Preface

This book is an outshoot of my 2014 Ph.D. thesis in the School of Social Sciences at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Its main focus is to draw our attention to the impact of newspapers on democracy in a third world country, drawing from two newspapers that operated in different epochs. One is the *African Daily News,* which was published during the colonial period between 1956 and 1964. The other is the *Daily News* of the post-independence period published between 1999 and 2003. The book argues that these two newspapers, which were eventually shut down by the colonial government led by Ian Smith and the Mugabe government during the post-independence period, were a thorn on the side of the respective governments.

The *African Daily News* did not start its life as a revolutionary newspaper. It was in fact a mouthpiece of the colonial government: supporting the government of the day while curtailing the birth of nationalism as it advocated gradual processes towards gaining independence. But it was an alternative source of news as it had the distinction of being the first and only daily newspaper meant for the African reading publics. Later, with the failure of racial cooperation under the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, the African *Daily News* would transform itself into a radical publication, fully supporting African aspirations for self-determination. It gave voice to African leaders who led the struggle for independence. Ironically it was the same Africans who would several decades later mastermind the muzzling of the press after independence.

Press restrictions during the colonial period were motivated by the desire to silence the Africans and even to starve the reading publics of alternative news. In addition, restrictive legislations would insulate the colonial government against attacks by the newspapers. Such legislations as the Law and Order Maintenance Act were used to silence the *African Daily News* in the "interest of public safety and security." The book looks at the politics of representation: Whose rights were the colonial government representing when it shut down the newspaper? In addition the various responses generated by the closures will be analysed. Such analysis inevitably shows that the *African Daily News* had become a strong force in the country's populations. Its editors and journalists were summarily deported and others were arrested. Prominent Africans who worked for the *African Daily News* would quickly find careers as politicians fighting for the independence of the country. Zimbabwe got liberated on 18 April 1980.

But independence did not herald a new beginning in press state relations. The fact that independence was masterminded by very same people who bore the brunt of colonial injustice and repression is interesting for this book project. President Robert Mugabe was once the Information and Publicity Secretary for his political party. Nathan Shamuyarira, a popular newspaper editor of the *African Daily News,* would later become the first Minister of Information at independence. Others like Willie Musarurwa became editors at state media house. They all got their experiences from colonial institutions that they saw operating daily. They definitely learned a thing or two from their colonial masters. They would later craft policies that fundamentally stifled the press, culminating in the closure of several newspapers in post-independence Zimbabwe. This was the fate of the *Daily News*; a victim of people who claimed to have fought for democracy.

Operating under the motto "Telling it as it is," the *Daily News* became the second daily newspaper in independent Zimbabwe after the *Daily Gazette*. Formed during the period generally regarded as the crisis period in Zimbabwean politics, this book argues that the newspaper became like an activist press, actively campaigning against the ruling party. This set it on a collision path with the government, eventually leading to its closure in 2003.

So what does the story of the newspapers teach us on the role of the press in a democracy? The book shows that there is indeed need for checks to the executive; the fourth estate is needed in any democracy.

However, the power of the fourth estate can be easily diluted and weakened by several factors ranging from legislations such as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), which hamstrung the operation of journalists and the private media in Zimbabwe. My argument is that the ZANU PF government, much like the colonial government, has continued to control the public media and when challenged, its representatives quickly used their majority in the legislature to come up with laws that entrenched their rule and muzzled the press.

But the closure of the daily newspapers in both epochs, though disastrous, allowed for the growth of a vibrant underground media that continued to challenge authorities. Such underground media in both instances continued to provide information as well as to act as a check on the excesses of the governments of the day. They provided a different challenge to the authorities as they couldn't be shut down like the *African Daily News* and the *Daily News.* To me this shows that the newspapers are not a weak force in politics. Because of their malignant influences, the authorities are always wary of an independent and vibrant press of the calibre of the *African Daily News* and the *Daily News.*

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