

Bringing the female voice to the forefront of radio in 2020



By [Boni Mchunu](#)

7 Jan 2020

2019 was a painful year for South African women. The brutal murders of women like Uyinene Mrwetyana, Meghan Cremer, and Leighandre 'Baby Lee' Jegels left South Africans shocked, sad, and angry.



Boni Mchunu, general manager of East Coast Radio.

Hashtags were started, marches were planned, government promised to act – President Cyril Ramaphosa described femicide as a “national crisis”.



#FairnessFirst: Stepping up to keep SA's females safe

Leigh Andrews 9 Sep 2019



Several of the cases made international headlines, with the Duchess of Sussex, Meghan Markle, visiting the post office where 19-year-old Uyinene was raped and killed in Cape Town, to show her solidarity with women.

“*Simi kunye kulesisimo* (We stand together in this moment),” the Duchess wrote on a ribbon.

Standing together

After all that has been said and done, we still wake up to a new horror story about gender-based violence (GBV) and femicide almost every day.

Are our cries for help not being heard?



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Miss South Africa 2019 and now Miss Universe, Zozibini Tunzi, said it best when she was asked what reason women had to keep smiling when they are continuously faced with emotional, physical, sexual, and economic abuse in SA.

“ We have absolutely no reason to keep smiling. South African women are dying every day and most people are doing nothing about it. ”

As a woman – and the MD of one of the most influential media brands in KwaZulu-Natal, I feel that it is imperative to ensure that the female voice is prominent and heard.

Radio is a great place to have discussions, create awareness, and share impactful stories that can instantly impact thousands of people.

The relationship between radio and its listeners is based on mutual faith, trust, and friendship.



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This friendship is why we need to bring the female voice to the forefront of radio in 2020.

Females to the forefront

Radio is a part of every social group. In KwaZulu-Natal, East Coast Radio (ECR) is regarded as the fabric that binds KZN together. ECR plays a key role in socialising, informing, and connecting people to find what makes them happy, especially during the hard times.

“ Radio is central to the community it serves. Radio can be used to change the lives of marginalised communities, like women. In South Africa, radio gives a voice and courage to fight the rights of the marginalised people. I personally find radio as a powerful platform to create awareness about various issues, such as politics, health, violence, and climate change. ”

Therefore, government and businesses in South Africa and in other economies, continue to utilise radio to disseminate information. As a South African, I find radio today still very relevant and it continues to be even alongside the growth of digital.

During 2019's '16 Days of Activism', ECR Newswatch interviewed Durban-based abuse survivor Rohini Bisaal about the years of emotional and mental abuse she suffered at the hands of her on-and-off boyfriend.

Her story was well received and touched many listeners.

"Rohini Bisaal, this takes courage especially in the Indian community as women are scared to tarnish their so-called reputation and suffer at the hands of supposed loved ones, so well done and proud that you have gone public, women power is what you symbolise," one woman wrote on Facebook.

Radio's role in women's movements

Radio plays such an important role for women's movements to communicate any issues affecting them, such as women's rights and gender equality, and to initiate positive, open dialogues where women can express themselves freely.

For many countries across Africa, Asia, and Latin America, radio is helping to tackle issues such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), other forms of violence against women, and promoting women's political participation and leadership.



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Thanks to the commitment of grassroots women's groups, word is spreading through urban and rural areas so that women know their rights and can claim their rights accordingly.

In South Africa, we have seen women like Thuli Madonsela, Basetsane Kumalo, and Khanyi Dhlomo influencing the media landscape positively.



Thuli Madonsela team summits Kili in aid of dignity for women

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Stories about GBV and femicide in the media paint a sad picture about the safety of women in South Africa, but I am hopeful and excited about the future of radio, especially where female voices are concerned. That will only help fight the scourge of gender-based violence and femicide in the country.

In the words of the Duchess of Sussex, we stand together in this moment.

ABOUT BONI MCHUNU

Boni Mchunu has been at the helm of East Coast Radio since 2015 and leads the team at KZN's number one hit music station with inspiration. Born and raised in Pietermaritzburg, she is passionate about KwaZulu-Natal and is proud of ECRs standing amongst the people of the province...

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