

# **APDUSA VIEWS**

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**HOW CAN THOSE WITH TAINTED**

**MORALITY REGENERATE A**

**NATION'S MORALITY?**

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**FLOWING FROM THE MORAL REGENERATION CONFERENCE  
HELD ON 18-APRIL 2002.**

**1. Dr Saths Cooper – Deserter and Moralizer:**

On the morning of the 19<sup>th</sup> April 2002 the theme of the main part of the TIM MODISE RADIO SHOW was “Moral Regeneration”. His guest was a certain Dr Saths Cooper, a psychologist.

For the benefit of those who don't know, Saths Cooper was one of the founding members of the Black Consciousness Movement of South Africa. He was a contemporary of Steve Biko with whom he worked very closely. Saths Cooper and 8 others, including Patrick (Terror) Lekota and Strini Moodley, called the SASO 9 were sentenced to imprisonment for, inter alia, organising the “Viva Freelimmo” rally. Saths Cooper was sentenced to 6 years imprisonment which he served on Robben Island.

On his return from prison, Saths Cooper continued with his political activities. During the 1980s, he was elected the President of AZAPO.

The period of the eighties was marked by a high degree of political consciousness and militancy. This was matched by savage repression by the State. It was during this very crucial time that Saths Cooper decided to put his political activity on hold and chose to leave the country to do a doctorate in psychology in the United States.

His decision was met with strong condemnation. Here you have the leader of an organisation abandoning his organisation during the height of struggle. He left his organisation without the blessing of his comrades. That is putting it mildly.

On his return to the country, he did not resume his presidency, nor his membership of Azapo.

For a while Saths Cooper flirted around with a Dr Oscar Dhlomo, a former Secretary-General of the Inkatha Freedom Party in a two - man body called The Institute of Multi-Party Democracy. They held out as experts in the field of democracy and offered services as consultants. This little scheme fell apart because of a dispute over money.

Here you have a person who in the recent past deserted his organisation and the struggle at a very critical time, now preaching to the nation about moral regeneration! It encapsulates the dilemma facing this nation, namely:

## **HOW CAN YOU HAVE PERSONS WITH QUESTIONABLE OR REPREHENSIBLE MORALITY PREACHING TO THE NATION ABOUT THE REGENERATION OF MORALITY?**

### **2. The Churches:**

In the stampede to morally regenerate this nation, the Church is in the forefront. The Church believes that it is pre-eminently suited to tend to the moral well being of the people. The Church being the shepherd and the people being the flock (presumably of sheep). There is always an air of arrogance about the Church despite the vows of humility. It adopts an holier than thou attitude and believes and lets the flock believe that it has the ear of God! That is why people get a priest to pray for them in times of crisis.

In real life the Church is not always the shepherd. Often it acts as the instrument of the ruling class. During the period of colonialism, the Church was in the forefront in the conquest of the people of the Third World.<sup>1</sup>

In South Africa, the Church was part and parcel of the ruling class right up to the mid fifties. More of this on another occasion.

Let us look at the conduct of the two main Church groups – the Roman Catholic Church and the South African Council of Churches (SACC), an umbrella body consisting of the Anglican, Methodist and other non-Catholic churches.

#### **THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH:**

This Church is in the middle of two horrible scandals. The first is that of the sexual abuse of young boys at the hands of predator priests. The second is the cover-up and suppression of the facts of the first type of scandal. Cardinal Napier, the head of the local Catholic Church, has, very unfairly (and in our view, very dishonestly) blamed the victims or the latters' family for the suppression of the facts.

We believe that it is more proper for the Catholic Church to regenerate itself morally before it seeks to tell the nation what is wrong and what is right.

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<sup>1</sup> The reader is referred to **The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest by Nosipho Majeke**, published by APDUSA.

## **THE SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES:**

These churches, together with the Catholic Church have been very active in the struggle against apartheid, especially from about the mid fifties. The opposition to the apartheid regime coincided with the growing impatience and criticism by imperialism ( U.S., Britain, France, Canada, Japan, Italy etc) of the apartheid regime. The coincidence was not accidental. The Churches represent the interests and views of imperialism.

With the banning of individuals and organisations and the fascistic repression of anti-apartheid activity, the liberatory movement became non-existent for all practical purposes. There was a vacuum in leadership. The Churches moved in to fill that vacuum.

In their activity of opposition, the leadership of the churches enjoyed a large degree of immunity. The leadership of the churches took good care to don on the garb of the cleric whenever they took to the streets or funerals which assumed the role of mass rallies. The garments of the clergy were used to ward off assaults and brutal treatment at the hands of the police. The Nationalists, who were in the main Afrikaners, were a deeply religious group.<sup>2</sup> Their respect for religion assumed superstitious proportions and they would not lightly lay hands on the people of the cloth.

It was in these circumstances that the SACC came to play a conspicuous role in the anti-apartheid struggle. Notwithstanding numerous assurances by Archbishop Tutu that on the return/release of the political leadership, he would relinquish the role thrust upon him, he found it difficult to let loose of the pleasure of the limelight. Hence he and his successor and colleagues continued to play a public political role.

It was in its status of a leading political role player, that the SACC was called upon to pronounce on the fairness and freeness of the presidential elections held in Zimbabwe earlier this year. The SACC then pronounced the elections to be free and fair.

The pronouncement of fairness and freeness flew in the face of overwhelming and incontrovertible evidence of widespread State sponsored violence in Zimbabwe ever since Mr. Mugabe lost the referendum in 2000. The same quality of evidence is available of a bag of dirty tricks in broad

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<sup>2</sup> Deeply religious in a twisted way. They respected the outward trappings of religion but not its essence. Hence while believing themselves to be a God – fearing people, they set up perhaps the most inhumane system of oppression in history using religion to justify the oppression.

daylight pointing unmistakably to rigging of the elections. And this was condemned by all decent and right-minded persons.

Yet the SACC chose to issue a certificate of fairness and freeness of the Zimbabwean Presidential elections.

Is the SACC, therefore, saying that what took place in Zimbabwe is democracy in action and that all the dirty tricks played by Zanu-PF is consonant with democracy?

Is the SACC saying that all the thuggery, all the killings, the blatant abuse of the President's office to give legal trappings to unjust laws passed to unfair advantage to Zanu-PF, the threat to the judiciary, the shameless refusal by the Police on instructions from Zanu-PF, to show respect for the Orders of Court and to enforce them, the drumming out of judges who were not prepared to dance to the tune of Zanu-PF, the packing of the judiciary with judges who are prepared to be compliant with the wishes of Zanu – PF, etc., etc., can be easily accommodated in the SACC's definition of democracy?

Nobody with a modicum of sense believes for a moment that the SACC came to that conclusion about the elections through ignorance, naivete or incorrect information. The inescapable conclusion is that the SACC knowingly and deliberately for opportunistic and unprincipled motives chose to proclaim a LIE about the elections!

Is it the same SACC which now has announced its intention to regenerate morality in South Africa?

### **3. The Government of South Africa:**

Take the case of the Vice President of our country – Mr. Jacob Zuma. He, on the one hand participates in the anti-Aids campaign on the radio, when he urges his listeners to “love your children enough to talk to them about sex.” Yet at the Moral Regeneration Conference held in April this year, Mr. Zuma stated, inter alia, :

“We could all discuss how to influence broadcasters to balance their approach to programming.

They could, for example, be sensitive about flighting soap operas and explicit sex whose content is not conducive to good conduct.”

(The Natal Witness 19/4/02)

No evidence is tendered to substantiate the preposterous claim that explicit sex scenes are not conducive to good conduct.

And what kind of sex talk does one have with children in the campaign against Aids? There is no alternative to explicit sex talk. The days about sex talks being confined to “birds and bees” are over. This is no time for skirting around the subject. There has to be open talk; there have to be models of sex organs, there has to be the display of condoms and how to fit them properly. The reader will be mindful of the fact that safe sex is one part, though an important one, of the whole process of educating the young in the fight against Aids.

In any event, how does watching explicit sex scenes affect the moral values of children? The sexual act is very much a part of the lives of children. They witness it on a very regular basis. They see it in the lives of domestic animals - fowls, dogs etc. Those from the country will have witnessed “explicit sex” in a greater variety of animals. Children would have seen it in their homes and neighbourhood with human participants. They would have seen “explicit sex” in the very excellent National Geographic series on the behavior of the higher mammals.

We repeat the question: How does watching “explicit sex” affect the moral values of society? Does it make them into thieves, fraudsters, robbers and killers? Does watching “explicit sex” make a child yearn for a 4x4 Mercedes, or a diamond tiara?

What then does affect the moral well being of young people? One of the most important factors shaping the character of young people is the conduct and behaviour of their elders, especially their role models. Youthful characters and system of values are often warped and corrupted by watching their leaders living a life of obscene affluence and luxury; by watching their leaders, like Mr. Zuma, embracing and congratulating Mr. Mugabe on his blood stained and crooked victory to presidency. By watching government employees like Albert Mokoena being given the boot as Director General of the Department of Home Affairs for abusing his position and then being snapped up by the South African Football Association and given the top position of Chief Operating Officer.

We not denying the negative impact of the soap operas. Indeed, these operas in many respects reflect what is going on among the leaders and opinion makers.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Who will forget the shameful scenario of the TRC Commissioners, including Archbishop Tutu, scrambling for luxury cars for their daily use whilst one of the commissioners, Mary Burton, stood alone in opting for a perfectly reliable small car but at a much reduced cost to the taxpayer.

## **Is There Hope?**

We can forget about moral regeneration emanating from Government, from the Churches and from the organised new and old elite. These sectors are, with small exceptions, corrupt to the core. It is like using infected matter to cure an infected wound.

Yet there are many decent and honest people in the country. There are many Mary Burtons and Andrew Feinsteins<sup>4</sup> in this country. You will find them in all walks of life – intellectuals, petty bourgeoisie, workers, peasants, students, unemployed. These are people of sterling qualities and they constitute the majority in the country. But they exist and operate in isolation or in small ineffectual groups. They rotate in their own orbits. At times, committed individuals break out of those orbits and make a strong impact on society. An example of this is the Treatment Action Committee.<sup>5</sup> This organisation is led by a leadership of clear-minded, committed and determined individuals. Their courage is inspiring. They have taken on the State with its mighty resources and have resolutely faced the calumny hurled at them by the Government.

What is required is that persons of integrity, persons who believe in principles, people who are appalled at the filth and degradation which is threatening to engulf society, persons who believe in plain decency, humanity and compassion – all these people need to reach out to one another, to search out each other and to band together as like-minded people. As an organisation, they will be able to draw people on a national scale. They will then be able to plan and act nationally. They will make a far greater impact on society as a whole. Their presence in the political arena in itself will begin to act as a deterrent to some degree. The culture of immunity and impunity will begin to face attack from a determined and principled organisation. Corruption and crime can only flourish when the sanctions against them are either ineffective or non-existent.

29/5/2002

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<sup>4</sup> Andrew Feinstein faced the wrath of the ANC when he stood firm against the Arms Deal scandal in the parliamentary oversight committee, SCOPA.

<sup>5</sup> The Treatment Action Committee or TAC is the leading proactive anti-Aids organisation in South Africa.

