

Adopt a journalist day/week/month/year...

We have all sorts of days from National Coffee Day (definitely one of my favourites) to Braai Day and even No-I day - not going there...

 By [Marion Scher](#) 1 Oct 2014

Various professions are also honoured with special days - secretaries, teachers and of course mothers. Well-deserved I must add. BUT there is no National Journalist Day. Now I know there are many of you reading this thinking, what about National String-Up-a-Journalist Day - or Put-a-Sock-In- a-Journalist Day and other such wonderful events but I'm thinking more along the lines of follow a journalist day/week/month or year.

No, I don't mean follow in the sense of stalk, 'cos that would just be weird. I was thinking of people who need to actually deal with media, maybe choosing one or more journalists and following their writing over a short or long (up to you) period of time.

It would be really easy and best of all cost nothing. Whether it's following a particular business reporter covering a merger or a tech reporter writing on the latest iThingy, you would be observing, learning and possibly recording what you find.

This is easier than it sounds because observing is a learned thing. It might mean picking up certain nuances in the writer's work - or getting a feel of where they're coming from on a particular topic. Whatever way you look at it, it's educational.

And like some other national days, such as 'Take a girl-child-to-work day' you could possibly take a journo to breakfast/lunch/dinner/drinks day - the latter possibly needing a Platinum card. Seriously though it would be good to find out just what challenges journalists face today and believe me there are many. Under-resourced newsrooms, too junior staff, diabolical pay, ridiculous hours and the list goes on.

Go inside a newsroom

If you really want to take things to the ultimate end you could request to spend an hour in a newsroom. This more than anything will give you a completely different take on what you think goes on in these hallowed halls of words. Here you will actually physically feel the tension when a journalist is waiting for that final interview to be able to post that story or the list of statistics needed to finalise a feature.

You'll see the editor striding impatiently into the newsroom bearing down on the poor journo with fire pumping from their nostrils, ready to tear the poor reporter limb from limb unless they have their copy NOW.

And particularly interesting to the visitor would be time spent at the subbing desks, where you can see first-hand just what happens to the carefully worded release or interview the journalist faithfully recorded.

If you're really lucky someone from the advertising department will come rushing in excitedly brandishing a sheet of paper showing that a prominent insurance company has just taken a fat chunk of advertising on the very page the article being edited was going on. You'll then become an eye witness to the slashing technique in action. You'll see how a well-crafted article can become almost unrecognisable in its brevity and how the headline, thrown on by a sub who doesn't really know what the article's about anyway, is shoved on at the last minute. And let's not talk about the photo chosen to accompany the piece...

So to return to my original thought - let's see a show of hands for National Journalist Day! No, not you - you're a journalist know the free drinks sound good, but we're looking for people who really want to know what being a journalist in South Africa is all about...

ABOUT MARION SCHER

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