

## 2021 Vodacom Journalist of the Year Awards winners announced

South African journalism has once again excelled at capturing and telling the stories of our colourful, vibrant and deeply complex society - made even more so by the enormous impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. This was the verdict by the Vodacom Journalist of the Year Awards (VJOY) judging panel as the winners were announced at a virtual ceremony on 25 November 2021.



The overall 2021 Vodacom Journalist of the Year winner is Siphamandla Goge of eNCA for his story titled, “The sun sets on Zulu kingdom”, who walked away with the coveted R100,000 prize and title. Goge covered the deaths of the Zulu king and the queen regent, a moment in our country’s history which engulfed the nation in uncertainty, confusion and grief, as well as evoking a sense of pride and of learning. The coverage of this poignant event was described as “superb, incisive and instructive live TV reporting”.

The virtual event was hosted by CNN anchor Eleni Giokos. South African singer, Lira, wowed the audience with a vocal performance while renowned former Sky News, BBC and ITN correspondent Jeremy Thompson delivered a speech to the audience live from London detailing his decades-long global experience as a war correspondent, including in Apartheid South Africa.

The national category winners of the VJOY awards, now in its 20th year, were chosen after a rigorous selection process which began in August and saw over 1,300 entries received nationally across 12 categories. This year’s VJOY judging panel consists of convener Ryland Fisher and judges Jermaine Craig, Arthur Goldstuck, Patricia McCracken, Mapi Mhlangu, Gilbert Motsaathebe, Collin Nxumalo, Jovial Rantao, Robin Sewlal, Phindile Xaba and Obed Zilwa.

The theme for the 2021 Awards – “Resilience” – spoke to the deep challenges which journalists across South Africa have had to face during the pandemic while continuing to produce high-quality work.

Takalani Netshitenzhe, Vodacom South Africa chief officer for external affairs, says: “The VJOY awards offer the perfect opportunity for us as a nation to recognise the sterling efforts of our country’s media sector. Quality journalism takes enormous skill, dedication and courage to find and tell the stories which matter, and which impact the lives of people from every sphere of life. For that, we salute the national winners who exemplify the very best of the journalism profession.”

“As Vodacom, we continue to support quality South African journalism, which is a pillar of our democracy. The VJOYs recognise, honour and celebrate the remarkable storytellers of our nation and I would like to extend my personal congratulations to all the national award winners on their achievements. Vodacom is also deeply appreciative of the exhaustive efforts of our hardworking panel of judges who make the VJOYs one of South Africa’s most prestigious and longstanding journalism awards.”

VJOY judging panel convener, Ryland Fisher, says: “Like 2020, 2021 has been dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has forced entire countries and industries to review the way they work and imagine their futures. South Africa is no different, with intense focus on how we will overcome the economic crisis associated with the virus.

“But the virus has not been the only big story in South Africa. Corruption, unemployment, poverty and inequality continue unabated, some political leaders have struggled to display true leadership skills and ‘ordinary’ South Africans have expressed their displeasure at their material conditions and the efforts of national, provincial and local political leadership in many different ways.”

Fisher adds: “It has been up to the media to try and make sense of this complex society called South Africa. The quality of entries in the Vodacom Journalist of the Year has shown once again that the industry is strong and up to the challenges presented by world events and, more importantly, by events in South Africa. We have seen the best of reporting from throughout the industry, whether it was for breaking news, investigations, opinion or features, and a host of other categories associated with these awards. The journalists have, through their determination and resilience, once again made us proud to be South African.”

### **VJOY Lifetime Achiever Award**

The VJOY Lifetime Achiever Award went to the late writer, author, journalist and editor Helen Nantando “Noni” Jabavu, who is described as a “true trailblazer. She was born in 1919 into an Eastern Cape family steeped in literary figures, and while she largely grew up in Britain, she returned to South Africa in 1976 and cemented an already formidable career as a writer and journalist. Jabavu died in 2008 but has been honoured with a number of awards and the VJOY Lifetime Achiever Award is added to this list in recognition of the “global ambassadorial role she played for South Africa in media and the literary world”.

### **Category winners**

The national category winners, who each won R10,000, are:

- **Investigative:** *Daily Maverick*, Pieter-Louis Myburgh
- **Opinion:** *Sunday Times Daily*, Tanya Farber
- **Features:** Joint national winners from *PE Express*, Candice Bezuidenhout; and from, Cutting Edge, SABC TV, Nontsikelelo Nohiya with contributors Sibusiso Tembe, Fatima Modise and Hlubikazi Kulu
- **Lifestyle:** *Saturday Star*, *Independent on Saturday* and *Weekend Argus*, Nelandri Narainan
- **Sport:** Sport24, Sibusiso Mjikeliso
- **Financial and Economics:** AmaBhungane Centre for Investigative Journalism, Susan Comrie and Sam Sole
- **Politics:** *Saturday Star*, *Independent on Saturday* and *Weekend Argus*, Nelandri Narainan
- **Sustainability:** amaBhungane.org, Dewald van Rensburg with contributors Tebogo Tshwane, Susan Comrie, Micah

Reddy, Irwin Manoim and Tabela Timse

- **Live reporting/ breaking news:** eNCA, Siphamandla Goge, with contributors Bongumusa Mkhize and Nkanyiso Mdlalose
- **Photography:** Netwerk24/*Beeld*, Deaan Vivier
- **Innovation in journalism:** News24, Jeff Wicks and contributor Kyle Cowan

The Young Journalist of the Year Award went to Jabulile Mbatha from eNCA Checkpoint. This award emphasises the VJOY's commitment to furthering the career of a dynamic young rising star journalist in South Africa. Mbatha has won an all-expenses paid overseas trip to work in an international newsroom. Should the pandemic continue to interrupt international travel, an alternative arrangement will be made.

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