

# Voices of Our FUTURE

## How Citizen Journalists Can Hold Us Accountable

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Citizen journalists play an important role in society because they often provide a different perspective on events compared to those circulated by the mainstream media. Traditionally, only a select few were able to publish; now, anyone with a smartphone can publish anything, anywhere and at anytime.

This workshop aims to help more citizens engage issues that affect their community and society as a whole. Using various exercises, participants will develop the basic research, layout and writing skills of a journalist. The course work will also help participants take advantage of new media to distribute the news, opinions and general information they gather.

However, in a world where the salacious outstrips the truth and everyone can post anything from fake to factual news, a true citizen journalist is bound by certain responsibilities. To shape your reputation and a better future, a good citizen journalist needs to understand how to work in a manner that conforms to established legal and ethical standards.

## Course Learning Objectives:

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Through this workshop, participants will learn to use their voice to shape our future. Each participant will learn:

1. The basics of news writing
2. Unpack tactics that will help you interview people to gain crucial information
3. Develop and manage your sources
4. Create engaging narratives across online and offline platforms and improve your communication to a wider audience
5. Understand your legal rights to access public information and what laws will protect you when you publish
6. Discuss the ethics and responsibilities behind journalism practice

As a class assignment, and to contextualise the coursework, participants will also conduct a mock investigation into an issue concerning their specific communities. They will then use their findings to write up a blog post with photographs, links to other (on and off-line) sources and interviews.

## You Can Attend If:

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- You are interested in reporting or telling a story via video, microphone, blog post, or any other media outlet

- You are interested in community-building and advocacy
- You are interested in understanding how you can meaningfully engage the media, the government and your local representatives
- You want to understand what fake news is and how to counter it

This is a basic course that does not necessarily require any journalistic experience. However, if you are already working as a journalist you might find this workshop a useful refresher.

## PRESENTER BIOGRAPHY:

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Heather Thuynsma holds a BA and a BA Honours from the *University of the Witwatersrand*, received her MA in applied politics from the *University of Akron*, and attended the *Women's Campaign School* at the *Yale Law School* to complete her specialization in fundraising and political campaign strategy. She has spent 26 years working in the South African and US non-profit sectors advising on strategic planning and fundraising operations and media relations. She worked as a specialist election monitor during South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, has coordinated communications and fundraising operations for political campaigns at various levels of government in the US State of Ohio, and has taught campaign management, fundraising strategy, and civic and human rights education in both the US and South Africa.

Ms Thuynsma has published articles on human rights education for the *United Nations* and on South Africa's political campaigns and electoral strategy for the *Electoral Institute of South Africa*. She is currently the Chief Executive Officer of the consulting firm *Thuynsma & Associates*, and is a Research Associate and Adjunct Professor at the *University of Pretoria's Department of Political Sciences*. Ms Thuynsma recently edited the book-length publication entitled, *Public Opinion and Interest Group Politics: South Africa's Missing Links?* and will release another edited volume entitled *Political Parties in South Africa: Do they Underpin or Undermine Democracy?* in March 2017.