

# Investigative journalism is a necessity

By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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"Journalists are not invincible, but some of their actions can lead to major change. Very few other institutions in society have that capacity" - Anthony Heard.



Supplied. Anthony Heard (centre), gives the thumbs up on receiving his Lifetime Achiever Award from (left) Sanef chairperson, Sbu Ngalwa and (right) Standard Bank CEO, Lungisa Fuzile

Heard was awarded The Allan Kirkland Soga: Lifetime Achiever Award at this year's Standard Bank Sikuvile Journalism Awards, hosted by the South African National Editors' Forum (Sanef) for the first time.

## A shining light

Heard was a shining light for journalism at one of the darkest times for the industry - and the country. He ensured, despite the Apartheid government increasingly having clamped down on the media, that the liberation movement, such as the voice of exiled leader of the banned African National Congress Oliver Tambo, was heard and that the true story of the Gugulethu Seven was told.

Commenting on this, Heard says that at the time he was "quite disturbed" as he got arrested. "I was facing three to 10 years in prison, but I had a funny feeling that in the final analysis, I would win."

Today, he says, media and journalists are once again under threat. "Journalists don't have to be treated like Gods, but they also don't have to be treated like devils. People generalise about the media. Journalists are ordinary human beings doing an honest job but in an area where they can have a real influence on the future events of the world."

He calls journalists his "favourite human beings". Walking off the stage with his Award, he shouted to the audience: "Never give up!"



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25 Jun 2022



## Investigative journalism is a necessity

*Daily Maverick's* Pieter-Louis Myburgh, who won Story of the Year and the Investigative Journalism category for his article *Digital Vibes* also expressed his concerns about the threat to the journalism profession, especially investigative journalism.

"Investigation journalism is unique and a brand or genre within journalism that requires more resources, more funding, and more manhours, but it is becoming increasingly different for normal standard daily, weekly and weekend newspapers to fund these types of investigations," Myburgh says.

He says there are also very few dedicated investigative journalism units like *Daily Maverick's* Scorpio, that do this work full time.

"Broadly speaking I am worried at the lack of support for the funding for this type of journalism not only at niche outlets like Scorpio, but also at daily, weekly and weekend newspapers as well as in the broadcast industry," he says.

"We need much more probing journalism in South Africa," he adds.

He adds that awards such as the Standard Bank SikuVile Journalism Awards give recognition for the type of work that journalists do. "This brand of journalism is high impact yielding work in SA, that shifts focus to very improved public interest journalism," he says.

Winner of the Lifestyle category, *Financial Mail's* Graham Wood agrees with him. "Journalism is a discipline that is under fire and it is good for the industry to remind itself of its value from time to time."



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## Rising Stars

Despite the challenges the profession and industry face, there are young people who have opted to follow their passion and become journalists.

One of these is the joint recipient of the Upcoming/ Rising Star Award, Onke Ngcuka, from *Daily Maverick*.

Ngcuka, who was a finalist in the Lifestyle category, says she became a journalist to tell the stories of the ignored and vulnerable communities in our country. "I want to bring to light some of the issues in society and reach communities that are not seen. As young people, we need as many people as we can to hold our leaders accountable for the work they are

supposed to be doing,” she says.

Another young journalist, Nomvuyo Ntanjana, from SABC 2 And SABC News *Channel 404*, who won the newly introduced Community Service Reporting category says she became a journalist because she wanted to know more. “I would watch the news on TV and want to know more.”

She says that if you want to become a journalist you have to have a passion for the industry. “It’s long hours and hard work, but if you are passionate that does not matter; it’s the impact of your stories that drives you.”



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## A tough two years

Speaking at the Awards, Sanef chairperson, Sbu Ngalwa, reminded the industry stakeholders and journalists gathered there that the industry has been through a tough two years. “We have lost over 1,000 journalists and seen newsrooms shrink, but now we are seeing green shoots and starting to rebuild.”

To assist the industry with mental health issues Sanef announced that it has launched a Safety and Wellness Committee.

The Awards took place at The Venue, Melrose Arch following a year hiatus and two years since the Awards were held live at a virtual awards ceremony.

## ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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