

Daniel Kalinaki Tribute



A man who has had a decided say on media landscape of the modern times

Daniel and I really swung headlines through 2008-2013, to the extent that we usually had the Editorial Committee of the Board on the edge!

BY ALEX B. ATUHAIRE



Daniel K. Kalinaki (his byline) and I, arrived in the newsroom almost at the same time. I recall this based on an e-mail he sent me three weeks ago, informing me he had decided to switch off the lights! From that email, he arrived in the newsroom on April 1, 1998; and my first published article, two weeks after I had signed into the *Daily Monitor* newsroom was on April 23, 1998! Therefore, Daniel and I are contemporaries, who later struck a professional and personal friendship. I am thankful and exceedingly humbled for all his friendship and magnanimity over the years.

Throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s, Daniel and I operated in the different sections of the newsroom, mostly as correspondents/reporters - and basically covered all newsroom beats - be it sports, business, features, society, entertainment, general news, politics, the investigative projects - name it!

Daniel even handled the foreign news desk, transitioned into radio,

did TV and later became an editor at a very young age as I continued my roles as a foot soldier.

He later, around 2003, bolted out of the newsroom for further studies on a Chevening scholarship in the UK, and when he returned, he joined *The East African* newspaper, a sister publication as Kampala bureau chief. Around the same time, I also got promoted to editor roles - first as Mr Andrew Mwenda's replacement as investigations editor. The ever fiery Mwenda left the Nation Media Group around 2005 after a fall out with the directors. I was later named the *Daily Monitor's* special projects editor, until around the turn of 2007 when Daniel returned to the newspaper as its managing editor.

Around the same time, then news editor Robert Crispin Mukasa was leaving for further studies - and Daniel didn't hesitate to recommend me as a replacement.

As reporters earlier in our journalism life, we had swung headlines but once we teamed up here as managing editor and news editor, we really swung them!

"We have to run the country!" -

was our popular phrase.

With the support of the re-assuring and dependable Aidah Nalubege, our editorial administrator and collaborating editors like Margaret Vuchiri, Fred Masiga, Carol Beyanga, Don Wanyama *et al*, we really run the country!

One of our early headline stories was the reporting on the National Social Security Fund (NSSF), sparked by the story of some land transaction between the Fund and a 'Super Minister' that led to scrutiny of other projects that unearthed more than meets the eye. At the height of unearthing several questionable deals, including an IT project, a senior media personality turned spy (now deceased) came to meet Daniel to plead that we should cease our reporting on NSSF. Daniel invited me to the meeting; he was patiently listening to the 'big man' belabour his ideas; "you're hurting the good work being done at the Fund", he pleaded.

We bluntly dismissed him.

We really swung headlines through 2008-2013, to the extent that we usually had the Editorial Committee of the Board on the edge! The committee's evaluations of our newsroom approach reportedly indicated that while they appreciated our agenda setting reporting, they were always worried we were too young; "these boys may



Daniel Kalinaki, alias DK. PHOTO/TIMOTHY KALYEGIRA

burn the newspaper!" - we never did. Even after running what President Museveni termed very "wrong headings" on several occasions, specifically during hearings of an oil tax dispute between Tullow Oil and Heritage Oil in a London Court in March 2013, and another during the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee investigation of the Shs142 billion award to businessman Hassan Basajjalalaba in February 2012; we didn't get the newspaper burnt, despite very aggressive phone calls from the President! In another story, we needed to

confirm the veracity of the information contained in a document that named a board member. Daniel proposed that I call the board member and conduct the verification. Alas, I did! Anyway, we shall be collaborating with Daniel on a book in the near future and details of these and more stories we reported will be explored.

And yes, we recruited or promoted some of the best talents in the pool too! I will make mention of some of those who have defected - Paul Amoru, Emmanuel Gyeza-ho, Sheila Naturinda, Sheila Nduhukire, Isaac Imaka, Nelson Wesaonga, Flavia Lanyero, Emmanuel Ainebyoona, Didas Kisembo, Rachel Mabala - why did you guys defect?

Kudos to those who have kept with the pace, led by Frederic Musisi, guided by our collaborators led by Tabu Butagira *et al*.

Anyway, Daniel has been as good as they come - and has had a DECIDED SAY on the Ugandan media landscape of the modern/digital era.

I probably could have been a half decent of the quality he was - exceedingly excellent in reporting, writing and editing; and led newsrooms, people and projects with impact, yet our combo as managing editor and news editor brought a rare professional and personal friendship for which I am grateful.

I don't want to accept that he has retired from the newsroom.

I told him long ago, that "revolutionaries don't retire".

The writer is a former news editor at *Daily Monitor*