

The Sun sets or rises on African news?

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What makes me happiest is being surrounded by journalists arguing about their business – so yesterday I was very happy indeed. About 20 African news people joined 150+ governance, development and media activists and officials at our [POLIS](#) conference to talk about how journalism can contribute to democracy and development. We'll report next week in full on what happened but here's a taster of the arguments.

At the lunchtime session Channel 4 News presenter [Jon Snow](#) led a discussion with two former African Journalists of the year from Nigeria. [Ibiba Don Pedro](#) is a wonderful independent journalist who abandoned the newsroom for a freelance writing and reporting career. She said that in Nigeria it is impossible to be a robust critical journalist in a news organisation because of commercial and political pressure. All the funding for adverts comes from the political parties and from the oil giants – exactly the people she writes against. But [Shola Oshunkeye](#) writes for a tabloid. It is called The Sun and it looks like our Sun and it reads very much like our Sun. Although Shola claims that their page 3 girl doesn't reveal much. But Shola has also published searing exposes and claims that his Sun still contributes to political and social debate in Nigeria. Of course, any good news media has room for both. And this is important. We do need brave independent voices but we also need to create a market, a mass readership, an appetite for news that isn't always earnest and good for you. I would suggest that our own Sun has done more to engage people in politics and has broken more political scoops than most of the so-called quality papers.

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