

2010 and beyond

Media steps into Malema's shoes

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IN MY YEAR-END COLUMN FOR THIS magazine just a year ago, I announced Julius Malema as my personal newsmaker of 2009. We all were mesmerised by him.

But Malema-obsession is now a thing of the past, mainly because Juju himself got a bit of a *klap* by the president and the ANC leadership, had to eat a lot of humble pies and eventually lost his flat screen TV to the Sonke Gender Group.

He is still there, but not as much fun to watch anymore. So what do I remember particularly in 2010? *Waka Waka* and *Wave the Flag*, of course. Those four weeks of special warmth and cosiness, despite the bitter temperatures outside. Travelling through the country from one stadium to the next. And, although my team did not win, I treasured every moment.

But I also remember the bitterness of the aftermath, the ugly health and education sector strikes, immediately after the world stopped looking at us. Jackie Selebi guilty of corruption. The *Sunday Times*'s wa Afrika being arrested. And lastly, the 'crackdown on the media' Media Tribunal and Protection of Information Act.

For me, the newsmaker of 2010 is the media industry. I cannot recall a year in the past 10 that the industry has been so absorbed in its own issues. Whatever the eventual outcome of the current peace talks with the government and the ANC, the industry spent some valuable time debating itself – a much-needed discourse that should have happened earlier and should have happened without needing government prompting. The discussion around the quality and appropriateness of content is replacing the traditional we-only-write-what-our-target-audience-wants-to-hear debate.

So what are we to expect from 2011?



Media will not stop investigating and uncovering things that are going wrong. We will hear and read more about corruption, because local elections are just six months away. I foresee that the performance of the president will be much scrutinised, because the question of his second term is moving closer.

In international media, green and sustainability are major issues. Although the trend towards a greater emphasis on sustainability can also be seen in our media, I would like to see a greater focus in financial reporting on aspects beyond headline earnings, share price and financial performance. Companies are increasingly rated across all aspects of sustainability, and I am more and more interested in the corporate behaviour of organisations both in terms of the environment, but also for their (real) social commitment. I expect financial journalists, in particular, to inquire about the long-term commitments of organisations in research and development, and innovation.

I also hope that 2011 will bring us more, faster and cheaper bandwidth, because the blogs and discussions that are emerging in South Africa are truly encouraging. They are a healthy balance to the often one-track mindedness of the traditional media. And even those who are trying to 'protect' us from all this information will then realise that increased conversations are exactly what this country needs. <<



media hits

The New York Times

The Opinion Pages

OP-ED COLUMNIST

Onward Christian Moguls

By MAUREEN DOWD
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Scornful play on hymn



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The headline 'Onward Christian Moguls' of a column in the New York Times by Maureen Dowd is a wonderful (and scornful) play on the well-known Christian hymn. The column was about a Christian motivational group who charge people money to attend get-rich-quick seminars and, amazingly, featured a number of powerful people as speakers, such as Rudi Giuliani. Dowd, unlike many of our columnists who simply spout opinions without doing much original research or reporting (what are they paid for, I

wonder?), actually reports all of her columns. They represent a point of view, and are often acerbic and biting in tone. But each fact is clearly reported and backed up, and the work is original. Like the headline, they work because of the thought put into them. <<