

Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely

 By [Chris Brewer](#)

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This was the phrase used by Lord Acton in 1887 (John Emerich Edward Dalberg, first Baron Acton – which explains why most people refer to him simply as “Lord Acton”).

Although he is always attributed with the full phrase there were others who passed similar remarks, such as William Pitt the Elder, Earl of Chatham and British Prime Minister in 1770 when he said “Unlimited power is apt to corrupt the minds of those who possess it.”



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The reason I mention it now is because during the past few years, many of our media houses have caused the government to change courses of action. The *Sunday Times* has always been good at this and, recently of course, they exposed Collins Letsoalo, acting CE of Passenger Rail Agency SA, for giving himself a 350% salary increase up to a R5.9m package.

The very next day he was fired.

It makes you think that IF the enquiring minds of the *Sunday Times*' reporters hadn't chased that story down then taxpayers

would still be paying for yet another exorbitant executive salary. ("His" employees, by comparison, were given something like 3% increases).

So well done the *ST* (and all the other really impressive media for their work on other matters). It proves, yet again, that a free press is absolutely vital in today's political climate.

But there's another beast raising its head in the wake of the "good guys" and I'm going to pick on the *Cape Times* for their oh-so-subtle (and disingenuous, I might add) twisting of words and "suggestive" reporting.

They don't lie – they just let subtlety perform their highly suspect propaganda.

Two examples.

The first I noticed a couple of month's back when they had occasion to mention Penny Sparrow's name – it was almost certainly a piece on racism. They wrote the story as normal but then slipped in a couple of extra words, which was a highly effective slight to the Democratic Alliance. Their phrase was: "Penny Sparrow, a DA supporter, was...."

Now ask yourself, what the hell had her membership of the DA got to do with anything? The obvious answer is that the *Cape Times* doesn't like the DA and will do anything to promote the cause of the ANC.

They could have said "Penny Sparrow, who likes McDonald's Big Mac Burgers..." which is equally irrelevant.

It's nasty and vindictive reporting.

The second example was the *Cape Times* headline last Friday:

"Zille: Most murderers [are] not white."

It's true she did say that. However, in context, it's more of a geographical and demographic fact.

What the *Cape Times* did was to select a phrase she used and used it as a front page headline, immediately turning it into a racist comment – just like that, with all the ease of simple yet spiteful reporting to try and besmirch the DA and our Western Cape Premier Helen Zille.

If I were her I'd be spitting blood at this stage.

It just isn't acceptable.

The media and their reporters have a moral duty to report the TRUTH. They DO NOT have a licence to twist facts in order to satisfy their owners' political agendas.

So whilst we have heroes on one side of the media landscape, we also have villains on the other.

When the media becomes too powerful then they must watch themselves very, very carefully, because they have the power to make massive changes.

And we all know what happens when you become too powerful... the editors run the risk of becoming as corrupt as those about whom they're reporting.

It's about time that social media commentators made more noise against the villains in our media.

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