

## **Eastern Cape – PEC**

The Board of the Moral Regeneration Movement brings you warm greetings. It does so as a way of acknowledging the contribution that this Province has made in the work of the MRM since 2003. Some of the leaders who laid a solid foundation include Rev. Makhenkesi, Bishop Mbethe and the late Rev. Xundu, to mention but a few. On the government side we salute the Premiers, MECs and Speakers and Councillors whose support has been most valuable. Last but not least, members of civil society who are the pillar of the MRM.

Honourable Premier and compatriots. This elective conference is taking place at a time when our country is facing serious challenges. These include: gender violence, a spate of murders of children, husbands and wives, substance abuse, violent public protests, bloody political infighting, factionalism, the unprecedented destruction of schools, universities, blessers/blessees and Ben 10s, capture of the state and political organisations, implosion of trade union federations, rampant corruption, ostentatious consumerism, NPA in disarray, poverty (gino-coefficient worsening), landlessness, instability in our universities, an underperforming economy, tenderpreneurship, alarming road fatalities. Add to the list the anarchy in Parliament, public scandals and the general sense of lawlessness. Whilst this scenario is alarming, we dare not succumb to national depression. All citizens are the architects of the future.

It is common cause that many people are very concerned about this state of affairs. Time does not allow us to do an in-depth critical analysis of this social phenomenon. We will make brief comments on some of the causes. When his country was facing a volatile situation, William Yeats penned the following:

*Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.*

When the new MRM leadership assumes its duties today, it must understand that it has a huge responsibility by fully appreciating the context in which it will work. The Charter of Positive Values is not about pie-in-the-sky. It is about devising effective strategies to infuse and inculcate the values into the lives of our communities. Their responsibilities involve more than organising prayers at public events, funerals and workshops. When communities grapple with the social pathologies I listed above, MRM cannot provide effective ethical leadership by being neutral or partisan. As we speak, our organisations are deeply polarised. They need leaders of integrity and courage who can become agents of unity and social cohesion; leaders people

can respect and trust. The "Eye of the Needle" has set very stringent ethical standards for those who aspire to lead others.

The key mandate of the MRM is to harness the moral wealth that is inherent in our culture, traditions and spiritual practice. It is a positive approach to moral renewal including the enhancement of ethical conduct. It is through the coordination of similar initiatives that MRM has the potential to become a movement of spiritual transformation or the RDP of the soul, in Madiba's language.

By way of strategy, MRM must diagnose the social reality in order to achieve the ideal. Hence the need to analyse social pathologies where they manifest themselves.

The question is often asked: What is this moral decay?

In the question lies our admission that, as a country, we have generally become morally deficient.

In simple language:

- Moral decay is when we expect to get everything for nothing.
- It is when we turn lies into a way of life.
- It is when we objectify women and children and subject them to horrendous abuse.
- It is when we injure, maim and kill one another.
- It is when we steal and see the wrongness thereof only if we are caught.
- It is when poverty and hunger lose their sense of abnormality. It is when we do not think of others the same way we think of ourselves, and therefore when we do not do unto others as we would have them do unto us.
- It is when the concept of Ubuntu becomes just another word and not, as originally, an inherent element of our national humanity.

In dealing with the question of moral degeneration, we must treat it as a threat. In order to have a sustainable solution, we have to regard it as a spiritual sickness not in a narrow religious sense but in Madiba's spirit of an RDP of the soul. On 05 February 1999 at the opening of Parliament, he said: "the values of human solidarity that once drove our quest for a humane society seem to have been replaced, or are threatened by crass materialism and pursuit of social goals of instant gratification..."

The alarming erosion of morality in South Africa has many causes. To mention but a few:

- The disintegration of traditional family structures, including the acknowledgement and adherence to indigenous culture and traditions;
- Poor quality education in schools and universities;
- Laissez-faire attitude to matters of morality and ethics;

- The abdication of parental responsibilities;
- The poorly managed migration whether from the rural areas to the cities or from foreign countries;
- The misuse of the media, especially TV by screening films that are voyeuristic as well as glorify violence;
- Poverty and unemployment; and
- The distortion of the constitution.

A historical factor which cannot be disregarded in this debate is the role of colonialism, which later morphed into apartheid – a notoriously inhuman system which was characterised by racism, crude capitalism, violence and the systematic dispossession of land from indigenous people from all walks of life.

Our people struggled to destroy the political, economic and moral base of apartheid. Since 1994 we have done well in transforming the political, social and legal infrastructural architecture. Spiritual transformation, however, is proving to be a challenge. We cannot simply blame apartheid for that. With the instruments of governance firmly in our hands, we should be shifting the balance of forces in favour of a more ethically sound society.

Analysts and scholars have identified the ideology of materialism as the main antithesis to the Common Good. It has eroded the ethical principles, which informed the struggle and Ubuntu. That mindset drives people to a pathological pursuit of quick wealth, regardless of how it is acquired.

Philosopher Karl Jaspers warns us that “there exists among men, because they are men, solidarity through which each share responsibility for every injustice and every wrong committed in the world ... if I do not do whatever I can to prevent them, I am an accomplice in them. If I have not risked my life in order to prevent the murder of other men, if I have stood silent, I feel guilty ...”

There are two closely related evils which are of grave concern to everyone except the perpetrators. One is the ideology of materialism which has engulfed our nation. Linked to it is corruption which is fast becoming systemic. These twin evils are historically brought about in the main by the capitalist system. Karl Polanyi a well-known political economist argues that the capitalist market destroys relations of “kinship, neighbourhood, profession and creed. These have been replaced with the insatiable pursuit of wealth by citizens who have become atomistic and individualistic”. This obsession with wealth urges us with hypnotic regularity: get rich! Get rich!

Many of us are becoming victim to that mindset. People are valued by what they have – money, expensive clothes, cellphone, motor vehicles, houses, expensive wife or girlfriend etc. Even notorious drug lords are regarded as important because of their millions and are not shy to display them. Even George Soros has condemned “market fundamentalism” as a grave disaster to modern society.

On corruption Barney Mthombothi, the former editor of the Financial Mail observes as follows: "Widespread corruption by those in positions and the cavalier and disdainful manner in which it seems to be committed is obviously depressing. But even more distressing is the fact that the public doesn't seem to care that much anymore ...". He continues: "South Africa suffers from what can be described as a moral deficit. It is a disease that seems to be afflicting all strata of society – from government to business to the lowliest state functionary ...".

At its 50<sup>th</sup> National Conference in December 1997, the ANC noted that corruption:

- "May be understood to be the abuse of power for illegitimate and illegal gain or profit; whether it be exercised in the private or in the public domain;
- Corruption leads to losses in efficiency and opportunity, and to increased production costs. Hence, it adversely affects development and, as a consequence, results in poverty becoming more prevalent;
- There are alarmingly high levels of corruption in the private sector."

It therefore, resolved that:

1. The elimination of corruption should be placed high on the agenda of the ANC, by ensuring that:
  - Branches and members are educated on the various forms of corruption, the necessity for its eradication, and the difference between corruption and maladministration;
  - A nationwide anti-corruption campaign, including a media campaign, be initiated;
  - Mechanisms be developed to build a link between state intervention on corruption, and our movement's own initiatives and responses to the matter;
  - Prompt disciplinary action be taken against any member, regardless of office, who is guilty of any corrupt practice.
2. The government should ensure that:
  - Legislation and regulations are introduced to deter corruption through punitive measures;
  - Steps are taken to review institutions fighting corruption, and to increase their resources and effectiveness;
  - The necessary capacity for financial management is created.

Programme Director, let me conclude by reminding ourselves that the national cry for ethical leadership cannot be overemphasised. Too many of us fight to grab positions not because we want to serve the people. The priority is access to resources, power and influence. That is why MRM has partnered with SALGA to provide ethical leadership training to the incoming local government councillors. One Hollard's prayer for good leaders. It says:

*"God give us leaders!*

*A time like this demands strong minds, great hearts*

*True faith and ready hands;*

*Leaders who the lust of office does not kill;*

*Leaders whom the spoils of life cannot buy*

*Leaders who possess opinions and the will;*

*Leaders who have honour, leaders who will not lie;*

*Leaders who can stand before a demagogue;*

*And damn his treacherous flatteries without winking!*

*Tall leaders, sun crowned, who live above the fog*

*In public duty and private thinking."*

Thank you for your attention.