

## Nat Nakasa Award 2019

Dear Guests and SANEF members...  
List of people to acknowledge

It is my honour to announce the winner of the Nat Nakasa Award for Courageous Journalism this year.

First, let me thank all those who took the trouble to nominate people.

South Africa is blessed with an abundance of courageous journalists: they are among us tonight, but even more of them are not here. They are working in our big newsrooms, in small broadcasting studios, in tiny rural news operations, trying – and succeeding – to tell the truth. Many of us are aware of the dangers they face, we have faced them ourselves, but tonight's winner may have alerted us to one we seldom, if ever, consider.

Your judges – Peter Sullivan, Chrystal Oderson and I – felt there were several nominations for great stories, or excellent reporting. While welcome, these did not meet the criteria for the Nat Nakasa Award.

For this one, we do not look for a good or excellent report. This award celebrates courage. Let me remind you of the criteria:

1. Show integrity and report fearlessly;
2. Display a commitment to serve the people of South Africa;
3. Tenaciously strive to maintain a publication or other medium despite obstacles;
4. Resist censorship; and
5. Show courage in making information available to South Africa's public

Any combination of these is taken into consideration by your judges. We welcome all nominations, encourage you all to think of people to nominate next year, so we can have a wide range, again, of courageous journalists from whom to choose.

Joining the ranks of our 30 previous winners is a reporter whose courage comes not only from investigative reporting, or fearlessness in talking truth to power, or courage in confronting the most powerful people in the country.

Her courage was also displayed in revealing her own anxieties, in writing and talking and sharing her fears about mental health, in warning us all to find equilibrium in the demanding and volatile jobs we do. Therapy is needed to heal the trauma we face.

Originally from Durban, she started on Muslim radio and has been a journalist since 2011. She has worked for publications such as The Sunday Times, Daily Maverick, Eye Witness News, the Mail & Guardian. Her focus is politics, and frankly living in South Africa in these times politics is probably the most exciting beat for a journalist, but potentially very dangerous indeed. We salute her courage and congratulate her on this award.

Her nominator, Muhammad Abdool, wrote:

***“When Nat Nakasa passed on, he was 28 years old and by then already had a dynamic and impact-full career in journalism. Which is why it is only fitting that this award this year is given to a young journalist, who at 25 years old has proven to be a fearless journalist who is committed to her craft...”***

***“As a young powerhouse, she has been at the forefront of political reporting in South Africa. Having started as a 17 or 18 year old, she has accomplished much more than any of her seniors. In her reporting on state capture, governance and party politics she has shown utmost integrity and has reported fearlessly. Her body of work has made her one of the country’s lead investigative and political reporters.”***

***“Her reporting on the so-called ‘Maharani meeting’ proved that she is not only a skilled reporter, but does not shake in her boots when threatened. She has faced a litany of attacks, including death threats, from supporters of former president Jacob Zuma. She has fought back against legal threats and blatant intimidation. Her reporting sets the agenda week after week and I find that she focuses on stories that many ignore.***

***“(She) recently shared her battle with anxiety and has begun an open conversation about the need for journalists to get therapy. She has advocated for open conversations about mental health in newsrooms, which has prompted many other journalists to come forward with their stories.***

***“As a young female journalist, (she) has proven over and over again that she (stands against) censorship, shows courage and works tirelessly to uncover the truth.”***

Our winner is Quaanitah Hunter.

ENDS