were clashes between INKATHA marchers and ANC security guards. At least 53 people died.”* This statement is historically untrue, since the demonstration was not organised by the IFP and those rallying did so at the hand of a Zulu monk. It is also untrue that there were clashes, one can’t describe the mowing down of innocent people, unarmed people with machine guns as a clash. Finally those of us, we had the occasion to be near the office of the Press Ombudsman, Mr.

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Joe Thloloe. He received a stack of unanswered mail for example in 2008 alone the office of the IFP president wrote to the ombudsman with a complaint about the Sowetan newspapers rejection of two different rejoinders. Not only did the Ombudsman fail to intervene, but his office didn’t even acknowledge to the communication with the IFP. That is the office of the ombudsman.

**THLOLOE:**

Can I mention at this point that I will take up this issue with Dr. Mkhize. Dr. Mkhize – I’m not aware of that correspondence, but we will take it up with you. At this point I just wanted to raise one issue; the question that you probably didn’t answer, I’ll come back to ones we have run through, is what is the role of the media in this current controversy? I think I’ll come back to you on that one. But in the mean time let’s try and interpret the role of the media in this controversy.

Mine is quite simple, it is that there is no plot in the media to airbrush the IFP out of history, it is simply not in our best interest to do so. We are in the business of running newspapers in order to make money, and in order to be profitable we need to sell many newspapers and have many listeners and many viewers and if we were to identify one set of the population and say you don’t want anything to do with the IFP, which is quite an important force in the province, we wouldn’t be very good business people. On that score alone it would be in our interest to do that. I have just two questions that I need to raise in this regard and it is. Whose

history are we talking about? I’m sure the IFP has its own version of the same history we are talking about and if you ask me, I have my own version, my own understanding of the same issues. I think the municipality distinction gets between facts, reporting the facts as they happen and where we give our own opinions, we interpret events. I would hope everybody would understand that distinction. If you fault us, you fault with our facts. You can take us to comrade Joe or you can sue us for deformation and some

of us will have to pay a lot of money. So there are remedies for that. But following my opening statement some people talk as if the media make people sit down in some corner and plot and say, this is how I am going to handle the IFP, this is how I am going to handle Nadeko or any other party, I’m just saying there’s no such, we are here as professionals and we

at the way the media constructs reality. I have been doing that for over 20 years and I’ve often noticed that the media is misconstruing reality especially in small areas that it happens in. I’ve got a couple of pet areas, the one is the Scorpions and one of them is the whole HIV debate, but that is not the question here. We are looking now how the media has looked at the renaming debate here. I don’t think the media has been unfair in reporting. I think it has covered many different points of view through its factual reporting – one what happened in Council, the procedures, the reactions of the parties and I think the IFP has certainly had a voice in this. I don’t think anybody has neglected to look at the grievances the IFP has about this renaming question. There’s been a lot of opinions about it, in fact it’s got quite a lot of media coverage. I think from my point of view, I have my own opinions about the way it was done, I’ve written my opinion about it, about how I think it was mishandled, how it could have been used for reconciliation, but what it’s done is actually highlight the faulty lines in our society, not just political cleavages between ANC and IFP, about who gets



**Audience members at the 5th Journalism Dialogues**

want to be perceived as such thing and if we fall short, there are remedies.

**THLOLOE:**

I think we need an academics view of this controversy and the media’s role in this controversy.

**MARY DE HAAS (Founder of the KwaZulu-Natal Monitor):**

Well, I’m a social scientist and I look

named and who doesn’t get named. Well, there may also be cleavages within the ANC itself because I noticed that some well-known local comrades didn’t feature – the home grown heroes’ names weren’t included, so there may be divisions for all I know there. It certainly has highlighted black and white divisions and those, in my opinion has not had enough done over the years to actually bridge those divisions. They are rooted in the recent past and the very deep chasm which divided whites and black

until 1994 and it's continuing to divide. This name changing process has brought those divisions out. Now what could the media have done? We are looking at the role of the media here and I think, as I said, the media has tried to give coverage of a range of opinions. I'm looking now at the English language media, I can't speak the four other languages, Afrikaans or Zulu, I'm looking at the main newspapers in this province, the national newspapers that have covered it. I think they've given voices to people who protested, but I don't think they've gone beyond that and confronted people and said well for example, lets take the IFP's grievance, which I personally think is legitimate. I don't see any reason whatsoever to rename Mangosutho Highway an addition to that it's really asking, in a sense, to replace it with the name of Griffith Mxenge is to actually resurrect what one hopes is some of the very unpleasant entrée black complex of the past. The media could be asking more questions, it could have gone to the ANC and said but why? Tell us more. It could've tried to explore these reasons, it could've asked why these names



Dr Zweli Mkhize, Mary de Haas, Cyril Madlala and Dr. Lionel Mtshali

and not others? Tell us more about this, it could've done some more in-depth exploration of it, in other words that would be my take on, has the media done enough, because that is what I understood, this was all about. The media coverage of it, and to me it's part of a broader problem I often see in South African media, of not asking enough questions. Not doing enough digging around, not doing enough investigation. To find a way of trying to explain more about why the processes are happening now? Asking the odd number of questions, I won't go into detail. The one question that comes to me immediately is to ask the ANC, this municipal ANC, but yes, we do agree, we've got to shed colonialism, I don't have a problem with that. Tell us, why are you still running single hostels, isn't that the single biggest symbol of colonialism? It is all very well

to say, street naming, yes, but there are other things too. My interpretation is that the media could have done a little more in-depth questioning and in depth exploration itself.

### DR ZWELI MKHIZE:

I said to Dr. Mtshali when this meeting is finished, we must remove all the journalists and the spectators and remain here and do a bilateral meeting between the ANC and the IFP, we've got enough of the leadership here. I think that is a very good idea. The issue that's been brought up, I must say, it did draw me out to understand what actually we are supposed to discuss, whether this is directed to the ANC, whether the ANC, as a party, is airbrushing the IFP and I have asked this question many times and

I have not been quite able to understand, but if the approach is that we are actually dealing with the media, then maybe it's understandable. I hope that one of these days we'll also have a topic talking about all the negative things that are being done to the ANC and put the media here and again we have a debate. But Madlala asked the question, whose history? The thing about history is, that we must accept that for one story there are different perspectives. This is likely to be a challenge that we have to deal with over a long time. In the case of what we are dealing with here, we must look back and say, if we talk of some of the history, there is a lot that we do agree about the history, whether it happened for the correct reason or whether, in fact it happened it is the way we say it happened. Now, whenever any of those issues come back we must accept again

that we will always disagree, that is part of the history, in history it is always been like that. Now, coming to the issue of the naming and renaming, I want to give you the perspective of the ANC. We ask the question, why this, why that? Firstly, I want to start by indicating that there isn't a decision from the ANC to airbrush the IFP out of history, to undermine and discredit the president of the IFP, Dr. Mangosutho Buthelezi. I want to say that because we've been through a number of processes. In one of the documents I have here is a document that was done in 1999 by the Joint Secretary of the ANC and the IFP, dealing with this issue of what perspective of history should we be looking at between the ANC and IFP, and of course we still want to take it forward. I'm saying this to our

colleagues in the IFP because I think it will help us to deal with these kinds of situations. Where the debate is, how do we deal with the fact that we differ on certain issues, can we have an approach where both the ANC and the IFP will say, this is the version that we are going to live by and deal with it like that, because the past few years there has a lot that we have learned in the process of transforming the province as well as in the process to try and

understand each other and bring peace and reconcile the people in this province. This document was done in October 1999, it is not for the media, it is for the ANC and the IFP, I'm only referring to it, I'm not going to read the document. Let me continue to say there are number of institutions, roads, buildings that are been named after Dr. Mangosutho Buthelezi in the province. I don't want to mention them, but there are a number of places. We have not asked the question of the IFP, when you named a road after Mangosutho Buthelezi, did you think of a name of another ANC member? We do not ask that question, it is not a question that you want to ask in public, because there are issues that we must sit down and talk about, how do we deal with this issue and balance it. I've got a long list that I can show, of the names, and there is no objection, including the

Mangosutho Technikon, but what I think is missing, was the fact that, what do we do about the name changing, and as I understood between the ANC and IFP there was an agreement on the process that this is what we want to do. Where the disagreement came was whether Mangosutho Highway was officially on the books or was it just a road, that is the debate as far as we understood it to be. Now the IFP is quite correct if they want to raise an issue in agreement on paper on that particularly issue. The ANC has it's perspective. That is why we felt this matter needs to be discussed by the leadership in this province and say, go and sit down and try and discuss this matter, so that we don't have to have all of this exchanging in the media. All of us ask the question, myself included and they said to the media, have they gone deep enough to this issue to actually explain who Griffith Mxenge was? What is the sensitive thing about them in the history of the people of Umlazi. Now that is a different perspective that this matter is coming from. Then of course we need to say to the leadership in **Empangeni** if you go about naming the municipality institution, the streets and so on, you must find an approach that allows you to brake your deadlocks, so that you deal with issues where there might be disagreement and so on because in this case, we are aware that they are coming from different perspectives. But we can't all get involved, we've got a leadership, they must take responsibility for name changing as its happening. If you want to change a name, the municipality must deal with that issue. If you want to change the name of buildings in **Msiyathi**, you must do that and the leadership must deal with those particular issues and try to solve them. Hold that question to us as the public to balance the issues out, let's hear all of these perspectives, here is the IFP disagreeing, here's the ANC disagreeing with the IFP, but let's hear these perspectives clearly as to what are the issues as far as this part is concerned. We do worry sometimes, about the memory of the struggle heroes. There is a tendency to quickly forget some of the things. You might have a perception, but that is one of our concerns. Sometimes we demonise, and individuals in the public will have their own views, but should the media have the same view of those particular heroes? I will then be saying that as far as I am concerned this is the kind of approach we need to have. Lastly coming to the issue of the book,

again if the IFP has a issue with it, I've got no problem, I understand what the IFP is talking about. I think we also want, as the ANC, not to be the ones who



Dr. Lionel Mtshali

must be accused if there is such a situation. In fact the cartoon is known to come from Zapiro. It is very difficult for the ministers to go and reconstitute, what it could have called, the shift, to go and cut out the offensive piece, but is there another way of dealing with it? They even want to fight about it, can we take this matter to court and deal with the people who publish the book and deal with it in that way because then we can deal with the issue in a different way. I would say in the media there is quite a lot of negligence, sometimes the lines of people that you talk to, give your

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perspective as the printed truth. It is not only Dr. Ntelesi who sends letters to the Ombudsman. My Secretary – General Gwede Mantashe, told me in fact they have a long list of issues to discuss with the Ombudsman. I don't want to get to that. We can't say the media never gets it wrong, they do, quite often and sometimes we wonder if there is an agenda. Sometimes we get to engage them and say, look these things you can't

do, this is wrong etc, go and correct it and they refuse. Until the court proves that they are wrong, they sell the papers. Now that for me is a challenge. That's a serious issue that I think we need to deal with. As far as this whole issue is concerned, I think the media needs to be a lot more sensitive. When you deal with issues, you don't need to get all involved in the issues, it's not your issues, it's our issues. Let us debate the issue, and you must keep the perspective. So, it's very clear, let the public make their own judgment, but you must say this is this and that is that person's view and keep it a balanced report. If your report is balanced, it will be fine, we won't have any problem with it. But if we begin to feel that the thing is biased towards one or the other person or party, then we have an issue with you.

### THLOLOE:

We have heard the four panelists, I was a little slack with time, but I think we still have enough time for you to ask questions, to make comments.

### ALFRED MPOTANE MEMBER OF THE IFP:

About the book, one of the things that is lacking in our education system which in fact is a great problem, is accountability. Some say, the ANC, the department has got nothing to do with the history book, it is the publisher. But the question is, who owns the schools in South Africa? We are not talking about the book in a bookshop; we are talking about a history book in schools. Then who owns the schools, who has got the ultimate political accountability of what happens in schools? It is the Minister. I personally have written to the National Minister about this question and she responded in the same way as that she, she washes her hands of this matter and I think this is not being accountable. Who knows what the process is in books election, but the books needs review from the Minister.

### AUDIENCE MEMBER:

I want to address Comrade Mary de Haas. We have the media which reports on events, but we don't have a media that goes beyond the news investigating journalism. We don't have a media that asks questions as to why do have to remove Mangosutho as a name. They need to ask these questions.

### AUDIENCE MEMBER:

I think on this one you've got it wrong

in the Mangosutho name change. The ANC municipality did not rename Mangosutho, they renamed the spinal route. What has happened, then I'm coming back to comrade Mzulu is correct there. There is a Mangosutho Technikon. At first the issue was raised of renaming it by the students, but the ANC said no, you can not. Take that one up and the result you will see is that one is not part of the process. So what I'm commenting on is that there is an issue that has no plan of doing away with the IFP. There is Mangosutho Technikon. There is also Nandi road, there is no plan to do away with the IFP.

### THLOLOE:

We've got three questions. The first who owns the schools? Investigative journalism digging behind the story and Spine road? Does any one of the panel want to take up these issues?

### MADLALA:

I think there is general consensus in South Africa that believes our journalism is rather poor. We don't do the kind of investigations that people are talking about, that is acknowledged. We have an organisation called SANEF which runs workshops and we are trying to address this issue. So, right from the start I'll conceive that we have a problem with the quality of our journalism. One of the problems obviously, is that we have very young people now because the professional pays, so ministers take all our best journalists, we can't compete with them so that is the reality. All the best journalists are now sitting in Government departments and when the IFP was in charge as well, and it happens across the board, nationally as well and in the province. The point about doing investigations, I said earlier on, that we are running a business here. Investigations take a lot of money and they require a lot of resources. You need to spend a week or even a month on one story whereas, you do a small story you can get away with a lot of material, we are not proud of that, but that is the reality.



Audience member

We don't have enough resources to do justice to our province.

### AUDIENCE MEMBER:

Let me say that we have to find a way of keeping a balance on the way we run our systems. Let's take a situation where we say that the context of the book is defamatory. Now, I would ask the question how do we come to that determination unless we take the matter to court? Then the court says to the department, this book is offensive, then the department has no choice. Now, if it's a matter of disagreement, I'll agree that we need to be very sensitive particularly about the interpretation of history. I looked directly at this whole section and I was trying to understand what is it that they were trying to do. They have called it up, to deal with the question of picking up prejudices and so on, which is a matter of opinion, it is a matter of stand point, it is a matter of debate. Now, how far do we go? By removing things that can not be proven by a court of law to be offensive? I would still have said, in the case of this nature, that there are two issues we are dealing with. We either are dealing with a disagreement or dealing with a defamatory verification in print. If that is the case, I would still say there is a case to be made in court, but if the court does not make that ruling, I've been through this. I've actually been to court on a matter which was failed to deformity.

The editors never agreed. They need to agree with me. They thought I was just being funny. When the court ruled, they had no choice. Sometimes in dealing with the issue of a democratic institution, we have to then say there are remedies to deal with this matter and maybe this is one of them. You can imagine if we then said, I don't

like that book. Why does it not have Oliver Tambo and Albert Luthuli on the cover? Why doesn't it have Steve Biko? If I asked that question, how far do you

stretch this issue? It is an issue that we need to begin to say to ourselves, this is our democracy. Where do we draw the limits. Indeed, it must be sensitive. If it was a statement which was done by the ANC like that, it would have been easy. I would say, listen lets remove that thing and that is it. But this is an open, public space. They are trying to get their kids to get involved with the debate and a

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lot of the stuff there they may not agree with. But how do we deal with that for our children who are supposed to be analytical in their approach? It is an issue for me in two

parts, lets take the matter to court and close it. The answer to the Premier. The Premier made the suggestion of what names we can use and in the process the final institution that must take the decision about which name is used, is the municipality.

### DE HAAS:

I will bring this back to the media because we are drifting away from the thrust of this discussion. I would like to pick up on something that came out of this discussion and that is the question of using the court. I have long felt that one has to be very wary of running to defamation actions. In the 1980s I remember the discussions when the Weekly Mail was banned, and it was the constant threat of defamation action, which is actually a form of censorship, that lead to it. I haven't run to the courts and I have been defamed, believe me. I don't believe one should, unless they're are very, very telling reasons for it. But I want to pick up and that is the question of Spine road, I've never been clear about the right name, because the way it's been reported in the media. And this is why, it is Mangosutho Highway and has been changed to Griffith Mxenge and if that is incorrect then the media needs to do something about it, obviously. And that is then a classic case of the media being sloppy.

### AUDIENCE MEMBER:

I would like to respond to a common problem that we have in the country presenting that of our "struggle" history. If we are taking the trouble to look deeper into our 'struggle' history, we wouldn't make the mistake of creating a perception that the local heroes are being remembered in a selective manner.



Audience members at the 5th Journalism Dialogues

The fundamental problem here, is that in some quarters a perception is being created that Dr. Mangosutho Buthelezi brings tellers did not contribute to the struggling for liberation of this country and this is why his name is being replaced with that of Griffith Mxenge forgetting that in fact it was Prince. Dr. Mangosutho Buthelezi who made it possible for the late Griffith Mxenge to be allowed to practice as an attorney. Secondly, I would like to comment on the publisher who is responsible for the publication of history books. Now where reference is made to individuals, why are those individuals not approached for their comments and then the whole situation evaluated critically before it is printed? Responsibility is not there.

### AUDIENCE MEMBER:

I can't agree with you. The topic said that the IFP is being airbrushed from history. The challenge we are having is how journalists are caught in this activity, as has been said. The second point I want to make on the school book. The book that you are talking about is not prescribed by the Government Department. It is a referral point for any school in any level to utilise. So it can't be blamed on the Government. Mr. Chairperson, the third point, I want to make is that we are honouring people from our past. If we are honest with ourselves here, almost in each and every municipality in this province, there is something renamed after Mangosutho Buthelezi.

### BHAGOWAT:

Please recall that this is called the Journalism Dialogues because it is about talking.

### AUDIENCE MEMBER:

I've been a Member of Parliament. I

think what we are really saying in the IFP is the method that was used, which was not as far as we are concerned inclusive, seems to be the case in many sectors of the population. With regard to the name change of Mangosutho, we are opposed to the process which was divisive and which was the last thing to nation building that you could have had.

### THLOLOE:

Can you respond to Dr. Mkhize's suggestion that there needs to be dialogues at the top level?

### AUDIENCE MEMBER:

I would like take up that another point

**“I think what we are really saying in the IFP is the method that was used which was not as far as we are concerned inclusive and it seems to be the case in many sectors of the population”**

here has to be dialogue, but there has to be understanding not just between the IFP and ANC, but between all people. There needs to be consultation which, as far as this issue is concerned, didn't exist. Can I raise the matter of going to court on the history book?

### THLOLOE:

Yes, very briefly.

### AUDIENCE MEMBER:

My colleague and friend, the Minister, has said that we can go to court. That is

easier said than done. It takes a long time to get into court. What we are calling for is understanding and empathy for each other.

### THLOLOE:

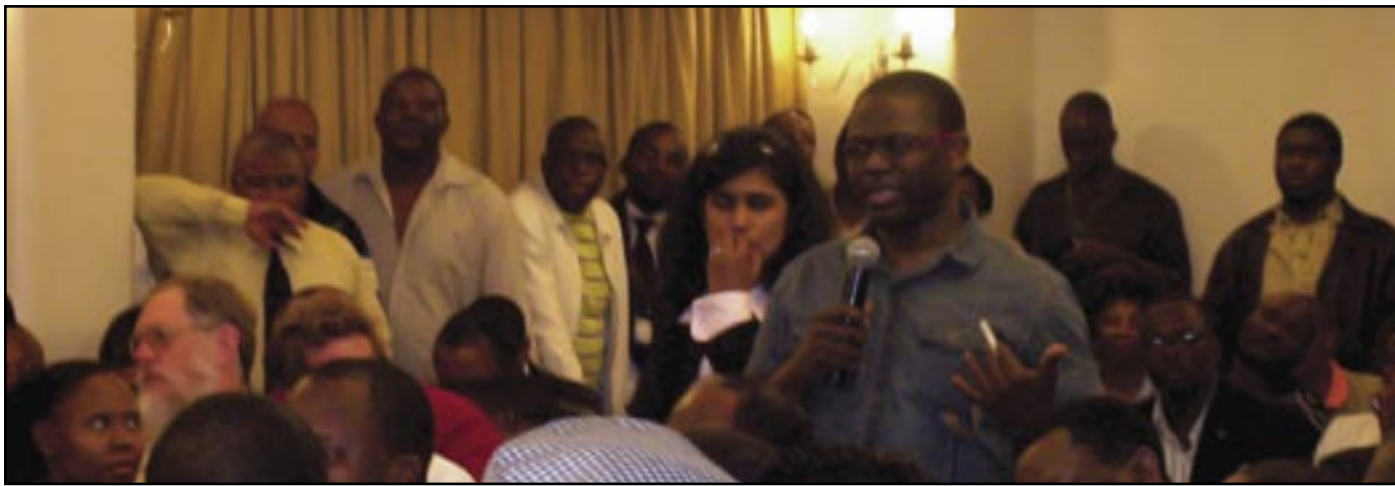
Does anyone want to respond?

### AUDIENCE MEMBER:

I'm asking a question to any panellist, but perhaps some of them would be more directed to Dr. Mtshali in terms of the last statement he made about the struggle and struggle heroes. To just say that when he answers, we would like, perhaps, for him to be able to also tell us whether it was omission on the part of the IFP when he was in Government. That whether it was omission that when the IFP was in Government, that there was no name dedicated to the struggle heroes other than those of IFP. If I'm wrong I, would like to be corrected. I want Dr. Mtshali to also assist us in knowing how do we actually, South Africans, deal with issues of dispute, that is when we differ? I'm saying it because I was very interested when I heard the national chairperson of the IFP criticising the president of the ANC. She went so as far as to say that she was triggering a third world war.

### DE HAAS:

I'm bringing this discussion back to its origin which is the role of the media. We are not debating history textbooks and schools. That is not what the debate is about. But the history textbook issue is important because it highlights differences of opinion, and I mean where the media is important and Dr. Mkhize has made this point, that you take things up through different channels. The role of the media is to give voice to all these different opinions and disagreements. The court's issue is that most people



**Audience Member at the 5th Journalism Dialogues.**

don't have the money to go to court. It is okay if you are a politician, or a business or a well paid person, but lawyers cost the earth. If the media has published something which is blatantly untrue and which is certainly putting you in a bad light, then I can understand if you are going to court. But I've also seen politicians with extremely thin skins who run to court at the drop of the hat even when they don't have a case. That is what I meant by censorship. I've seen this in the 1980s, where the threat of defamation was used all the time to stop accurate reporting and that is what I'm against. I want to differentiate, I'm not saying there is no role for the court, by its very nature, and I deal with problems of poor people and injustice all the time, everyday. It is not accessible for people who don't have the money to pay.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:**

This should be a constructive dialogue but unfortunately it's not. I think it is reflecting the quality of the debate we have here. My first problem is with the quality, there is no level of debate. The point I am making is that the challenge the media faces here, is that the quality of debates of our politicians, is dismarked.

When we go to the legislation, they should listen to the debates. We are disappointed. I write for a national newspaper and for some reason people are very interested in what is happening in KwaZulu-Natal. But you can spend a week here and listen to these kind of debates, these exchanges. If we have to do a piece tomorrow about this

**“I think among here are leaders that's what is very obvious we actually give each other time to talk to each other and listen to each other so that we can deal with the views that differ.”**

discussion today, I am sure many of you will be disappointed as the quality is not up to scratch. I think we miss a lot of opportunities. What we need to discuss here is our role in the media, as you guys see us and then we would respond as to how we see it.

**MADLALA:**

First I would like to point out that the naming and renaming was not a real issue in this country during the struggle days. What was important was actually to face the politics of the day and also we made a contribution under very difficult circumstances. We made it possible for the names of people who were incarcerated to be brought into the limelight. We went further and even upheld the colours the freedom colours.

**THLOLOE:**

That has not been the issue, there's a general agreement on those issues, but the point is what has been the media's role in these debates, essentially.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:**

The media has been selective in covering events. Secondly the media has shown bias to the ruling party. In this

particular debate the media has not done its research and presented codes and views so as to enable the public and the readership to make their own assessments. But in this case the media has failed in its mission.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:**

I would like to go to the point raised by

Dr. Mkhize that the media hasn't done enough in terms of telling the public who Griffith Mxenge and his wife are. Maybe it is good that the point is raised, maybe the media will now go out and tell the public that Griffith Mxenge is that gentleman who was killed. Secondly the name Spine road, is not the name of that road, it is a descriptive name the engineers use to describe it. There are so many Spine roads around here, so don't use it as an excuse. We are still saying the IFP is being airbrushed out of history with the help of the media because nobody can deny the role Dr. Mangosutho Buthelezi in the struggle of this country and in this province particularly.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:**

So much has been said about the media in this room, I feel that I should make a few observations. Unfortunately history is always a contested commodity. It depends who is telling it and everyone wants to contest it and present it in a way that is going to portray him or her positively. It will all be contested. The other side of an item that's been contested is the media itself, by all political parties because there are political people here today and they view it in so many different ways. Finally we have to agree that unfortunately newspapers are chasing profits and as far as I am concerned there is no hope that there will ever be politician journalists. Newspapers pay people badly, that is why all good reporters are working for PR agencies or Government. Government pays better. Some of us are still working at newspapers because they are not good enough to leave.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:**

Firstly, I do not agree that the media is poor because of money, it is the way

it conducts its business. What makes you not phone a person before you write about him? Just to make call, to say 'I found out this about you'. You go to the people and write about somebody without asking that person. I don't think that they waste too much money to do that, but you don't do that. Secondly, Griffith Mxenge died in Umlazi and he was working with the community of Umlazi when he died. He was servicing the community and the community of Umlazi named that street Griffith Mxenge. The community submitted the name to the municipality to say, we want this road to be named Griffith Mxenge.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:**

Question directly for Dr. Mtshali. What do we mean when we say transformation? We have many KwaZulu-Natal people who were there before and what exactly has it done for transformation? Secondly, when you speak of people who speak the language which is not accepted in society, you mustn't be economical about it. Because I'm failing to understand what exactly are the wounds that are going to be opened when the road name is changed? Lastly, I want to know the history that will teach me as a young South African what I should look up to. I also wonder if there would be anyone will recognise in the IFP other than Mangosutho Buthelezi.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:**

I always enjoy a lively political debate and I'm very tempted to get drawn into this political debate. Is the IFP being airbrushed out of history? I want to take it to the media. This history book, what do people know about this history book? They know the history book is one thing and the only one thing the IFP is marching about is the history book. Could the media not have played a role and explained to our young people that history is not a exact science as people have said? There are many perspectives, there are many views. What are we trying to achieve with the education of our children? Could the media not have explained that in terms of the new curriculum, it is not pallet fashion learning, like I use to learn history and I hated it because of that. If you had one difference from your teacher, you lost marks. Our children now have to think. Have you ever explained to the public that the way our history books are now written, is to exactly prompt our children to think, to be analytical, to actually ask

questions and to try to provide answers. Censorship is not the way to go, and with great respect to my colleagues in the IFP, I do not believe that you are pleading

**“The point I am making is that the challenge the media faces here, is that the quality of debates of our politicians, is dismarked. When we go to the legislation, they should listen to the debates”**

for censorship because we don't want to go there. We don't want to go the censorship route. Have you ever said to our people there are twelve history books to choose from for our matrics? Twelve. This is not the only one. And why do we do it? We do it so that our children can learn different perspectives, so that they can develop their brains, so that they can start saying, 'Yes, there is a cartoon here of Buthelezi. Do I agree with it or don't I?' Have you looked at the book, have you looked at the questions posted? I think the media has failed, you have not painted the IFP out of history, you have popularised the book and the publishers couldn't in a million years have wanted better publicity than what they've got. You can not find that book, try and find it, you can't even find it on the black market. But you as the media have taken a very shallow view. The public are none the wiser, they know nothing about that book.

**DR. MTSHALI:**

I would like to say that, we need to address the question of the role of the media whether it is merely to regurgitate facts or whether it is to present a picture – a broad view of the picture to enable the readers to make their decisions. We need to look at the role of the radio, 52 % of the radio according to research, reaches the greatest number of listeners. Question – does the radio ever present issues in a balanced manner or is it diluted for certain purposes?

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:**

I agree with Dr. Mtshali, this is how

we should proceed but our starting point was acknowledging that we do have problems, we don't think we are doing a very good job and we acknowledge that we have a problem. But at the same time what Dr. Mkhize raised about building the trust among ourselves and the general public is very important. I think a lot of people don't trust the media. People used to say, the last people to trust would be I think car salesmen and lawyers, but journalists rank further down with them. You can imagine the challenge of building trust between journalists and politicians must be quite big. The point that we want to acknowledge is that we do have challenges.

**DE HAAS:**

I am not terribly sympathetic about thin skinned politicians but you shouldn't be in a political kitchen, if you can't stand the heat. But I do think there are valid cases where the important things, maybe, that a case for going to court sometimes exist but there must be a redress if you are misquoted, if there are factual inaccuracies – and there are in the media, I know that. That is so important that those be set right. From my point of view, we've heard a lot of allegations about media bias but we haven't had any substantiation, I'm an academic, if people make allegations, I say substantiate, I would like factual examples of all this bias and I haven't seen that. My main point about the media, where I started of with the name changing thing and I think some of it has come out in this debate, is that the media can play a crucial role. The debate has been very divisive. It has shown those divisions, the goal in reality between people of different colours, people of different political persuasion and I think the media can play an important role more so then it has, by helping educate people about the realities.

**“We made it possible for the names of people who were incasurated to be brought into the limelight”**

**THLOLOE:**

Thank you everyone and thanks to our panel - Dr Zweli Mkhize, Mary de Haas, Cyril Madlala and

Dr. Lionel Mtshali. We would have liked to focus this discussion more on the media and their role in the reporting of the name change saga. Some useful comments, did however emerge. Thank you so much and we'll let you know when the next dialogues take place. Goodnight.