

# Bravery in telling stories without fear or favour

 By Jessica Tennant

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Eyewitness News (EWN) recently won a Bookmarks' Gold for its *Poisonous Bullets: The Silent Betrayal of Sindiso Magaqa* three-part podcast series, in which news reporter Ziyanda Ngcobo took an in-depth look at what killed the former ANC Youth League secretary to tell the story of the broader political killings in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN).



Mahlatse Mahlase

In addition to this, the radio station was also awarded a Silver in the online news video category for its coverage of the Zimbabwe elections.

Here, editor-in-chief Mahlatse Mahlase tells us about the historical importance of both events and that it was the longevity of the podcast that she believes stood out, as the killers have since been arrested and are going to trial. She also goes into how this particular format gives the listener a deeper sense of the story and how news consumption is changing...

## **Comment on your Bookmarks 2019 wins.**

We won in two categories, the online news video which was a compilation of the work that we did during the Zimbabwe elections. The second one was podcasts and audio streaming; this was for a podcast that was titled 'Poisonous Bullets', which was around the political killings in KZN and the death of Sindiso Magaqa. Both stories have historical importance.

On the Zimbabwe elections, it was the first time the country didn't have Robert Mugabe present. In the compilation of the work that reporters do, it vividly illustrates the risk of what they go through in their everyday lives.

Sindiso Magaqa's story was brought to the attention of South Africans, the political killings that are happening in KZN. We saw, out of his death, commissions being set up and a national focus in political killings.



**What does this recognition mean to you/for EWN?**

To Eyewitness News (EWN) this is continued recognition of the hard work of our team.

“ The bravery in telling stories without fear or favour, it is newjournalism so to speak because it’s video and podcast. ”

It shows that EWN is at the forefront of pioneering and delivering the news in the new formats that the public is getting to enjoy.

Podcasts and videos are big in our offering and to be recognised for that is something that we take a bow and acknowledge.

■ **What does it take to put together a podcast such as this?**

It takes a lot of hard work. Newsrooms are becoming smaller and smaller and to be able to do in-depth podcasts that speak to the families and political players. For the reporters, it is a lot of hard work and if you listen to that podcast of ‘Poisonous Bullets’ there is a lot of heart and hard work that went into it, which comes through in the final product. During the elections in Zimbabwe, reporters worked 24 hours and made sure that they were there on the frontline, telling the Zimbabwean story.

■ **Why was Ziyanda Ngcobo the journalist for the job?**

Ziyanda Ngcobo is hardworking and was passionate about the story and it came through in her work.

■ **What barriers did you have to overcome to get the story?**

With the Zimbabwean story, the evidence is there with the video to tell, the live ammunition fired in the presence of our reporters, but they continued to do the work risking all. KZN was quite volatile, especially if you are focusing on the political killings. It is about trying to build confidence with the different political players and getting their trust to be able to do the interviews.

■ **Why do you believe this series is worthy of a Gold – what aspect do you believe stood out?**

The personal stories and longevity. It used one person’s story to tell the broader political killings in KZN.

■ **Comment on the category (podcasts and audio streaming) – why you think this format worked well for this particular piece.**

What’s great about the podcast is longevity. We saw that with Sindiso Magaqa, the killers have since been arrested and are going to trial. We are also learning that people are finding more time to listen.

Podcasts allow us to showcase the depth of our reporters in terms of reporting but also their creativity. It also gives our reporters time to do special broadcasts because in all our platforms it’s only bulletins but now we have additional content that can be converted into podcasts and this gives the listener a deeper sense of the story.

*In conclusion, Mahlase said consumption of news is changing. "People don't necessarily listen to the news at the top of the hour like they used to. They are looking for context, why things matter and they are always looking for more in-depth stories.*

"For EWN podcasts are that great opportunity to be able to tell the story in detail and to allow for radio to be the theatre of the mind.

"Video is one of our big projects at EWN, that people always like to see."

She said their online platform availed these opportunities. "We don't only do day-to-day news; we do a lot of features to tell South African stories. We are more than a radio news platform. We are more than that."

Follow Mahlatse Mahlase on Twitter [@hlatseentle](#), as well as EWN [@ewnreporter/@ewnupdates](#). Also, click through to our [IAB Bookmarks Awards and Summit](#) special section on site for continued coverage of this year’s winning work.



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Jessica Tennant 11 Apr 2019



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