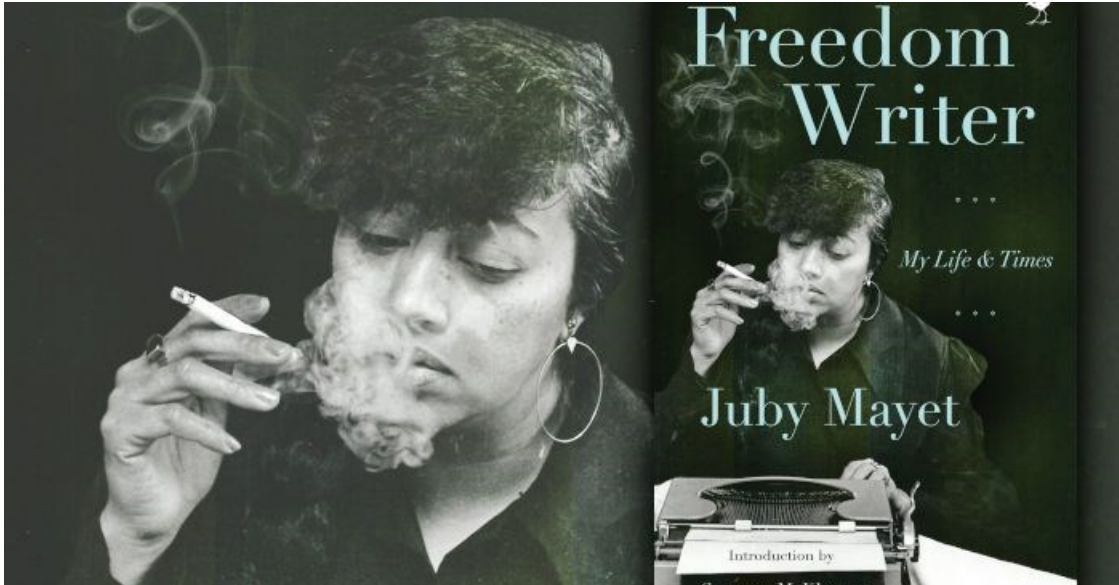


Sanef fund to fight misinformation on journalism

By  Danette Breitenbach

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The South African National Editors' Forum (Sanef) will set up a fund to fight fake news and misinformation about the journalism profession.



Source: © The Reading List [The Reading List](#) The cover of *Freedom Writer: My Life and Times*, the autobiography of legendary journalist Juby Mayet

In the past communities and journalists worked hand in hand, today local communities have turned on journalists, but this is not a coincidence.

Speaking at the Standard Bank Sikuvile Journalism Awards held on Saturday at The Venue, Melrose Arch, in Johannesburg, Sbu Ngalwa, Sanef chairperson quoted the example of Juby Mayet, legendary journalist, who worked with the community to help a mixed race couple escape to Eswatini (then Swaziland) from South Africa because of Apartheid laws that forbid mixed relationships.

Collaboration a thing of the past

“Previously, under Apartheid, journalists and the community worked hand in hand but today there is a deliberate effort by corrupt and criminal forces to chip away at journalism and undermine the work we do by driving a wedge between communities and journalists.”

According to a survey by [Reporters without Borders](#) journalists in 180 countries or two-thirds of the countries surveyed said that political activists jeopardised the right to information and worked to weaken journalism.

“In South Africa the approaching election will be of the most important since our first democratic election, and as journalists, we must expect that political leaders will target journalists to shift the attention from themselves,” says Ngalwa.

A time to fight

But, he says it is time to fight. “As we continue to expose wrongdoing as journalists and we will find ourselves confronted by politicians. Fake news can destabilise nations and misinformation undermines democracy. So I argue that we must not stand back.”

Sanef has resolved at its AGM, held on the afternoon of the Awards event, to set up a legal fund to help journalists fight against fake news and misinformation against them. "Politicians must know that we will not stand back."

He adds that journalists are also facing increasing resistance from the courts to be allowed to sit in on cases.

"It is important for us to come together, as there is a lot at stake and we have a lot of work to do. At the very least we need to push back, we cannot leave the lies unchallenged.

"Not only must we challenge these who push disinformation and fake news, but we need to hold them accountable for the damage they are causing to our profession."



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Definition of journalism

Standard Bank head of business, Simone Cooper says that the definition of journalists as a social construct of reality places a big responsibility on journalists to carry out their work with a higher purpose, ethics and a social consciousness.

"This definition could not be more appropriate for the time we are living in."

But she points out that social media such as Twitter, TikTok and WhatsApp have fundamentally transformed word of mouth communication.

"This has given those previously without a voice, a means to expressing themselves."

But she says, social media is not without its social undesirables and fake news. "However, it can be applied for good and as a complementary role to traditional news, broadcast and print.

"Digital can bring about media freedom and diversity in the media, and to promote free and informative journalism as well as encourage debate. In a democracy the media plays a developmental role by telling the truth of those entrusted to lead," she says.

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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