

# Mathatha Tsedu named Print Media Fellow

At the [Sikuvile Standard Bank Newspaper Journalism Awards](#), held earlier this week, Mathatha Tsedu was named the Print Media Fellow. The fellowship is awarded to a newspaper journalist whose life has been dedicated to press freedom and whose work has contributed significantly to the betterment of the newspaper industry in South Africa.



Mathatha Tsedu. Source:  
[www.ufs.ac.za](http://www.ufs.ac.za)

"Mathatha has distinguished himself as a formidable media leader and the Print Media Fellowship is one of the many awards he has received in his lifetime," said Ingrid Louw, Print Media South Africa's executive director.

"He is one of the most respected editorial figures in South Africa. He is a mentor to at least two generations of journalists and a role model, who leads with conviction and integrity. The South African print media has every reason to be extremely proud of him."

Tsedu started his career as a freelance journalist for several publications, writing from rural Limpopo. His reports uncovered some of the most shocking human rights abuses that were widespread in rural South Africa during apartheid. His work landed him in trouble with the regime, resulting in long periods of detention without trial, which included solitary confinement and torture.

## A tough negotiator

In the 90s, Tsedu joined *Sowetan* as a full-time investigations editor. He later crossed over to *The Star* as a senior editor, where his incisive and hard-hitting political columns were compulsory reading.

He served a number of terms as the national chairman of the South African National Editors' Forum (Sanef). Of particular importance was his leadership at the time of the Sun City talks in 2001 between the Thabo Mbeki government and the print media. Tsedu kept a diverse corps of editors and senior journalists focused, as government voiced its irritation with the

robust South African media and demanded from editors to state where they stood on contentious issues such as "the national agenda."

Tsedu led several Sanef delegations in talks with government where he showed his mettle as a tough negotiator and a champion of the free press, never crossing the line between journalist and activist.

He is the recipient of a number of prestigious awards, including the Nat Nakasa Award for Courageous Journalism and the Mondi Shanduka Newspaper Awards' Lifetime Achiever Award.

He was awarded a Nieman Fellowship in the mid-90s affording him the opportunity to study at Harvard University.

After a brief stint at the SABC, he edited the *Sunday Times* and later, *City Press*. In 2009, Media24 seconded Tsedu to form and run the secretariat that guided the proceedings of Judge Pius Langa's Press Freedom Commission (PFC), the recommendations of which were tabled earlier this year. He played a big role in laying the political groundwork for the PFC.

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