

## Wendy Willems Editorial

### Article (Accepted version) (Refereed)

**Original citation:**

Willems, Wendy (2010) *Editorial*. [Journal of African media studies](#), 2 (2). pp. 135-137. ISSN 2040-199X

DOI: [10.1386/jams.2.2.135\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1386/jams.2.2.135_2)

© 2010 The Author

This version available at: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/51159/>

Available in LSE Research Online: July 2013

LSE has developed LSE Research Online so that users may access research output of the School. Copyright © and Moral Rights for the papers on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may download and/or print one copy of any article(s) in LSE Research Online to facilitate their private study or for non-commercial research. You may not engage in further distribution of the material or use it for any profit-making activities or any commercial gain. You may freely distribute the URL (<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk>) of the LSE Research Online website.

This document is the author's final accepted version of the journal article. There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

## Editorial

Wendy Willems

Department of Media Studies, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

### Original citation:

Willems, W. (2010). Editorial. In: *Journal of African Media Studies* 2(2): 135-138.

Radio continues to be one of the most accessible media in Africa, although the mobile phone is rapidly approaching as a widely available medium on the continent. Because of its accessible nature, radio has frequently been used to win the hearts and minds of ordinary people. The first three articles in this issue discuss the role of radio in the challenging of power in different parts of Africa over different time periods.

Sekibakiba Peter Lekgoathi looks at the way in which Radio Freedom became a key tool used by the African National Congress (ANC) to counter the propaganda of the South African apartheid regime. Because the apartheid government outlawed all liberation movements, radio became an important platform through which the banned ANC could continue to mobilize support among South Africans. Lekgoathi argues that the specific political context in which Radio Freedom operated resulted in particular creative listening cultures, as audience members had to be cautious while listening to the radio station because they could be spotted by security forces any time. The recording of radio programmes and distribution via cassettes helped to further spread the message of the ANC. Most importantly, Radio Freedom enabled the ANC to connect struggles in exile with those fought at home.

While Sekibakiba Peter Lekgoathi discusses the historic role of clandestine radio in South Africa, Danielle Batist's contribution focuses on the more recent role of the London-based Zimbabwean short-wave radio station SW Radio Africa, which like Radio Freedom operates under challenging conditions and in a tense political climate. Whereas Lekgoathi looked at audience reception and listening publics of Radio Freedom, Batist is interested in the production context of SW Radio Africa. Through a range of in-depth interviews with staff members, she highlights the constraints that SW Radio Africa staff members face in their daily work, including safety, threats, dependency on donor funding, and challenges in consulting official government and opposition sources. She argues that SW Radio Africa's use of both old media such as radio and new media technologies like mobile phones and the Internet has enabled the station to reach audiences in Zimbabwe as well as in the diaspora.

In the third article of this issue, Christoph Spurk, Sharon Lopata and Guido Keel investigate the democratic quality of radio news in Liberia. Media freedom in Liberia has significantly increased since the end of the war and the inauguration of a new government in 2006. However, while there is a flourishing of new radio stations contributing to media diversity, listeners remain concerned about the lack of impartial, truthful information and good analytical reporting. Drawing from Dahl's minimalist model of democracy theory, Spurk, Lopata and Keel offer a methodology in order to measure the contribution of radio to democracy. Their analysis compares the quality of radio news on four Liberian radio stations: Star Radio, Radio Veritas, Truth FM and Radio ELBC. The authors identify the lack of background information on radio news as particularly problematic, as most Liberians rely on radio to gain an understanding of current affairs.

Based on his travels through northern Uganda in 2010, Henry Bongyereirwe documents the reconstruction efforts in northern Uganda in the wake of the conflict between rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army, led by Joseph Kony, and the government of President Yoweri Museveni. While Ugandan newspapers, radio and television rarely cover the healing process in ways that put humans and processes at the centre, Bongyereirwe's images show the impact of the conflict on ordinary Ugandans. However, despite the negativities, the essay presents the seeds of hope in the aftermath of the conflict, with an increasing number of Ugandans relocating from the Internally Displaced People's camps to build up new lives and livelihoods in their home areas.

Nhamo Anthony Mhiripiri interrogates the resilience of the Zimbabwe music industry in the face of the economic and political crisis that hit the country in the early 2000s. He argues that the local industry has been able to sustain itself as a result of the resourcefulness and inventiveness of musicians. Due to piracy and poor payment of royalties by recording companies, live performances have become the major sources of income for musicians. In the business environment of live performances, intermediaries such as promoters and venue owners have made attempts to extract as much as they can from proceeds. Zimbabwean media have also sustained the industry through the creation of 'stars' and 'celebrities'. However, in spite of the media-generated popularity, musicians barely manage to survive, with some even caught for petty crime, including piracy.

While Mhiripiri explores the creativity and vitality of Zimbabwean musicians, Birgit Englert and Nginjai Paul Moreto discuss the issue of resourcefulness in the context of foreign-language film translation in Tanzania. Focusing on the life and work of Hemed Musa from Masasi who translates films from Hindi/Urdu into Swahili, they highlight the decentralization of cultural output in Tanzania. The flourishing of cultural production in 'peripheral' places has generated exciting new forms of popular culture that might not necessarily be met with recognition from those who consider themselves as part of the establishment of cultural production or academic establishment. Englert and Moreto contend that local audiences use these foreign-language films as tools to connect themselves to the wider world and understand other parts of the globe.

The late Denis Ocwich assesses the trends, opportunities and rationale of public journalism practices in Africa. Ocwich passed away barely a month after submitting his manuscript to the *Journal of African Media Studies*. The posthumous publication of his contribution is a tribute to his promising scholarship as an emerging media scholar. While public journalism as a movement emerged in the United States in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Ocwich argues that the phenomenon of public journalism was already prevalent in parts of Africa in the 1960s, exemplified by the tendency of community radio stations to use local residents as news sources; the recruitment of Africans as station managers, programme producers, reporters or editors; the hosting of community discussion forums; and the coverage of local issues. Ocwich offers examples from good public journalism practices in Scandinavia, Latin America and Australasia that he believes could be replicated by journalists in Africa in order to encourage more citizen participation in setting the media's agenda.

The review section includes Levi Obonyo's review of Guy Berger's publication *Media Legislation in Africa: a Comparative Legal Survey* and Graham Evans' review of Darren Newbury's book entitled *Defiant Images – Photography and Apartheid South Africa*. Nkosi Martin Ndlela reviews the DVD production of the popular South African musical *Africa Umoja*.