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Writing between the fine lines of democracy:

The role of the media in entrenching democracy in South Africa

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A DISSERTATION PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN THE POLITICAL STUDIES DEPARTMENT, FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG.

Declaration:

I, Candice Bailey, hereby declare that this research is my original work and that to the best of my knowledge and belief, it has neither previously been submitted to any other university for a degree or any other award. Where someone else's work has been used, due acknowledgement has been given and reference made accordingly.

Signature: _____

Date: August24, 2016

Abstract:

Pending legislation in South Africa in the form of the Protection of State Information Bill presents an unprecedented threat to freedom of the press in post-apartheid South Africa.

Like most countries globally, there have been tensions between the ruling party, which represents the state and the media, who argue that freedom of the press is critical to democracy. Both are institutions that consider their presence essential elements in a democratic regime. There is a fine line between censorship and self-regulation. But equally important is the need to balance rights to privacy with information that is in the public interest.

In a country seen to have one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, enshrining freedom of the press, there are, however, still many questions around the media and where they ideally fit into society. Should they be the watchdog? Should they be a mouthpiece? And 22 years into democracy, how free are they to choose which role they prefer?

With the freedom of expression war between the media and the ruling party continuing to play out in South Africa, the challenge lies in understanding what role the media has in efforts to entrench democracy.