

Honoring Representation: An Interview with Sisipho Skweyiya Ndlovu

Salient Aminu, Wits University, HBCU-ACC Correspondent | 30 June 2024



Sisipho Skweyiya Ndlovu was a guest speaker to the [HBCU-Africa Correspondents Corps](#). Based in South Africa, she is currently with Reuters.

You mentioned that you are always eager to learn new skills and technologies. Could you tell me about a recent skill or technology you have mastered, and how it has enhanced your work as a visuals/video producer?

Working in the media means I always must be on top of the game with current trends and stylistic updates that help my work stand out from the rest. Particularly in journalism, we always must find efficient and effective ways of communicating essential information. Lately, the adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the newsroom is the biggest thing. I have to say, embracing it was tough at first, but the more I have seen other colleagues use it, the more I have also learnt to use it to my advantage especially for creative storytelling. Also, some of its tools have proven to be highly effective when I need to file urgent breaking news stories with a lot of speeches to translate. So, the use of AI has been very crucial as an addition to my technical skills as a journalist in a fast-paced newsroom.

Diversity, creativity, and collaboration are values you mentioned as being important to you. Can you expand on

how you have incorporated these principles into your work at Reuters? How have they shaped your approach to visual storytelling and working within a global team?

Working in a diverse newsroom has been a key part of my career success and it is especially important for any journalist wanting to tell impactful stories. Because I am around different people from various backgrounds and cultures, my perspective has been immensely broadened by being exposed to multiple ways of existence and this helps my journalism to be sensitive against unconscious bias, stereotypes and makes me seek to be more inclusive and open to tell all sides of the story, including marginalized voices.

As someone who covers news, features, and politics in Southern Africa, can you share some of the most rewarding and challenging aspects of reporting on this region? What specific stories or experiences have had a profound impact on you or influenced the way you approach your journalism?

Southern Africa is an interesting region politically. Nothing much really happens apart from elections and protests here and there. However, for me, the most rewarding part is the opportunity to tell colorful feature stories about ordinary people working against all odds to do extraordinary things in their lives. I have interviewed athletes, entrepreneurs, scientists, tech innovators, chefs, from different countries across the region. With all these stories I have had the privilege of seeing the greatness of Africa and what the young people of this continent are capable of – very inspiring.

In your work in Southern Africa, how do you ensure that you are amplifying the perspectives and stories of marginalized or underrepresented communities? Can you share an example of a story you have worked on that gave a voice to people or issues that are typically overlooked in mainstream media coverage of the region?

Inclusivity and representation are always the foundation of my journalism. And I am incredibly happy that I work with an international organization that values the significance of ‘smaller’ voices. One example that stands out for me was the Amazon vs Indigenous Khoi San people who were fighting to preserve their land in Cape Town

against commercialization by the city government. It was a story about business vs humanity, and which is more important. But in all the complexity of the story, even though I knew Amazon was going to win the case and continue building the first commercial offices in Africa, it was very important that we extensively reported on the significance of that land for marginalized groups like the Khoi San and also how much of their heritage was going to be lost as a result of the construction of the Amazon building. When reporting about a global company like Amazon, it is easy to focus on their side of the story and on the economic value of what the construction will bring, but it was also important to not ignore the affected communities who were negatively impacted.

Southern Africa is known for its rich cultural heritage and complex political dynamics. As a journalist, how do you navigate the intersections between politics and culture in your reporting?

The wonderful thing about Southern Africa is there are various cultures and tribes, but it can also sometimes cause tension with various interests especially when politics is involved. In South Africa particularly we are fortunate that tribalism does not feature in day-to-day political discourse and so political and social issues affect all people in the same way. However, racism is still very much an issue that I must be cognizant of because the effects of apartheid are still very much prevalent across South Africa. So, I always ensure that I report such issues with sensitivity and respect, but in a way that does not compromise the standard and quality of my journalism.

Beyond the traditional news and political stories, what emerging trends or underreported issues in Southern Africa have you been following, and how have you approached covering them through your storytelling?

Science and technology innovations is a theme we do not often explore outside of medicine and vaccines. South African scientific research is one of the most advanced and sophisticated on the continent but so much of it is unknown or stays in academic journals. I believe that so many of the diseases we have on the continent could really be eradicated if we invested in covering the work of scientists and showing its value to society so governments and funders could invest more in scientific research for a healthier and more progressive African society. Unfortunately, I have not had the time to dedicate to doing stories about science and technology but the few innovative stories I have reported on have sparked a curiosity that I plan to explore very soon.