



BOOK REVIEW: *Sharp Spotlight on News24*

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A book review on A Journey to the truth: The Case of KwaSizabantu Mission

By Gerda Potgieter

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A wide-ranging critique of a major media house does not often appear in print in South Africa, and less so on a particular topic such as this book's analysis of News24's reporting of the KwaSizabantu Mission.

A few reasons can explain this. For one, journalists rarely confront each other publicly. So those best equipped to identify poor, unethical reporting keep their criticism primarily private.

Second, scholars focus on shorter studies published as academic articles. This limits the scope of any analysis.

Third, young researchers working on a master's thesis are seldom mature enough to tackle a topic as demanding as Gerda Potgieter has done.

Fourth, research committees will not readily accept a thesis topic which does not fit neatly within theoretical frameworks.

Fifth, senior academics are loath to attack the media, as their students need to find work after graduation. You do not want to be known as a critical academic!

This book, not a formal academic work, evades most of these restrictions. But, more importantly, the writer is a seasoned, independent media professional.

Her experience, knowledge, and passion were prerequisites for a book like this. It also required years of dedicated research, which scholars are seldom afforded in the race for subsidy-generating publications.

Thus, this work is an exception. It is well-sourced, written with enthusiasm, and makes a point.

I particularly like the use of theoretical points of view without ever sounding "academic." I also enjoyed the substantive quotes from an independent report. In short, it's a good read.



Her arguments are backed up by well-known investigative reporter Martin Welz, whom she quotes at length on particular issues. From a journalistic point of view, this counts a lot.

Let’s be clear: News24 does not come out with its honour intact.

I was less happy about the use of exclamation marks. The arguments were strong enough without them, but that may be my academic inclination shining through.

A more serious criticism concerns the last chapter, in which Potgieter discusses KwaSizabantu glowingly. This detracts from the integrity of the text. If she is so supportive of the mission, is her criticism of News24 without bias?

Readers may well be convinced by her arguments without the final chapter. However, some will instead like it.

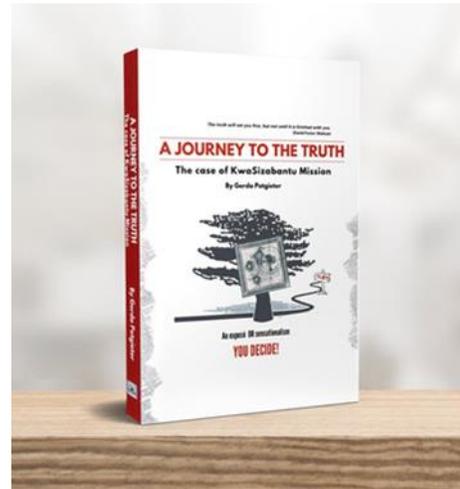
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