



# GRAPPLING WITH ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT BROADCASTING HISTORY OF SOUTH AFRICA: ON POLITICAL COMMUNICATION AND THE ANC'S ANTI-APARTHEID RADIO FREEDOM



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## INTRODUCTION

**D**uring South Africa's 25-year democratic celebrations in 2019, the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture announced that the equipment of the African National Congress' (ANC) legendary clandestine and political communication broadcaster, Radio Freedom, had been successfully repatriated back to South Africa<sup>1</sup>. For a radio station that had initially operated from South Africa, and then Tanzania, Zambia, Angola, Ethiopia and Madagascar, this announcement marked a homecoming of a broadcaster and political communication platform that came into existence in 1963 as a response to the apartheid government propaganda that aimed to frustrate all political activity in apartheid, South Africa. "Established during the apartheid [era], Radio Freedom provided waves of mass of resistance to the regime with broadcasts from different radio stations..." (South African Government News Agency, 2018:1)<sup>2</sup>. Within the context of the repatriation ceremony that was held at the Freedom Park Heritage Museum by the ministry of Sport, Arts and Culture in the year 2018, Radio Freedom's repatriated material was returning to a democratic South Africa that was a far cry from the apartheid era. The repatriation of the radio station equipment also took place at a moment when South Africa's post-apartheid project was being scrutinised in light of settler-colonial legacies that are ingrained in post-apartheid South Africa. Thus to understand the continuing struggle of forging ahead with the strategy of eradicating colonial legacies and coloniality (cf. Tuck and Yang, 2012; Grosfoguel, 2004; Maldonado-Torres, 2007), and the role of the media in this struggle, this article revisits the historical media archive as per the role that was played by the ANC's Radio Freedom in the continuing struggle to advance political communication and eradicate settler-colonialism injustices and legacies.

While there is much literature on various forms of mediums that were used for political communication during South Africa's anti-apartheid moment, there is only a handful of literature when it comes understanding the complex role that was played by the ANC's Radio Freedom (Tyali, 2020). Much of the historical literature on the

ANC's Radio Freedom is found in biographical and autobiographical work that captures the lives of anti-apartheid activists (Kathrada, 1999, 2004; Suttner, 2008; Gevisser, 2007). A large body of work that is linked to these anti-apartheid activists has either alluded to the role of this radio station in a footnote or has nostalgically reflected on Radio Freedom. Except for work drawn from a handful of media or history academics (Davis, 2009, 2011; Lekgoathi, 2010, cf. Bosch, 2006) who have examined or commented on the role of this radio station, there is some research gap in the historical and intellectual understanding of the role that was played by the ANC's political communication machinery through its Department of Information<sup>3</sup> (DIP) in general and Radio Freedom in particular. With the assistance of primary archival research data, this article contributes to the history and the historical understanding of colonial and apartheid era media institutions by focusing on Radio Freedom and how it enabled political communication through its broadcasts and communication strategies. Furthermore, the article also illustrates how the ANC's DIP in general, and more particularly the Radio Freedom platform, assisted the political party with political communication battles against apartheid South Africa.

## SEEDS OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION: BRIEF NOTES ON RADIO FREEDOM AS A RESPONSE TO APARTHEID COMMUNICATION MACHINERY

As indicated above, Radio Freedom was created as a response to the clampdown on anti-apartheid activity of South Africa (cf. Lekgoathi, 2010). For instance, much research literature illustrates that leading up to the year 1963, mainstream political activity and activism against the apartheid state of South Africa had been suppressed (Gevisser, 2007; Mandela, 1994; Massey, 2010) due to anti-dissidence nature of the then apartheid authorities.

<sup>1</sup> The equipment of the radio station is currently housed at the Freedom Park Heritage Museum.

<sup>2</sup> Further report about the repatriation of Radio Freedom equipment can be accessed on this link <https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/radio-freedom-equipment-finds-home-freedom-park>

<sup>3</sup> The DIP had a total control of the communication strategies of the ANC. Thus it is impossible to understand Radio Freedom outside of the workings of the broader ANC communication machinery which was planned and executed by the DIP officials.



The clampdown on such political activity in apartheid South Africa meant that anti-apartheid political parties such as the ANC, Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), the South African Communist Party (SACP) and, later, the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) had to conduct their political work "underground". The banning of such political work also meant that the leaders of anti-apartheid political parties were not allowed to give any politically related public speeches in South Africa. While the public banning of political party address in South Africa is a widely known historical fact (Gevisser, 2007; Feinstein, 2007; Mandela, 1994), what is relatively unknown is that on 26 June 1963, the birth of broadcasted political communication against the apartheid state took place. History records indicate that the following statement was heard on a then recently established anti-apartheid broadcasting radio medium:

I speak to you from somewhere in South Africa. I have not left the country. I do not plan to leave. Many of our leaders of the ANC have gone underground. This is to keep the organisation in action, to preserve the leadership, to keep the freedom fight going. Never has the country and our people needed leadership as they do now. In this hour of crisis<sup>4</sup>.

These were the first words uttered on Radio Freedom. The announcer was Walter Sisulu, an anti-apartheid stalwart. He was accompanied on air by another major stalwart, Ahmed Kathrada (Davis, 2009; 2011). This maiden political communication message on airwaves of Radio Freedom would mark a significant shift in the battle of communicating political activities by the ANC. Not only did the broadcast mark the birth of being in control of its political broadcasting narratives but the message also signalled a shift from relying solely on print political communication strategies by the ANC to a range of media platforms that were to be used for political communication by the political party. The broadcast would also commence a three-decade-long use of broadcast media by the ANC to communicate with its exiled as well as its South African-based constituencies during the apartheid era. The broadcasting and control of such electronic media messages by the ANC buttressed a prolonged period of being in charge of its narrative, thus making the airwaves a useful political communication tool against the government of apartheid South Africa (cf.

Lekgoathi, 2009). The apartheid regime, of course, quickly moved to clamp down this clandestine radio station in its early days of broadcasting in South Africa<sup>5</sup> and this clampdown forced the radio station to be moved outside of South Africa and operate from exile.

## CLANDESTINE MEDIA HISTORY CONTEXTUALISED: ON RADIO FREEDOM

Radio Freedom, the former radio station of the exiled ANC, is arguably the oldest politically aligned and anti-apartheid media institution to be dedicated to political communication against segregated South Africa. Launched as a counter-response to the void left by the banning of anti-apartheid political activity in South Africa, Radio Freedom initially conducted its broadcasting activities within the country. While based in South Africa, the radio station operated from the Lillieslief farm, north of Johannesburg. The station was later forced to broadcast from several African countries (Tanzania, Zambia, Angola, Ethiopia and Madagascar) that hosted the then exiled ANC.

Broadly speaking, broadcasts by Radio Freedom generally could be classified as "clandestine broadcasting, [which] is a method used by revolutionary groups. It has been argued that this type of radio broadcasting can be classified as illegal, political, and can frequently be misleading. Operators broadcast from stations without licences or registration with the International Frequency Registration Board (IFRB)" (Downer, 1993: 98). Radio Freedom thus needs to be understood as squarely fitting this tradition of clandestine broadcasting. Within the context and urgent need for the existence of such a political communication platform in South Africa, Radio Freedom became necessary when the ANC's political activity and the anti-apartheid struggle in the country was officially banned by the apartheid government in 1960. The historical need for the existence of this broadcaster has been put into context by Riddle (1994:17), who indicates that "the ANC's Radio Freedom is only part of the story of clandestine radio in this country. South Africa has a long, largely untold, experience of illegal political broadcasting." He further elucidates that, "the country can lay claim to no fewer than five 'freedom radios', all of which have transmitted illegally, mostly against the government of the day" (ibid:17).

The seeds of such “radio freedom(s)” can be traced to as far back as the 1940s – 1942 to be exact. These varying forms of “radio freedom” were initially assumed to have been staffed by English-speaking employees of the then South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). Their *modus operandi* was based on the urgent need to embarrass white Afrikaans-speaking South Africans who opposed South Africa’s participation in the Second World War. The other example of the “radio freedom” model emerged in 1956 and was also poised at attacking the government of the day. Later, came the ANC’s Radio Freedom, followed by Radio Vryheid [Radio Freedom], “a right-wing station supporting the ‘Boer cause’” (Riddle, 1994:17).

When it comes to the ANC’s Radio Freedom, Davis (2011:225) indicates that “the story of Radio Freedom begins with the turn to the armed struggle undertaken by the Congress Alliance in 1961”. Thus, after this decision of the Congress, sometime in the beginning of June 1963, the now struggle veterans, Ahmed Kathrada and Walter Sisulu, recorded and broadcast a message that indicated that the ANC would operate its activities ‘underground’ as it had become illegal to conduct political activities under the then apartheid system of the country. At the time, these young anti-apartheid activists recorded statements (see the introduction of this article as an example), each political statement lasting about 15 minutes. Hence on the eve of 26 June 1963, Kathrada, Sisulu and some of their comrades, including Denis Goldberg, travelled to suburban Parktown, Johannesburg. Here they “connected [a] jury-rigged transmitter to a tape recorder, pressed play and broadcast [the ANC’s version of] ‘Radio Freedom’ to an uncertain number of listeners” (Davis, 2011:226–227). And so, the project of using broadcast media against anti-apartheid rule officially began for the ANC. The Radio Freedom service “[operated] from five African capitals [broadcasting] for several hours a day, several days a week until the early 1990s” (ibid:224). Lekgoathi (2010:139) notes that “through Radio Freedom, the ANC could directly connect with its supporters inside the country and influence political mobilisation particularly during the 1970s and 1980s”<sup>6</sup>.

According to Kushner (1974:299), Radio Freedom was established as a result of African

liberation groups increasingly recognising the use of broadcasting in political communication purposes: radio’s potential for reaching and enlisting the support of the largely illiterate masses, in time, nearly all the major movements gained access to radio transmitting facilities, whether through clandestine transmitters or through airtime granted by the national states of countries sympathetic to the cause.

More importantly, by the 1980s, the ANC’s political communication machinery had built up a formidable and somewhat respectable response to the apartheid propaganda machinery. By this era, “the ANC had built similar ‘portable studios’ in five additional countries – Zambia, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Angola and Madagascar – with each state broadcaster granting an hour to Radio Freedom programmes” (Davis, 2011:230). This means that the ANC used broadcast media to portray a certain image of itself to its audience – “in-xiles” and exiles (South African and none country -based constituencies). The use of broadcasting facilities by the ANC also means that the political party aimed to control its narrative concerning how it was seen by the broader global public. Thus, the broadcasting content of Radio Freedom “was addressed to three audiences: one at home in South Africa, one abroad comprising foreign patrons and one in exile among those in the training camps” (ibid:236). In this way, the ANC had unfettered control of its image among its primary stakeholders.

This article, therefore, responds to how the ANC executed its political communication practice, and how its constituencies may have received this control of broadcasting and strategising. To make sense of the objective of this article, the research heavily relied on archival data that had been donated by the ANC in post-apartheid South Africa to educational institutions. The ANC donated the examined archived material to the National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre (NAHECS) at the University of Fort Hare in present-day Alice, Eastern Cape. The section below illustrates the research process followed in gathering data for the study underpinning this article.

<sup>4</sup> The rest of the maiden speech by Walter Sisulu on clandestine Radio Freedom can be accessed on the following: <http://www.anc.org.za/content/broadcast-clandestine-anc-radio-wm-sisulu>

<sup>5</sup> The station piggybacked on various stations within the African continent. Largely the countries hosting the radio station had also been hosting ANC exiled members.

<sup>6</sup> In this interview, Z Pallo Jordan reflected on the history and his role in the ANC’s DIP and more particularly on the history of Radio Freedom that was used as a propaganda and counter-propaganda platform: <https://readinglist.click/sub/z-pallo-jordan-says-the-assassination-of-ruth-first-was-no-mistake/>



## COLLECTING DATA: BRIEF NOTES

The data that underpins this article was sourced from historical archives currently based at NAHECS at the University of Fort Hare in Alice (also see above). The centre is the custodian of liberation archives that were donated for preservation, research and scholarship purposes by various anti-apartheid political associations of South Africa, including the ANC, PAC, AZAPO and the Black Consciousness Movement (BC), among others<sup>7</sup>. While the Mayibuye Centre of the University of the Western Cape (UWC) houses an additional archive containing audio recordings of Radio Freedom, for this stage of the research, the purpose was to analyse documented correspondence, planning and strategy documents as well as other related documents that pertain to the history of the ANC in relation to Radio Freedom and the use of this radio station for political communication activities. Largely unexplored by researchers aiming to understand the history of media institutions in and about South Africa, the NAHECS archive consists of Radio Freedom scripts, and historical letters to the radio station (mostly authored by South Africans during apartheid). It also includes documents authored by the ANC's DIP staff members on how to make better use of Radio Freedom as part of the ANC's political communication machinery mix. This article, therefore, unearths a layered narrative of the broadcast history and role of radio in apartheid South Africa. For the research study underpinning this article, the following documents were analysed:

- Twelve internal correspondence (letters, strategy documents and reports) documents. These documents were drawn up by ANC staff members working for the DIP (as part of the anti-apartheid propaganda, DIP also used Radio Freedom).
- Seven radio broadcasting scripts (Radio Freedom) documents. The radio scripts were drawn around various themes and issues that were affecting the ANC's constituency in apartheid South Africa (see the thematic section below).
- Five external correspondence (listener engagements with Radio Freedom) documents. On examination of these documents, it was clear that the documents were received from listeners of Radio Freedom.

All of these archived documents were accessed between various periods of visiting the Radio Freedom archive at NAHECS. These visits took place between January 2015 and August 2018. While assessing the Radio Freedom archive, I also formed an opinion that the NAHECS centre needed to be better organised and store these vital historical records about the media history and political communication of South Africa<sup>9</sup>. At the moment, the documents are illogically scattered across a set of boxes. The lack of proper organisation of such important research material hinders and delays the research process because the researcher spends much time trying to make sense of how the archive is organised. It would be ideal to have a chronological flow of dates for the broadcasts scripts, dates of listeners letters received, and dates of strategy documents.

These documents were analysed and grouped according to themes emerging from each category. The researcher sifted through hundreds of documents and meticulously gathered Radio Freedom documents over two years, and then read and analysed them to understand the emerging themes in the radio station's planning, tactics and strategy documents. It was qualitative research with a thematic focus. Braun and Clarke (2006: 5) indicate that "through its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data". Hence, it is often argued that "thematic analysis should be seen as a foundational method for qualitative analysis" (ibid:4). For the research process underpinning this article, the document data were sufficiently analysed, and themes that pertain to 1) community responses to Radio Freedom political communication and 2) politics of managing propaganda, emerged from the data. Therefore, these broader themes constitute the subtheme that is captured by the discussion that appears below.

## COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO RADIO FREEDOM'S POLITICAL COMMUNICATION TASK

Audience reception of the role of Radio Freedom's political communication messages, and its strategies and planning for reaching these audiences, can be understood through the responses of what constituted its listening public. Lekgoathi (2010) argues that Radio Freedom was an instrumental platform in the attainment of information/intelligence about the apartheid state. He has also demonstrated that the listenership of Radio Freedom had an impact on the struggle against apartheid. Although it was illegal to listen to Radio Freedom in South Africa - this act carried a jail sentence if caught - the DIP wing of the ANC always tried to get an idea of how its broadcast content was received in South Africa. Data emerging from the archived content illustrates that the Regional Political Committee of the ANC "feels strongly that the availability of up-to-date information on our struggle at home is essential for the development of political consciousness and maintenance of revolutionary morale" (Manicom, L, 19 September 1980, Lusaka). Furthermore, the archived data suggests that there was concern about the availability of political communication content from the ANC and its distribution in South Africa.

The problem Comrades is that the Department of Information and Publicity, especially its internal organs, the radios, *Mayibuye* and leaflets are out of touch with the internal situation they have the task to mobilise and prepare for our cause, e.g. the combat operations (Sizakele Sigxashe, 14 April, Lusaka).

Therefore, through its assessment of the listenership trends in apartheid South Africa, the ANC had noted that its machinery was weak and was not serving its intended strategy when it comes to its intended aims of radical political communication strategy. Lekgoathi (2010:143), in a study of the Radio Freedom listenership trends in South Africa, indicates that "by the early 1980s, according to the information in Sechaba (1981), the ANC's monthly journal, listeners in

South Africa could access Radio Freedom via at least four state radio services on the continent, namely Radio Madagascar, Radio Lusaka, Radio Luanda and Radio Tanzania". However "...tuning into Radio Freedom was considered subversive and thus occurred within the realm of illegality in South Africa" (ibid:145).

Archived data on the response to the political communication machinery of Radio Freedom illustrates that the station was continuously supplied with information of developments in apartheid South Africa. A close analysis of the archived material (scripts) reveals that the broadcasts of Radio Freedom were continuously up-to-date on the then-current affairs of South Africa. For instance, the scripts, which illustrate the broadcasting of Radio Freedom programming, show that constant reference was being made to the current events in the then apartheid South Africa. Among others, these broadcast included the following current affairs issues: 1) a Women's Day programme on 6 March 1980 that alluded to the Crossroads struggle and how the apartheid regime of South Africa was oppressing women in particular; 2) a 17 April 1978 broadcast on unemployment in South Africa that spoke to the then proposed Bantu Laws Amendment Bill that would re-settle "idle" and "lazy" black workers to the Bantustans; 3) the then relations between apartheid Pretoria and Tel Aviv; and 4) the unjustified sentencing of Solomon Mahlangu.

Further analysis of how the ANC broadcast these current events through its political communication platform, Radio Freedom, suggests that there was constant contact and feedback between the then exiled ANC and its South African based constituency. For instance, some archived correspondence (data) to the ANC's Radio Freedom gave the following information:

We are sitting quietly watching what is happening and if any developments, I will keep you posted. I am listening to our freedom radio whenever possible and I hope you receive my letters and broadcast them (Mkhalabye, nd)

<sup>7</sup> Further information on the centre, which houses these liberation archives, can be accessed on the following link: <http://www.uh.ac.za/uh101/liberation-archives/>

<sup>8</sup> In my interactions with archivist assistant at the University of Fort Hare (NAHECS) it was indicated that the Radio Freedom archive has since its handover by the ANC been explored by only two researchers: 1) a former broadcaster of Radio Freedom who had explored it with an interest of writing an autobiography as well as 2) as a Canadian researcher who was doing research on the history of the ANC.

<sup>9</sup> Looking at the size of the archive dealing with only Radio Freedom, I have no doubt that some of the historical data about this radio station may have been lost. For instance, the radio station operated from a number of countries during its exile days and this may have meant that the archive, which had been scattered across many African countries, might have been lost at the time of relocating the ANC materials after the unbanning of apartheid in South Africa.



This and some other archived documents reveal exchanges between the exiled ANC and its South African-based constituency. Most of the analysed exchanges were crafted and sent anonymously, indicating how people were careful not to reveal their identities in discussions about Radio Freedom.

Although the data illustrates that some correspondence was signed with names and surnames, the researcher of this article has concluded that there is no manner of verifying if these were the actual names or actual pseudonyms of the letter senders. However, what is most relevant here is that there was a constant exchange between the ANC and its South African-based constituency. This exchange was not unidirectional; the archival data illustrates that there was in fact “interactive” communication between the ANC and its South African-based constituency. Additional data, which illustrates the correspondence between the ANC and its country-based constituency, suggests that there were friendly and familiar relations with the broadcasters of Radio Freedom, for instance, one exchange reads as follows:

How are you, my friend in the struggle? Did you receive my previous letter? This time I want to tell you what has happened to my cousin Sibongile Mthembu. She was sent to jail by the Boers for two years this year in Kempton Park (Nathaniel Matiwane, 29 November 1979).

The correspondence from this listener to Radio Freedom also illustrates how news and current developments in South Africa were made available to the then exiled ANC. While the apartheid government aimed to curtail any communication between exiles and “in-xiles”, the role played by Radio Freedom suggests that this clampdown on communication was not successful. The following additionally archived data material illustrates other exchanges from South Africa to the Radio Freedom platform:

I am a Tswana 24 years of age. I was born at a place called MUNSIEVILLE LOCATION, KRUGERSDORP – Republic of South Africa and as a staunch listener of your radio programs which come strong and clearly through my radio receiver. I wish to submit herewith for your information some local news (KF Mogotsi, nd)

Thus, Radio Freedom had a somewhat strong frequency which made it available to the ANC constituency in South Africa. The availability of Radio Freedom in South Africa also meant that people in the country could rely on the radio station to report on the atrocities that were being committed by the apartheid state:

Greetings to you all brothers and sisters there in Tananarive. (The Spear of the Nation). First of all, comrade I want to tell you what is happening in Natal farms. By what the fascist farmers are doing on our people (From your brother of South Africa, 10-11-79)

This last correspondence, which was sent to the ANC on 10 November 1979, also continues the theme of updating the ANC about developments in South Africa. It also illustrates the two-way communication between Radio Freedom and its South African-based listenership during the apartheid era.

## RADIO FREEDOM AND ITS POLITICAL PRIORITIES

How the ANC was preoccupied with its image and the role a broadcasting platform played in this preoccupation can be discerned from the data that constitutes the archived scripts of Radio Freedom. Although the scripts have been selected and analysed using a qualitative research process, the readings of these clandestine radio scripts illustrate that the ANC aimed to respond to both the South African public under apartheid and the “international community” on the following key concerns: 1) the unity of the anti-apartheid movement; 2) police brutality in South Africa; 3) the murder/sentencing of political prisoners by the apartheid government; 4) the conduct of White soldiers of the South African Defence Force (SADF); and 5) an appeal against the solidarity that the apartheid regime of South Africa aimed to make with international partners.

For instance, in a radio script dated 3 March 1978, the ANC—through its international political communication platform, Radio Freedom – appealed for unity in the struggle against the apartheid regime.

A broadcast script that is marked Vol.1 No.1, notes the following:

Our feature here again, will deal with the stand of the Coloured and Indian sections of the population, with particular emphasis on the former, with regard to the new constitutional proposal (script author: Siphon Moloto, 3 March 1978).

In this document, which was drafted and prepared for broadcasting in no less than five countries, including South Africa, Radio Freedom is used to appeal to the moral conscience of the Coloured Federal Party and the Indian people of South Africa. In this broadcast script, the broadcast platform exposes the divide-and-rule tactics that were being planned and executed by the Nationalist government of apartheid South Africa in its quest to weaken the anti-apartheid movement. For instance, in that script, the author notes that “as Mr Mayet stated as early as last year, the Indian people reject the idea of ‘power-sharing’, as long as it excludes the African majority” (Siphon Moloto, 3 March 1978). Thus, this broadcast script reveals that the Nationalist government was in the process of creating a “power-sharing” deal with the Indian and Coloured populations of the country. Additional broadcasting scripts of Radio Freedom reveal that the broadcast institution was also used to attack the police and army machinery of the apartheid state of South Africa. In a script dated 4 March 1978, some commentary notes that “the biggest menace today to the security, property and wellbeing of all South Africans (black and white) is the police”.

The broadcast material further notes that:

These thugs have such tremendous powers that they think they are actually above the law and are not subject to punishment for crimes committed against the people. This was clearly shown in Vorster’s words when the police were shooting school-children during the June uprisings (Don Ngubeni, 4 March 1978).

In this document, various transgressions that the police have inflicted on the black and oppressed population of the country are highlighted. And thus, in response to these transgressions, the broadcast institution uses the words “thugs”, “hungry wolves”, “devour” and “bloodthirsty” to describe the apartheid regime of South Africa and its agents.

The trend of attacking and sometimes appealing to the conscience of apartheid South Africa had been a continued tactic in the propaganda strategy of Radio Freedom. In another script publication, the ANC’s propaganda machinery notes that “the Pretoria Fascist regime stands condemned for the innumerable crimes it has committed [and] continues to commit against humanity” (Siphon Moloto, 4 March 1978). The commentary on Radio Freedom, therefore, continues to illustrate the strategy that the DIP had undertaken in the process of delegitimising the apartheid government of South Africa.

## CONCLUSION

In post-apartheid South Africa, there is a continuous tension between the media and the governing ANC. This tension has been demonstrated by various exchanges and developments that have taken place between the ANC and the South African media industry (Berger, 2010). However, and despite these tensions, the research underpinning this article illustrates that the ANC relied on the media to achieve its objectives of political communication during apartheid, South Africa. The tension between the media industry and the ANC thus seems to be at odds with how the ANC has traditionally understood the role of the media in advancing democratic principles. In the case of this research, the data illustrates how radio was instrumental to this particular cause and how the ANC used the media to advance its political objectives. Carpini (1995:21) indicates that “the history of radio is inextricably suffused with politics”.

Furthermore, Davis (2011:224) argues that “simply put, radio emerged as both the point and counterpoint of the construction of apartheid and anti-apartheid struggle”. This means that the ANC used a broadcasting institution such as Radio Freedom to challenge apartheid policies. The archived data on Radio Freedom suggests that the ANC meticulously planned and strategised its virtual presence in South Africa to counter various forms of propaganda that were created by the apartheid government of the country. Thus at the level of virtual presence, Radio Freedom simply illustrates that the ANC was within the borders of the country, instead of being exiled.





Therefore, in a way, this presence of the ANC through Radio Freedom suggests that the political party maintained a simulated presence even at a time when the apartheid government of South Africa had banned all political activity (Wieder, 2013; Dlamini, 2014). This conclusion has been discerned by sifting through the research data and understanding how the radio station employed political communication strategies to remain relevant and accessible to its listening constituencies. ☉

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