

Seekers of truth

 By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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Despite the internal and external challenges that journalists face every day, the industry is strong, delivering excellent work in newspapers. This excellence was on display last night when the stalwarts of the newspaper industry came together to reward and celebrate the best in their industry at the annual Standard Bank Sukuile Awards held at the Green Venue in Sandton.

The big winners are Beauregard Tromp (who also won the Hard News Category) and James Oatway who were awarded SA Story of the Year, Nokuthula Mbatha who was named Young Journalist of the Year and Siphe Macanda who was awarded Newspaper Journalist of the year.



Siphe Macanda

Oatway, who also won the News Photography Category for the same story, says he is pleased the killing of Emanuel Sithole, in the *Sunday Times*, was given this Award. "I am very honoured to have been awarded this as it brings this story into the public eye for a second time and makes people think about what happened again. We can never forget what happened to Sithole so we can stop this kind of thing from happening again in the future."

Twenty-five-year-old Mbatha, was awarded Young Journalist of the Year for her story "*Deep in the devil's drug*" in *The Star*. The young journalist was ecstatic with her Award. "I will never forget the feeling when I heard my name being called out. I am so grateful for the Award. It shows that hard work does pay off. This was also a dangerous story for me so this is very rewarding."

She says the Award has motivated her even more. "This has motivated me so much to move forward and focus on my passion which is highlighting women's issues."

Macanda who won the Investigative Journalism category, was awarded Newspaper journalist of the year for his "*Siyenza toilet scandal*" story in the *Daily Dispatch*. He says he was hopeful that he might receive the Award. "My editor told me my story was good so he thought I could win so I was feeling a bit hopeful and confident. Now I am over the moon, I am so happy and it has excited me to go out there and do more great work."

Mail & Guardian's Mia Malan, was awarded the Feature Writing Award for her story on Diepsloot Rape. A story she says left her traumatized. "It was the first time ever that a story did that to me, but I had to pursue it. I wanted to know why so many people get raped there and then write about it for others to also understand and make sense of it without being judgmental."

This is the third year in a row that she has won the Award for Feature Writing.



Mia Malan

Paula Fray, the Awards judges Convenor, says the feature writing category attracted a wide variety of good work, making it a difficult category to judge. "There were a total of 94 entries, of which many were very good but not all of them could make the shortlist. In the end the criteria, the relevance of the subject and the quality of writing determined the finalists and the winner."

Fray used the opportunity at the Awards to express her concern on what was currently taking place in the industry. "It is hard to celebrate without acknowledging that many of our colleagues have been served with notice letters."

She adds that the environment that journalists have to function in is not only uncertain, it has also become increasingly dangerous. "It is in times such as these that we need to find that courage and commitment to continue to seek out the truth and to be fair, independent and accountable."

Sponsored by Standard Bank, group chief executive of the Standard Bank Group (SBG) and the chief executive of Standard Bank South Africa (SBSA) Sim Tshabalala, also touched on the importance of the media in a democracy, pointing out that when it comes to press freedom South Africa is ranked on a par with the United States and Great Britain. "Over the past couple of weeks, we have seen ample evidence of the strength of the South African press with the men and women of the press instrumental in keeping us up to date on what has been the most important event in this country since the 1994 elections."

Ishmet Davidson, Media24 GM distribution and board member of the Publishers Support Services (PSS), which hosts the Awards, voiced the Awards' gratitude to Standard Bank for sponsoring the Awards for the past five years. "As an industry we are hugely grateful to Standard Bank, as it is their sponsorship that has enabled us to honour the people who work and contribute every day to one of the cornerstones of democracy, the media."

Newspaper excellence

The Frewin Award was awarded to *Beeld* newspaper which also shared the Joel Mervis Award with *Mali & Guardian*, while *Die Volksblad* was awarded the McCall Award. The winners were chosen from 10 finalists that had been selected out of the 28 newspapers that entered the Awards, which recognise newspaper excellence in advertising, printing and production, layout and typography as well as the balanced use of pictures and graphics.

[View all the winners.](#)

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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