

# REVERSING THE SITUATION: VIEWS FROM TOP MEDIA MANAGERS

## MEDIA HOUSES SHOULD BE DELIBERATE ABOUT WOMEN INCLUSION

– CAROL BEYANGA,  
MANAGING EDITOR  
(DIGITAL), DAILY  
MONITOR



**T**hough women are not excluded, it is not a very friendly environment. There are perhaps fewer women in sports and photography. This is for various reasons for example at university; women are made to think they write on features, women, education and health issues. It is true that women like those issues because, for instance concerning health, naturally women think about the people around them but that doesn't mean we are not interested in other areas. Yet you find that right from university, women are made to think certain areas such as politics and what is considered 'harder' areas are for men.

At Daily Monitor, we have a good number of women who report and edit different sections such as business, news and features. If a woman came here and wanted to write the opportunities are there, and if she is good, it is even better.

### **Sometimes the media doesn't favour women**

There are promotions for women in the media but you find that the higher the promotion the fewer the women because people do not take into account the

dynamics of women like having children and maternity leave, which is all proper and fine. That is how it should be, yet she may be denied an opportunity because of that sort of thing. Companies do not tend to think that now that Carol has such responsibilities, how do we help her and make her grow in her career because at the end of the day what the company needs is my knowledge and skills? But they think she is married, she has children, she won't want to stay at work longer, which tends to make women excluded.

Yet if a woman was younger with no responsibilities of family and children it might be easier for them to get such opportunities. What should be done is to ensure she has her job, she is safe and protected because she can manage to combine family and work responsibilities.

Concerning women who are reported about, it depends on what is being reported, for you will find that if it is politics, it is the men who get most of the coverage – so, yes, there is some discrimination presumably because men make more ‘noise’ and the media would always want to pick someone who is making news. Today we cover Gen. Kayihura and Dr. Besigye, and you see, all the players there are men. We cover it because it is news. But I also know there are other things women do but are not reported about.

#### **It’s got to be deliberate**

Yes, there are women who are reported about in the news but it tends to be the same crop of women. My thinking is that as media houses, we should not only be looking out for people who make ‘noise’ but be deliberate about women inclusion. For example, one time we were on a board and were setting up a panel. I realised there was no woman. I said, ‘We should have a woman on the panel’. On another panel at a different occasion, it was the same thing, no woman. Then I said, ‘We should have a woman’. Then someone said, ‘Eeh Carol, you are all the time talking about women’. I said, ‘Yes, it has got to be deliberate, otherwise you will not think about it.’ Such women should have the qualification though.

The media should be going out to find the women doing something good. You can’t say they won’t say anything, no. It has got to be deliberate. It is good



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to report about Besigye, but aren’t there women in the FDC who as well have got something to say? They may not be out on the streets or criticising the police but they are there. Pick them and ask them what they think about the issue. It has got to be deliberate. But I have also noted that men are aggressive in getting in the media. He will follow up his (opinion) piece until it is published, unlike some women who may not have written a good piece but do not make follow up adequate.

#### **Some women benefit from the media**

There are women who have succeeded in the media for various reasons. Some have understood the media can work for them. She realises if that I’m in the media and can put across my point, get people to hear my point of view, it works for me; it gives me visibility in what I do, whether business or politics. Others find themselves in the media. It may not have been on plan but they either said something and the media, whether social or mainstream, picked it up.

Internally at Daily Monitor, I wouldn’t say it is the policy but the Managing Director has, for instance, said if we do interviews, let the best candidate win, but if we find two good candidates and either of them can get the job, we pick a woman. Yes, there are good attributes about men but there are also nice attributes about women we would want. We also ensure we put women in different informal positions internally here such as Ekimeeza (internal platform for employees to speak out and address issues affecting them).



**WOMEN SHOULD  
EARN THEIR PLACE  
IN THE MEDIA –  
ABBY MUKIIBI,  
PROGRAMMES  
MANAGER, CBS  
RADIO**

**C**BS is a company with the embodiment of culture. Part of our responsibility is to promote culture. We represent different interests of the kingdom and so we do not want to be misinterpreted or accused of being biased against women or men or a particular religion. We take into account aspects of gender balance. In fact, both our news and internal audit departments are led by ladies in addition to some of our programme managers being ladies, so we have a fair representation. I can say the ratio of women to men is 2:3.

We promote our culture but also women and gender. We give a platform to both so our audience can decide on the issues being debated. We do not allow instances where one demonises the other. Instead we create a platform for people not only to talk about these issues and see their relevance in each so we can make necessary adjustments or devise means of working together. Sometimes what is referred to as gender-insensitive language is when we want to provoke a debate. I can use a sarcastic statement just to provoke a debate. Such is not intended to demonise women but provoke debate so the issues at hand are understood.

The concept of gender equality has its own problems but there are issues we adhere to, for example, issues concerning women empowerment, for example. As a radio station, we really promote such because we believe, in many instances, women are the voice that is ignored, or not heard because of culture and other factors. So we give women a platform. That is why some

people say 89.2 FM is more of a young female-leaning station because of its programmes. We have women's health, rights and development programmes. We know women still go through a lot. I know of 'high-flying' corporate ladies who suffer beatings in their marital homes; ladies are treated like slaves. We expose things like that. We may hide the identity of persons involved but we know the problem is exposed.

We promote co-existence of modernity and culture. At CBS you cannot demonise ladies and get away with it. Our coverage of women is balanced. Generally the media should be credited for trying to promote a more positive image of women today because actually it is women, some women, who discredit themselves. Some still regard themselves as inferior. However, one or two media houses that portray women in a bad light should not be used against us all. Many media houses try to put women on a deserved platform. Apart from the tabloids which people feel ride on the women's card by discrediting them.

Having said that, I also feel some women could do better. They should earn their place in the media. We do not have to cover Justice Julia Sebutinde because she is woman. We give her coverage because she has excelled. I tell women if they have got to do something, they must go for it, do it. I do not believe in the saying "Mukazi kyakula sajjja" (masculine woman). There is nothing like that. It is about ability and whether you are able to perform well. We are not going to employ a woman just because she is a woman. If you say women should be treated fairly it throws away the equal opportunity aspect. Let good be good. Let something deemed good be covered. Let's not cover events because it is a woman, involved.



Every Time  
We Liberate  
A Woman  
We Liberate  
A Man.

The Fresh Quotes





**JOURNALISM IS AN AWESOME PROFESSION, BUT THERE IS LACK OF PASSION AND ZEAL AMONG FEMALE JOURNALISTS –**

**CAROL NAKAZIBWE, SOCIETY MAGAZINE EDITOR AND ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR, THE OBSERVER**

**T**he situation of women in the media today is worse than when I practised as a reporter not because the media is unkind to women but because several female journalists have decided they want the easy way out. Many female journalism students prefer doing public relations (PR) because it does not require them to come face-to-face with people. This is no surprise because even while in journalism school, PR was always easier than print. As a Public Relations Officer (PRO) one asks for a job, is hired and begins to earn a salary. In print journalism, whether female or male, one must prove oneself. When one comes out of journalism school and wants to write, we do not necessarily hire them based on their class of the degree. In journalism, from time memorial, one has to write as a freelancer and then it is their stories that open doors. Very few women today have the patience to go

through these stages.

**Female journalists not daring enough**

At present, The Observer has a total of 24 writers in the newsroom, both permanent and freelancers, but only four are women. Inclusive of the editors, The Observer has only five female journalists. It is not our policy to exclude women, but they are just not interested. Those that are given a chance are mediocre yet we prioritise hiring on merit rather than gender balance. It would be great to have gender balance but it just turns out that the women who make the cut are less. When hiring someone, we consider someone who is a good writer, creative, with commendable work ethics and can go out and get the story without having to sleep with sources or taking a bribe to get a story. We

follow the same criteria for female and male. Unfortunately, increasingly we do not see this among female journalists.

Involvement of women in the media has greatly declined over the years but this is not because they are being excluded. Today you will get a good journalist, and a few months down the road, she does not go out to collect stories but instead does weird things that give women a bad name. If there is exclusion of women from the media, I have not noticed it. From when I was a practising reporter and now as an editor, we do not have instances where we put gender before performance. As long as somebody feels they can do the story, they go ahead and do it. For example The Observer reporters that cover police and parliament are women. In the past, I have also covered riots and Ebola. We never refer to any story as too tough or too serious for a woman. At The Observer, women have written for nearly every section of the newspaper, including sports.

### Teaching institutions should motivate journalism students

It is quite difficult having internal structures that favour women and at the same time maintain quality and standard journalism. It does not matter whether the person who brings quality is female or male. We have had discussions before on how to make the newsroom more gender-balanced but, honestly, it is not practical. You cannot force somebody to have passion for something. I have tried it, I have been very frustrated. Therefore you cannot have such policies in place when the people the policies target are not interested.

The only way to revive interest among females to practise journalism is to start at the journalism schools, otherwise newsrooms cannot do much. The newsroom works with what comes

to them. When I was at Makerere University doing journalism and mass communication, our department invited journalists from the BBC to talk to us. One of them was Elizabeth Ohene. At that time she was a Ghanaian journalist working with the BBC. She later became a government minister. I recall how she talked with passion about being a female journalist and how she usually wore shorts underneath her skirt so that nothing would stop her in case a story broke and she had to climb a tree to cover it. She truly inspired and made me realise that this is what I wanted to do. I do not know what I would have chosen if the university had not organised that talk. For me that was a life-changer but today the education system has changed and most people get a degree without much regard to what they pursue thereafter. Someone can do a mass communications degree and go to sell shoes in Kikuubo. What we need is teaching institutions to go back and motivate and inspire women to join the media actively, not to just be degree-holders.

Female and male journalists face the same challenges. The only difference is that women have the extra role of



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being mothers yet journalists work long, unpredictable hours so I have always dreamt of a workplace not just in the media but a workplace that allows daycare centres. Our profession is quite strange. Sometimes you are away by 6 a.m. and you are still at work by 8 p.m. If that could be taken care of, it would reduce the number of women opting for other fields of work. I think the aspect of motherhood also greatly influences women's career choices. Most women want a job that allows them to leave at 5p.m.

### Being a woman shouldn't hold anyone back

I never look at myself as a woman but as a journalist. One of my proudest moments in my journalism career was at the Daily Monitor. I was promoted from a retained reporter to full-time staff when I was in advanced pregnancy. For me that brought tears to my eyes. I was about eight months pregnant when my confirmation letter came. For an employer to confirm you as permanent staff when they know you are going to go away for some months of maternity leave was a boost. I thought I would not carry on with my work because of my pregnancy and that my bosses would think I would slack off. But I carried on working like everybody else and at no point did I say I could not work because I was pregnant. I never let being a woman hold me back. But what I see today is 'Oh my God, I am a woman let a man go'. That should not happen. It is not a handicap being a woman. I advise female journalists to find the passion in their work. It is the only way they are going to wait out the different phases that will lead to their promotion.



**AGAINST SOCIETAL PERCEPTION THAT JOURNALISM IS FOR MEN; WOMEN ARE WELL REPRESENTED IN THE MEDIA – BAHATI REMMY, JOURNALIST AND POLITICAL TALK SHOW PRODUCER AT NBS TV**

**I** am a journalist and a programme producer at NBS TV. I am a political reporter and producer of two political talk shows, The Frontline and Barometer. There are a number of opportunities for women in the media but I find it strange when female journalists do not want to embrace these opportunities. First, being a woman is an advantage. Sources, for example, like to talk to women. They are often cooperative. But there are some female journalists who don't embrace this. This is one of the major setbacks for female journalists. Others have intimate relationships with sources, which hinders their professional work as journalists.

At NBS, the majority of reporters and some editors are female. Women are included in the media. Women are well represented in the media because every time I go to a press conference, I find a significant number of female reporters. I

think we are doing well. There are still women who look at media as a profession for men though. There are those who anchor news and do not want to go to the field to get the stories and end up wallowing in self-pity about being women.

### Challenges of female journalists

At NBS, there are no favours for men or women. We are all treated equally. Thriving entirely depends on your performance. Before you are sent to cover a big story, you are evaluated on what you can deliver and how you approach the story. One's ability is what sets them apart from the rest. Someone may say if media houses favoured women it would attract women to join the industry. But I do not believe in that. I believe in working hard to get to the top. Maybe to encourage women to join the media industry, women who are already in the media should be exemplary. They should portray the good the media industry is, showing that anyone can make it. Media houses, particularly TV stations, should have programmes that connect women better, influence women to join the media industry.

The challenges that come with being a female journalist are almost similar to those faced by male journalists. They are basically occupational hazards. I really got upset in March 2016 when I was arrested while on duty, but it was an occupational hazard. You go into the field knowing anything might happen to you. Another challenge is you might go to interview someone who has had a crush on you. You have to be prepared and ensure you stick to business. The presence of cameras also saves you from other challenges you would have encountered while doing the interview.

There are also male bosses with a bad attitude towards women. They think women cannot deliver at work. Some



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companies have challenges employing women who get pregnant very often and thus spend more time on maternity leave than at work.

### Focus and hard work are winning strategies

I believe that when a woman is focused and works hard, there is no room for failure. One has to know what they want and be very aggressive in getting it. Women ought to know things are not easy. For example, if you must get an exclusive interview from a government minister, you have got to be aggressive because his or her personal assistant can toss you around yet when you go straight to the minister, you are never turned away. If one thinks things will be very easy or someone will help them, the media is not a place for them. They should forget it.





**WE LOOK AT SKILL  
AND TALENT  
REGARDLESS  
OF GENDER –  
STEPHEN DUNSTAN  
BUSUULWA, ACTING  
GENERAL MANAGER,  
TOP RADIO, FM J AND  
TOP TV**



As Acting General Manager, I oversee the general operations of the stations, including programming, so I can say that, to some extent, women are excluded from the media. In some sections of society there is still the belief that women cannot do certain things, which also happens in the media where if someone is looking for a good reporter or presenter of a talk show, it is often the men that are sought after. In Kampala, for example, you may not find many women hosting political talk shows. But why? People think women cannot do it. Yet there are ladies who are very informed and can ably challenge or interview personalities in politics.

The problem is both from society and inside the media houses. On the part of society, there is a notion that when one tunes on a radio station and hears a woman's voice, they think it is an entertainment, lifestyle or children's show, so one will not listen to them but will switch to another station to listen to male political show hosts. They think politics must be handled by men.

Concerning the media, when a lady seeks to host a political talk show, they are not given a chance. It is true, therefore, that some media houses buy into the societal biases against women.

That is, however, different with me. For example, a lady came to me and said she could do a political talk show and I asked her to prove herself. She did it well and today she hosts a political talk show on Top TV. We do not have a policy per se. Our policy doesn't come out explicitly on gender mainstreaming but it was my personal initiative. It is upon the management team that makes the deployment decisions.

Yet the problem is not entirely with the media but women too. Some still have an inferiority complex. They fear to give interviews. You will rarely find a female MP calling Top TV for an interview. They fear to comment on controversial issues. Yet men do it. They run after us wanting to give interviews and comments about hot issues, say, debated on the floor of parliament. We have, for example, more than 100 female MPs but when you watch the news, you might find the same personalities giving comments every time. Where are the rest?

I should, however, note that the media should encourage women and seek interviews from the less known personalities. If one is able to give a comment of three words that is OK. She is gaining self-confidence and esteem. She can do better next time. Other than that the issue of inclusion and representation remains a challenge to

both the women and the media.

Ours is a Christian-based media house, and we know in biblical terms the man is the head of a woman but professionally there should be equality. We differentiate biblical from professional settings. For example, we have both men and women board members and top managers. Many of our programmes are run by women. So we look at skill and talent regardless of gender. Women should not fear taking on challenges. Winners do not fear to start. They start. Every great person you see, such as Jennifer Musisi (KCCA Executive Director) or Maggie Kigozi (businesswoman and former Uganda Investment Authority Executive Director) or other persons you have ever heard of, had a starting point. If you make mistakes along the way, it is okay. We learn from our mistakes. Woman, begin again or try something else, but never fear to do something. No one wins without doing something.



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**MEDIA REQUIRES CLARITY OF PURPOSE AND PASSION – PETER KAKURU, MANAGING DIRECTOR, POWER FM**



Women's involvement in the media has been growing over the years. Women have not only become the face of the media as top radio personalities and talk show hosts, but also as News reporters. There are a number of women in the media who are competent, hardworking and competitive and knowledgeable. There are go-getters. There are women who definitely are doing a good job and are in such positions on merit.

At Power FM, although the policy is not written, we know that if a radio programme is to be hosted by two people, it is preferable that it is hosted by a man and a woman. It is not only Power FM doing this but other media houses as well. Also if you flipped through the newspapers, you will find there are increasingly more female personalities interviewed so there is no exclusion of women in the media.

At Power FM, for example, we do not have a gender policy so we do not hire basing on one's gender but character and competence. And, a lot of women have high levels of competence and are able to thrive in a competitive work environment. So management looks out for ability and passion to

work, and only supports them by instituting a good work environment. We respect the law, for example we grant maternity leave, breastfeeding time and safety at work as is due.

The women who have succeeded in the media are those who have the character and zeal to succeed. They have thrived because they have the character and determination to succeed. They also constantly work at getting better, for anyone who has good character and the urge to continuously improve, always has room for growth. That is why it is very important that before one joins the media, one has to be very clear in their mind as to why they want this particular profession.

The media is one of the most critical industries in any country because it provides a voice that influences people's minds and choices. Therefore we need people who come into the media and work with responsibility and an understanding that their job is critical to the health of society. That is why there is need for clarity of purpose, vision and the passion. Otherwise if you come in with the wrong reasons, you will not only handle your role irresponsibly but will also not last long in the industry.



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