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Jeremy: In a country as diverse as South Africa, reporting any issue is tricky. Get the balance wrong even minutely and you run up against opposition from any number of interest groups who feel wronged and slighted and often have a very good pointer. Key nuances have been overlooked by a size 14 media boot. On the other hand media itself can become hamstrung sometimes as it is bending over backwards in trying to appease all group rendered its incipit but its important to note that the media must be aware and even hyper aware of how to handle its coverage particularly when it comes to issues like race, religion and sexuality.

And that's the issue we are going to discuss today in another in our series of radio conferences is in association with the Media Monitoring Project and the Open Society Foundation. Today we are going to look at how the media treat issues of diversity. And we are going to look at the subject from a refugee perspective, an HIV perspective and also from a sexual orientation perspective.

Here in Johannesburg with me, Benita de Robillard who's a lecturer and media studies coordinator at the Wits School of the Arts here in Johannesburg. And sitting next to her is William Bird executive director of the Media Monitoring Project. In the hour I'll also introduce you to Dr Yoon Jung Park post-doctoral fellow at the Centre for Sociological Research at the University of Johannesburg. A little later Gordon Mthembu, member of the Treatment Action Campaign and Shaun de Waal who is literary editor from the Mail and Guardian.

Jeremy: William Bird let me start with you as I always do. Diversity first of all what are the requirements. Is it for the media to give voice to every single special interest group or just to become a little more sensitive? I used the word key nuance or phrase key nuance a little earlier.

William: Good morning Jeremy, I think its important that we remember that its not possible for the media to cover everyone all of the time. But what I do think is important is that we acknowledge that there are certain equalities and certain inequalities that exist in our society so we know that there are a lot of rich people or very few rich people and a lot of poor people. And one of them if you look at it historically that sort of the idea of the power of the media and the role of the media generally one of the common things that comes out is to try and give voice in a level to the voiceless.

So if we look at the groups that tend to be marginalised particularly refugees and you are talking on a very simple level about people that are fleeing from a country very often with the possessions that they have on their backs they are

coming with nothing into a country where they don't know what's going on and they are coming into a very different and foreign environment. And it's quite important that our media starts telling those people's stories and start reflecting some of their issues because again when we come back to us as the Media Monitoring Project our aim is always to try and enforce the reemphasis the importance of the rights that are contained in our constitution so talking about the rights to dignity and equality.

**Jeremy: Benita I think William Bird makes a very important point. Do we generally then as an institution, a fourth estate, the media give that broad a voice or are sometimes held hostage by the commercial imperative that we fail to tell those important stories?**

Benita: Well I think there are a number of factors to take into consideration and I think one of those is obviously the increasingly commercialisation, commodification of news and different kinds of media products and meanings and messages.

I think that taking that into account there are a number of other things that I can't pursue this morning but what I would like to emphasize and pick up on coming out of Williams' comment is that the fourth estate is not necessarily excluded from and exempt from kinds of meanings and practices that make and constitute our society and I think that's a crucial point.

The media don't just reflect what is happening in the world, they have a constitutive function and so when the media do not and I think that in fact the media don't sufficiently address our diversity what is constituted as our diversity. When they systematically and consistently either exclude groups that are described as different or are understood to be different as constituting this diversity, what in fact in effect they are doing is they are performing a series of exclusions, exclusions that have very real in many instances ethical, political and material effect for those subjects who are constituted as different and making up our extensively Rainbow Nation multi cultural society.

**Jeremy: Do we exclude by ignorance or do we exclude because there are other agendas at play?**

Benita: I think we do both and I think we should look at a number of very specific case studies and in each of those try to unravel the knots that make those exclusions possible and lead them to have those impact and effect.

The other point that I wanted to make is very often when those groups or persons who represent those groups become visible in public, and in our media tied spaces they are often done in ways that are extremely pejorative. So we are dealing with a double prompt problem here. Becoming visible does not necessarily and automatically in our context and our global context mean that you become empowered to speak and to become visible in ways that are not derogatory and that don't reinforce the very problem of invisibility. And so it is a

complex interplay of those two strands and those two strategies that we find in a lot of media coverage of these kinds of questions.

**Jeremy: And how on earth is the media supposed to get this right?**

Benita: Well I think there is a responsibility that cannot be side stepped and I would have to say that it is a jointly collective one. So today we are talking about the media but I think it is very important for us to say the media does not operate in a vacuum and this is why I resist the idea of a fourth estate.

I think that that's precisely the point that there is a collective responsibility to produce the kind of ethical community and interpretive ethics around these representations that involve and implicate educators, families, and different institutional sites including the state.

**Jeremy: But the media is going to surely shape and lead that debate**

Benita: Well yes, and this is why we often have these kinds of discussions and interventions because increasingly we are living in a world that is media tied so the state becomes effective through its media visibility.

**Jeremy: How is this taught then, is that part of the problem of the journalism school for instance getting it right. Are young reporters who are coming into the business being shown how to deal with this very complicated nuance? Can you describe for us?**

Benita: I think that is the question and I think that the answer quite simply is no. But there are shifts, there are institutions that are aware of this and are wanting to make an intervention and I think that organisations like the Media Monitoring Project which is working closely with the Wits School of Journalism and Department for example try to make that intervention at the level of training. Which is not just for new media practitioners but practicing, mid level, mid career and senior professionals who need to be aware of these issues.

**Jeremy: William Bird from the Media Monitoring Project, to what extent is the media itself awake, alive to these issues of diversity. Are they testing their responses to the various stories sufficiently enough for instance?**

William: I think very often they are caught up in the ordinary and everyday politics of the news agenda of today, tomorrow and yesterday.

**Jeremy: And as a practicing journalist myself, it's getting the story out and just heaving a sigh of relief when you've met the deadline. I know it's not an excuse but it is a problem.**

William: But this is precisely we do what we do, because if you are working in that environment, I mean working as a journalist it's a very high stress high pressurised environment particularly if you are on radio, you've got a very limited amount of time in which to put across all of your ideas and outside of that its

gone. And if you are in print it is a similar thing you have got to get your story on deadline and beyond that it's gone.

One of the advantages of monitoring is that you are able to look at patterns of reporting over a period of time and then when the journalist or the editor has moment to reflect on what they are doing, they are able to start to see these things. And you can see there has been a lot of positive shifts in that regard and you can see for example I think it is incredibly positive initiative of the Sunday Times to have the teach one reach five initiative on HIV as well as on everyone knows someone.

And there are a few other initiative like that to make sure that we are putting HIV as an issue about ordinary people, their ordinary lived experiences and telling their particular stories because that I is an initiative that starts to change the their ordinary news agenda. And I think that way they are starting to recognise but again you are getting a lot more of this idea that you are pushing boundaries of ethics in our media.

So the recent WAM-conference in April talked about tabloidisation and one of the key elements of tabloidisation is that of editors understand that it seems, that it is about pushing the ethical envelopes, showing more and more gratuitous images, more and more bizarre things. And all of those things have a particular human rights angle so you'll never going to see someone from an upper class family seen in those kinds of dramatic and deeply personal images of their body parts. If people's body parts are going to be seen in the newspapers and tabloids are going to be those of the poor. And again it starts to tell you over a period of time what their lives are like and it starts to perpetuate certain ideas about their values of their lives.

**Jeremy: Three issues that we are highlighting today, refugees, HIV/Aids and sexual orientation. Is there a reason why we are looking at those three subjects?**

William: When we were putting the programme together, obviously diversity encompasses a whole range of things by definition is the definition of diversity. So we chose the area of refugees primarily because there are a whole lot of issues around xenophobia around racism with issues very close to South Africa. There is also an imminent refugee crisis on our borders with Zimbabwe but there are also some unusual and quite different angles there that I hope our next guest is going to be touching on.

In terms of HIV obviously is one of South Africa's national challenges that we all have an obligation to deal with, and address and I still think that while some of the media has caught on to addressing some of the critical issues, i'm not sure that we are seeing it fully addressed in coverage, so it is second very vital area. And in terms of sexual orientation is something that there have been some comments and some debates about how much gay and lesbian people have managed to achieve using the South Africa's constitution. Probably more than other generally marginalised groups. Yet I think the way they tend to be represented is still often quite marginalised and there are some key issues there around civil unions' bill for example we haven't really had a chance to discuss.

**Jeremy:** Well we'll get to that a little bit later on. Benita very quickly from you what about the issues of rights and recourse when people are wrong, if the media doesn't get the issues of diversity issue spot on?  
**William** spoke about constitutional court recourse, but you can't always do that?

Benita: Well indeed, and I think there are a number of avenues that you can pursue but all of them seem to not have the sufficient kind of impact and I think that if one reports or lodges a complaint with the BCCSA for instance which many people are not aware of, and not confident in, it doesn't always translate into sustained theories of engaged changes. And I think that in as much of those kinds of regulatory or semi-regulatory bodies are necessary and have a role to play.

Again I want to return to a point that I made when we introduced the debate this morning. I think it is a collective responsibility and I think that part of what needs to happen is that the media needs to play a role in fact educating, informing its readers on how to hold it to account, and that doesn't happen sufficiently.

**Jeremy:** Dr Yoon Jung Park post-doctoral fellow at the Centre for Sociological Research at the University of Johannesburg joins our discussion, a very good morning and thank you for joining us.

Dr. Jung: Good morning Jeremy, good morning William and Benita.

**Jeremy:** Let me ask you first of all for an opening comment or two and we are going to now look at the issue of diversity and refugees. I know that you have a number of interesting points that you want to make about rising Anti-Chinese sentiments in South Africa for instance. But when it comes issues of refugees, do you think that the media is too one dimensional in its approach?

Dr. Jung: My sense is that in general the problem with refugees in South Africa is primarily focused on refugees from other African countries. You seldom have mention in media or in public anywhere refugees or illegal immigrants from China for example or Eastern Europe. The targets of xenophobia when it comes to foreigners, refugees again, economic migrants tends to be particularly from neighbouring countries but also from West Africa and it does seem to be very one sided.

**Jeremy:** Is that not just a simple issue of demographics and geography?

Dr. Jung: I think to some extent yes. The dominant numbers are from other African countries particularly our neighbouring countries, but it is discussed to >>the exclusion of all others and as you may know, I did my research on Chinese-South African, Chinese-South African identity in particular and looking at a lot of new Chinese immigrants that are coming into the country both illegal and legal. There's been virtually no coverage at all about these communities.

**Jeremy:** Is there a reason for that?

Dr. Jung: I think it has a lot to do with race and racism in this country and again to some extent it might be the numbers. In proportion to the number of illegal immigrants and refugees from African countries, the numbers of Chinese who are

in the country illegally maybe nominal and yet with regard to the Chinese-South African population it has almost increased the size of the Chinese in South Africa by 20 times.

**Jeremy: If we are reporting this from the incorrect perspective, what impact does this then have to the Chinese community itself?**

Dr. Jung: Well I think there is just a lot of ignorance around the Chinese. For example I'm Korean-American and I have a friend who is staying with us now who is Japanese. In this country anyone who looks like us is portrayed as Chinese and the assumption around this certainly have something to do with the lack of exposure of most South Africans to people from other East Asian countries.

Especially in advertising, Chinese men all know martial arts Chinese women are exoticised and sexualised. So there are these stereotypes that are portrayed and it certainly has an impact on my day-to-day experiences.

**Jeremy: It's not just a South or Southern African problem is it?**

Dr. Jung: No. But it has something to do with the levels of exposure in this country. I lived for 3 years in Nairobi. I told a taxi driver my surname and he immediately said oh you must be Korean. In Nairobi because of all the international organisations, the UN headquarters there, there is a whole lot more exposure there to people from different countries.

**Jeremy: And I suppose that you gave him a bigger tip, did you?**

**Jeremy: Dr. Park, how would you like then the media to engage with this particular issue, particularly when it comes to a smaller minority section of the population?**

Dr. Jung: The biggest problem really is that everyone gets lumped into one group. All refugees from this country are African, all East Asians are Chinese and they are new immigrants and they don't speak English. I think the reality is that there are several different communities of people, of Chinese descents in this country; there are Japanese, Filipino, Malaysians and Koreans in this country as well.

Also I think there needs to be, I think more sensitive portrayal of some of those differences, the nuances. If you keep seeing Chinese faces on television or Asian faces on television and the only things that they do are karate, it just simplifies and reinforces the stereotype that already exist in this country.

**Jeremy: Is this the Chinese community or the Korean community for that instance in this country doing enough itself though to try and change the stereotype?**

Dr. Jung: Probably not.

**Jeremy: Surely you have a responsibility as well.**

Dr. Jung: Yes I would think so. Again it comes down to numbers, you know you are talking about less than half of 1% of the population of this country with respect to the Chinese-South African community, you are talking about a

community between 10 000 – 12 000 in South African who are second, third and fourth generation South Africans. A lot of them are in the professions but there is also a community pressure if you will from apartheid, to not to get involved, to not make waves, to not get into these issues.

The vast majority of the Chinese in this country as I said are new immigrants from mainland China and for the most parts of people are still immigrants and not South Africans, many of them don't speak English so where would they then engage with South African media in any of these issues? I think people like myself and others who are studying these issues have a responsibility to try and correct some of the misperceptions and I'm certainly trying to do things like that but we do need to do our part, again I'm not sure how some of the smaller communities can if they are in fact if they are refugees, illegal immigrants you know, tiny tiny communities.

**Jeremy: Benita de Robillard let me bring you back into the conversation, Dr. Jung don't go away we'll get back to you in just a moment. But a lot of this ignorance predictably around the world is always driven by fear isn't it?**

Benita: Well of absolutely Jeremy, and of course we are living in a geo-political climate in which not only the media but state actors increasingly politically mobilise a rhetoric of fear and anxiety with respect to the stranger, that person who is not us, who threatens us. And that's why the media has to be very careful about how they deploy and mobilise those kinds of meanings even when they do it in ways that they would imagine to be muted and mitigating the impact of the politics of the fear, that seems to have exploded after 9/11.

And I'm thinking here if I may, if I could site a recent example of a photograph from the Saturday Star, I think it was last weekend. It was an image of the South African, Zimbabwean border. There was no human subject in the frame so it would seem to be a fairly innocuous image supporting a story about the crisis in Zimbabwe at the moment. And the fact that we are going to confront and we are already living with the refugee question in this country.

And my sense of that image and this is not a subtext, this is the architecture and the particular framing device that that image relies upon, and then in fact imports into the text that accompanies the image is, here we are on this side of the border and we are about to be overwhelmed by hordes and throngs of refugees who are going to cause trouble, who are really going to ferment a number of problems that are already simmering in the South African landscape. And we know that there are deep seated issues around xenophobia in a number of communities.

**Jeremy: Now what are you saying, is that an irresponsible image or powerful one?**

Benita: I think it is an image that resonates with a number of very; again, very prominent meanings and ideas that are circulating globally and that have a particular local resonance. And that are asserting that there is 'us' that needs to be protected from this 'them' that is threatening, these threatening hordes that are going to overwhelm and engulf us. And I think that we have to be careful

about those kinds of images, because even though that might have not been the intention, that the people who made the decision had in portraying that cover story in that way, the point is that you cannot quarantine an image from those very overwhelming and persistent meanings that surround us and that readers are aware of.

**Jeremy: Dr. Park how do you respond to that. Do we just sometimes as I said in my introduction to this piece a little while ago, do we just wade in with the size 14 media boots sometimes and not think of the more subtle ramifications?**

Dr. Jung: Absolutely. As Benita was speaking I was nodding my head because the terms that are used in the media with regard to the larger numbers of Chinese coming into this country are exactly the same ones. You hear about hordes or invasions of Chinese coming into Africa or taking over. And it just reinforces those fears and those stereotypes that exist already and I find it quite dangerous.

**Jeremy: Let me ask you one final question. If the image of the stereotypes as you and Benita have both articulated becomes entrenched, lets use the refugee example that you've both raised. How difficult is it to change perception then?**

Dr. Jung: I think it's going to be very very difficult. And I think again the media has a tremendous responsibility to try and report more accurately, in a more nuanced way that there are different communities, that all the Chinese that come to this country are not members of tyrants, they are not coming to steal your jobs.

**Jeremy: But realistically Dr. Jung, do you really see that happen?**

Dr. Jung: I think they have to

**Jeremy: I know they have to but I'm saying do you think they have the will to do so?**

Dr. Jung: I think so; I think most of the media people in this country are bright enough. I think it is a matter of education, opening minds, awareness, and I would hope that shows like this would start to plant a seed that oh, maybe I need to be more careful when I say things like that.

**Jeremy: Well certainly that is the intention. Dr Yoon Jung Park thank you very much indeed from the University of Johannesburg. Before we move on to the next issue, which is diversity and HIV/Aids, Benita you wanted to add something in conclusion there.**

Benita: Yes two quick points in answer to your question Jeremy. I think that first thing to say is that yes journalists are under pressure. They live and work in a pressurised environment. The point is not that we want them to do more; we want them to do things differently. And I think there is a quality distinction there. So I think it is possible.

But related to that is the responsibility of the state to have policies that respect to refugees in this particular pressing situation that don't incite xenophobia, that don't make it possible. And I think that is we can't assume that it is acceptable to

say that white people can come across the border but they can't work, they can't study. They become the surplus people that don't work, that don't study, don't have use and don't have a value. And so what the state does plays into the kinds of logics that surrounds how xenophobia becomes possible.

**Jeremy: As you said a little earlier, it is a complicated dynamic. Our radio conference this morning on SAFm in association with the Open Society Foundation and The Media Monitoring Project, reporting a diverse nation.**

Our radio conference continues as we discuss this morning reporting a diverse nation.

Benita de Robillard, lecturer and the media studies coordinator at the Wits school of Arts is here with us in Johannesburg along with William Bird Executive Director at the Media Monitoring Project. Member of the Treatment Action Campaign Gordon Mthembu is going to join us in just a moment. But, William maybe we just revisit very quickly the overview as far as reporting HIV/Aids is concerned particularly when it comes to diversity. We tend, I would imagine in this country to look at it from two broad perspectives. One is policy and denialism, which is driven a lot of media recently. And the other we see it simply in statistics of death.

William: A lot of the research that has been done by a number of people looking at the representation of HIV shows I think on a level highlights the two points that you just made, that it tends to focus on political arguments, about what government is doing or about what they aren't doing and what they should be doing, and very often in conflict with what an organisation like the TAC and at the same time there is almost a complete absence of people who are actually living with or affected by HIV, hearing their voices and hearing their stories.

As I said earlier, there are newspapers for example and some radio and other broadcasts that have specific initiatives to make sure that we get to hear those stories because in fact a piece of research about two years ago now suggested that what people are wanting to hear about those that are living in rural communities, they are wanting to know how you deal with a someone who is HIV positive, how do you care for them, what are the kind of bread and butter issues that you can do in order to address those kinds of things. And those sorts of issues very much don't tend to get represented.

**Jeremy: Gordon a very good morning to you. You've listened to what William Bird has to say. Do you sense that it is reported in the same way, that it is too one dimensional, that the media's understanding of HIV/Aids is driven by death statistics and policy?**

Gordon: Yes, it is true what William said. But there are three dimensions of how HIV/Aids is being reported by the media. It is difficult for one to generalise the media parse because you've got many aspects that is involved. There is the question of the newspapers, the magazines, the radio stations, the television stations and the others.

The question is, we've got good media reporting, we've got the bad media reporting and we've got the awful media reporting which doesn't balance what needs to be done here.

**Jeremy: Where do you think the media is failing?**

Gordon: There are some kinds of political interventions at some stages whereby you'll find that there are very awful media reporting, is the question of commotion of denialism. As a person who is living with HIV/Aids it is very much difficult because of the person who on a daily basis is interacting with people who are HIV positive like myself, you'll find that they are being influenced by denialism. We are not arguing that maybe one can express him or her self but the truth needs to be told to the people so that the people can make informed choices rather than the confusing of the masses.

**Jeremy: Benita I want you to respond to that because I find the use of the word hope quite interesting. If the media is reporting this issue too simplistically, it's denying many people hope. How do you respond to that?**

Benita: Well I think it is an important point for us to bear in mind. I think that one thing that is very difficult is that we know that media relies on a number of very easily accessible frames and templates, for presenting stories and helping readers make sense of them.

**Jeremy: And that's not about to change, are they?**

Benita: No, its not about to change overnight but it has to change. And again, I'd say it is a collective responsibility, those who make the news, make the media and those of us who engage with the media. And I think that part of that that makes it possible the different ways of telling the stories, ways that don't just re-entrench these very narrow and fixed conceptions about people who live with HIV for example.

It starts with becoming aware of the issues and then developing the tools and skills to do that. And there are ways to approach the story that doesn't mean that you reduce the subject of the story to their HIV positive status. And that you also have a realistic multifaceted understanding of what that person's experience of living with HIV is about that just doesn't reduce them. And bearing Gordon's point in mind, it is important to have hope, but we also don't want a situation where the HIV positive person is only now allowed to speak if they are preaching the gospel of positivity.

What I'm advocating is a complex understanding of having a person say in a story, you know I'm really having a bad day or this is a difficult period or I'm hopeful now. It's not just one strand or one message track.

**Jeremy: A question to both of you and Gordon Mthembu from the TAC let me come back to you and I'm going to play devils advocate here. Is the reality of this discussion not that the broader media audience is just simply sick and tired of HIV/Aids stories and that we suffer from something called Aids fatigue, we just don't want to hear the news.**

Gordon: I did not say the media did not want to understand. There are quite a number of issues as complex as it is you said. But at the very same time token we just can't say that everyone is aware and informed about HIV/Aids so therefore we don't have to deal with the disease issue, because as a country we are faced with this epidemic, we are still subject to dealing with this issues on a daily basis because if we have to win the battle against HIV/Aids we still have to engage on these issues on a daily basis and not just throw in the towel. Because for us at least for me as a person living with HIV I still have a responsibility to protect people who are HIV negative. And out there are people out there who are not even informed about their own status of whom they still have got a responsibility to protect the country per se.

**Jeremy: Benita my point though is that does the media really want to be part of that debate? Have we not heard it all before?**

Benita: Well whether or not the media feels exhausted and fatigued in a sense,

**Jeremy: Well do I have a point or I'm I just being cynical?**

Benita: No, I think that might very well the case with some people who work at the print face But it is a responsibility that cannot unfortunately be side stepped or circumvented and so I think the challenge is and I a went to a symposium, I think it was last year William, where a number post monitors, researchers, activists and journalists tried to discuss how do we make new kinds of narratives, stories and templates for talking about and reporting on HIV/Aids.

**Jeremy: Did you meet with any success?**

William: I think there were a number of quite concrete suggestions that were put forward. I don't like to keep on hopping about what the Sunday Times is doing but there is one initiative that is making sure that HIV is in a sense a mainstream story and that it doesn't make the headlines when it is a political crisis or when there is some other kind of disaster around it. It is a fundamental issue and as much as South Africa has an economy, we have a disease called HIV that we need to address.

**Jeremy: Do you think its broad audience is engaging with it?**

William: Well I think that's a question that you have to ask the editor more than me. But my sense of it is that it is something that is still quite unusual to get people to tell their own stories. In a sense what they are doing is they are following a formula that already has been used by the tabloids. What's interesting to me is that if you look at the tabloids and HIV, you generally don't see even though they are dealing with ordinary people's issues, HIV as an issue is not explicitly spelled out. Which I think it is a bit of a problem because it's an issue where they have an opportunity to raise the issues but they often fail to do so.

**Jeremy: I want to move on to the third leg of our discussion this morning as we look at media diversity and issues of sexual orientation. Gordon Mthembu from the Treatment Action Campaign my thanks to you for joining our discussion this morning. We are now joined by the literary editor of the Mail and Guardian newspaper Shaun de Waal. Shaun it's always nice to talk to you.**

When the media reports on gay issues, it tends to be, and this is my experience of it, about gay weddings that fail and when crime was involved, for instance, this awful murder of two lesbians. Is that how you see it as well, that we don't understand the nuance sometimes?

Shaun: I think it is a difficult issue because the media very often responds to bad news more quickly than it responds to good news and tends to cover things even with the civil unions legislations for instance, that when there were debates, when there were out cries and the kinds of statements made by Jacob Zuma or in particular Holomisa. That's the kind of thing that gets covered and it is very difficult to work out how that should change. I tend to think that the public broadcaster should be playing a more substantive role in terms of education, in terms of peoples rights, in terms of the kinds of recourse they might have in law, other services and stuff that might be available to people. You know it is difficult to hand out rules and instructions of how they should be covering certain things.

**Jeremy: Benita De Robillard you can't abrogate all the responsibility to the public broadcaster. I mean I understand what exactly Shaun de Waal is saying but does the commercial media have any role to play in this at all?**

Benita: Well of course. I think that given how our current media [09:20]<college> is constituted, to say that we are not going to include, and I don't think that's what Shaun is saying, exclude commercial media would be nonsensical.

**Jeremy: But commercial media is also going to have that more black and white agenda as we discussed earlier?**

Benita: Yes, commercial media also has readers and people who consume or use or engage with their products if I can use their language in logic for the moment, who are constituted in these ways and I think that it's important for that part of South Africa's media landscape to be attuned to it and attentive to it.

And so what we are seeing is a number of less prominent groups have tried to start alternative kinds of public or media, in response to these gaps and silences, they are also fraught with some other kinds of problems.

**Jeremy: Also in many cases preaching to the converted anyway?**

Benita: Sometimes and also enforcing exclusions in other areas. I was at a conference at Pretoria University recently where one of the speakers was dealing with the publication Gay Pages and made the argument fairly compellingly that while this particular publication was addressing the so called gay constituency, it was excluding lesbians, it was marginalising black gay people and lesbians.

**Jeremy: So Shaun de Waal its back to specific agendas isn't it?**

Shaun: Yes, up to a point. I mean the problem in a sense is that one cannot regard the commercial media as moralistic. I mean we talk about things like the Gay Pages; this is a private publication that is going to as any public publication would, try and target a very specific market.

**Jeremy: Because it has a commercial agenda as well.**

Shaun: Exactly, and depending on how that works, it may then lead to what seems to be certain exclusions. And therefore that is a very difficult thing to deal with. You can't legislate to private media that they have to change their marketing strategies. They just can't change their demographics overnight. Understand what the people are saying understand their problems. I can't really see exactly how this kind of thing is going to be addressed. I mean the mainstream media's coverage of gay and lesbian issues in general is rather patchy. It does not give a sense of the full range of what the community, of what the people have to say about different issues.

There is a kind of reacting to crisis and reacting to controversy in general.

**Jeremy: Is the gay lobby itself in this country, Shaun de Waal, vigorous enough in telling its own story and articulating of the issues are?**

Shaun: Well in think it is becoming more and more so and I think the gay activists and the lesbians activists do need to be realistic in some ways about how these things work. If you look for instance the way the mainstream media has covered something like the pride parade over the years, it started out very much as a kind of a slightly sensationalist take on it.

**Jeremy: Looking for a good front-page picture?**

Shaun: Yes. It sort of focused on the drag queens and the people in funny outfits and the more outrageous elements of the parade. And that still happens to some degree but at the same time over the years, people have become quite used to it and there is a positive sense of that event to the degree that large commercial radio stations have become sponsors and so forth.

And I think that's an indication of how through the event itself and the management of the event, and the event becoming a regular part of the calendar, has changed perceptions of them, and has become quite standard part of coverage at that time of the year and it no longer just focus on the more outrageous elements. And at the same time people involved in activism around that event has become more used to the idea that if the drag queen is going to be the person to get their picture taken, well that's ok. So activists are no longer worried that we are going to be represented by a drag queen.

**Jeremy: Shaun very quickly and again we have about three minutes left of programme time and I'm going to open an entirely different avenue of discussion, just a quick response from you.**

**Is the issue more difficult in South Africa and on the African continent generally where often homosexuality is seen as unafican?**

Shaun: I think that is a huge issue and a huge debate and I think in South Africa we have made headways, we have a constitution democracy that addresses some of the issues that need to be filtered through to peoples daily lives. In other parts of Africa it is an enormous problem in that gay and lesbian activity is often illegal, police are entrapping people, penalties are very heavy, heads of state are making homophobic comments using it as an issues to distract from other problems in their societies and it feels to me as though in many parts of Africa

that that form of activism has barely started. Although I also see a lot of African countries looking to South Africa as an example of the way to go and at least one can say that opening shots have been fired so let's get on with the war.

Jeremy: Shaun de Waal, literary editor at the Mail and Guardian. Thank you very much indeed.

Benita de Robillard I'm going to give you the final word. We've discussed this issue from three specific platforms today. Pull it all together for us very quickly. What is the lesson here, how do we take this forward?

Benita: Well I think what today's discussion reveals is that each of these areas demonstrate is that we are working with intersecting logics and systems of exclusions and inclusions that have very real political, material and ethical effects to the people who are affected. And so we need to be more aware of this and we need to unravel where those intersections and points of intersection lie. The ideas and assumptions that make it possible to be racist are not that different from those assumption that makes it possible to be homophobic or xenophobic. And this is a reality that we need to confront and vigorously challenge.

Jeremy: And that is where we are going to leave it this morning. My thanks to Benita De Robillard lecturer and media studies coordinator at the Wits School of Arts, along with William Bird executive director of the Media Monitoring Project. My thanks as well to Dr. Yoon Jung Park post doctoral fellow at the centre of Sociological Research at the University of Johannesburg, Gordon Mthembu member of the Treatment Action Campaign, Shaun de Waal literary editor at the Mail and Guardian.

Our radio conference this morning in association with the Media Monitoring Project and the Open Society Foundation.