

CONCLUSION: MORAL REGENERATION FOR CRIME PREVENTION

It was shown earlier in this monograph that the campaign for moral regeneration was strongly linked, at its inception, to a concern about crime in South Africa. Even mid-way through the development of the campaign, the official report on the 2000 government-led workshops on moral regeneration made a direct link between the moral regeneration initiative and crime prevention:

We cannot expect the police to be social workers, parents and everything. Their task is to help apprehend lawbreakers (that is, to act upon immoral behaviour) whereas ours is to ensure that there are less, or no, lawbreakers (that is, helping people to make ethical decisions from the start).⁷⁴

Perhaps one of the central problems in maintaining a link between the moral regeneration and crime prevention initiatives is well-illustrated by the above quote: in fact, not all immoral behaviour is actually illegal or criminalised; and the job of the police is to apprehend those who engage in illegal behaviour, not those who engage in immoral behaviour. The relationship between law and morality is complex and debatable, hence it is not possible to simply conflate illegal behaviour with immoral behaviour. Indeed, a definition of what kinds of moral issues to focus on, and the drawing of any clear lines about what constitutes 'immoral behaviour' has not even been possible within the moral regeneration initiative. For instance, the movement committed itself to the broad promotion of 'high moral values'⁷⁵ but has not taken a clear position on whether interpersonal violence is unacceptable (perhaps because corporal punishment of children is still widely accepted in South Africa?).

Unless the moral regeneration initiative is able to agree on and hold some absolute positions, it is likely to remain beset by the problems of misunderstanding and suspicion that have dogged it to date. Its attempts to be inclusive, and to allow all sectors of its membership and affiliates to hold their own views, mitigates against this need for clarity; and so, in the very nature of

the 'broad alliance' it has sought to create, the MRM has perhaps been its own worst enemy. This monograph has sought to demonstrate, in respect of moral regeneration, the problem that Xolela Mancgu describes in respect of black economic empowerment:

A few years down the line we shall be lamenting that the concept is not working, forgetting that we did not define it in the first place.⁷⁶

A second dimension of the relationship between moral regeneration and crime prevention is the campaign's ambiguous relationship to existing crime prevention initiatives. It failed to ally itself with the 1996 National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS) (although this may have been wise, given that the NCPS subsequently fell into disfavour⁷⁷), but has engaged occasionally with other government anti-crime campaigns. In particular, the moral regeneration initiative has been associated with the campaign against gender violence and child abuse. This is evidenced, for example, by its participation in the annual Sixteen Days of Activism Against Women and Child Abuse, its participation in a Men's Dialogue project with the Commission on Gender Equality, and its endorsement of the HSRC's work around gender and fatherhood.⁷⁸ The MRM often cites the work of the Department of Sports and Recreation—notably its (almost-defunct) Young Champions project—as part of the moral regeneration under way in the country, but seldom refers to the Values in Education programme within schools. The selection of which government crime prevention campaigns the MRM works with may be a product simply of lack of capacity, or of some 'matching' of themes and issues with those prioritised by the MRM—issues of gender roles and families tend to be seen as critical for the production of morals.

The moral regeneration initiative has also failed to engage with other NGOs doing crime prevention work that could be relevant to its efforts. For instance, many efforts at early childhood development, youth development or diversion, parenting, and violence prevention may, in fact, be contributing to moral regeneration. But the campaign seems to have limited its engagement with these types of crime prevention work to a few of the NGOs dealing with family violence, or with parastatal organisations (such as the HSRC), or initiatives that are close to government, such as Business Against Crime and the Freedom Park Trust. The moral content of 'Restorative Justice' initiatives would offer significant partnership potential for the MRM, which has not been taken up. The MRM has also failed to profile or comment on, or significantly engage with, different foci on ethics in the business sector (many of which are

also non-state, or civil society, initiatives), or the implications of the King Commission on corporate governance and anti-corruption efforts in the private sector. Recent debates on empowerment and social values have also provided openings for engagements around morality in respect of wealth and inequality.

The campaign's failures to engage with non-state initiatives are significant lost opportunities. They may, once again, be a result of the organisation's limited capacity and consequent failures to build effective networks,⁷⁹ or may be related to the campaign's own uncertainty and ambiguity about the role of NGOs and civil society. The more mainstream crime prevention NGOs may also be wary of engagement with the moral regeneration initiative, because of perceptions that it is either (or both) a religious/spiritual initiative, or closely allied to government.

The development of the moral regeneration initiative in South Africa has seen the concept defined both in terms of crime prevention and nation building. In some incarnations, moral regeneration has had a distinctly spiritual and religious tone, in others, a strong flavour of African nationalist ideology. Remarkably, and probably only because of the South African tolerance for diversity, it has survived its own confusion and embraced a range of differing interest groups—conservative religious groups, some elements of the business community, political parties, government and intellectuals.

It seems that much of the survival of the moral regeneration campaign is due to support from the ruling African National Congress, (which is often not explicit) and from some actors within government. This is hardly surprising, given that the larger political project of the ANC is a nation-building project that would require also the building of a new social morality. Apartheid surely did not bequeath an attractive or hopeful moral legacy—of the need for moral regeneration there is no doubt. What remains to be seen is whether a largely ideological campaign of this type will deliver any meaningful results in terms of a more socially responsible and humane morality for South Africa.