

Why we, the media, love Julius

 By [Daryl Ilbury](#)

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OK, I'm going to say it: "The media loves Julius Malema, and there are many reasons why."



Any journalist or media person who says they hate Julius Malema is either lying, or about to jump ship into a less respectable profession, such as politics. The fact is, for the media, there is much to respect, even admire, about this much-maligned young man.

Good for a number of reasons

Ever since Julius Malema narrowly won the presidency of the ANC Youth League (ANCYL), he has found his actions, and most often his words, earning valuable column space and airtime; and this is a good thing, for a number of reasons.

First of all, in the highly competitive media industry, compelling content is critical. The original authority of news - to inform us in a calm, logical and comprehensive manner - has lost its place in the melee for the more lascivious and shocking tribulations that are the bread-and-butter fodder of a seemingly voracious media consumer.

As the print, broadcast, electronic and online media vie in an ever-increasingly competitive arena for the ever-decreasing attention span of the consumer, the need for speed and conciseness has become paramount in the chase for reactive content, even if truth and detail are the victims. In the rush to provide shocking sound bites at the expense of compelling, well-researched and thought-provoking articles, the traditional editor's mantra of "if it bleeds, it leads" has been replaced with "chop it up, and serve it up".

Simply has to open his mouth

So how does Julius fit into the picture? Beautifully.

He simply has to open his mouth and say something and the content virtually writes itself. Watch the floor at an ANCYL

media conference, and as Julius starts talking, waving his finger around his face with that stern look of a man on a mission, and you'll see journalists reach for their notepads and recorders, gaze upwards and mouth a silent "Thank you, God."

They simply demand a single phrase or opinion from him to capture the imagination of their reader, viewer or listener; and he fires them out at a deliciously babbling rate of knots.

More importantly, what he says is bound to incite reaction, from whoops of ululation to vitriolic condemnation. And that's great for any media yearning for the ideal of an emotional reaction from their consumers. That's because reaction takes the energy of a story beyond the confines of its medium and turns it into water-cooler talk; and if that water-cooler talk includes the medium's brand, it's a marketing department's wet dream.

His own brand

And speaking of brand, Julius has his own, and it's simply that: Julius. No-one refers to "the ANC Youth League President, Julius Malema" anymore; neither is it necessary to talk of "Julius Malema" in a by-line/stand-first/intro; it's just 'Julius'.

And that makes everything from headline writing to cartoon caricatures to subtle and sinister references so much easier, all under the name "Julius". I doubt if, since Caesar, there's ever been a more famous Julius. And he's ours.

Journalists will also applaud Julius for doing what this country so desperately needs: getting things out in the open. He has forced us to debate things that have either remained suppressed in our consciousness or which are sitting dangerously on our immediate horizon. Whether it be racism still simmering in public or state institutions, the ANC's convenient abandoning of its core liberation promises, suggestions of inappropriate behaviour by journalists, the nationalisation of the mines or the sexual proclivity of leading political figures; the fact they are being ardently debated around coffee tables and in the media, is also thanks to Julius' actions and comments.

Youthful revolution

Julius is a politician, and for the media, politics is both alluring and frustrating. By its very nature, politics is conspiratorial and devious; and the truth is often hidden behind a veil of lies and rhetorical obfuscation. Julius' youthful revolution has no respect for this centuries-old tradition; he just blurts out whatever pops into his head. He's like a stoepjapper barking at fireflies; and the media loves him for it.

But, if a recent interview with Julius in the *Mail & Guardian* is to be believed, this has given the media one of the most important reasons to admire him. As I often impart to those I coach and work with: there is an element of truth in every opinion; and if Julius Malema says things exactly as he sees them, and does so honestly, he may be a world exclusive: the first politician to actually tell the truth about things.

So, you can shake your head at what he says, voice shock at his antics - even rally your friends to ask for his head on a platter - but the fact remains that the media loves Julius.

For more:

- Bad Entrepreneur [blog]: [#IgnoreJulius](#)

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