

EDITOR'S VIEW

What will it take to end spate of slayings?

IN THE next few days we celebrate Christmas, the day Christians believe Jesus Christ was born more than two millennia ago.

Christ represents the type of individual we should be – men and women of morality and obedience. Hindus view the deity Rama in a similar vein – a person who had a set of values and virtues that we should embrace. For Muslims, Prophet Muhammad is a role model.

However, too many among us have not embraced the values these guides espoused. We see it reflected in the crimes being perpetrated daily in our country. In recent days the lack of respect for human life has once again been highlighted.

Last Wednesday, a family in Hammarsdale, Mpumalanga, were watching television when gunmen opened fire on them. When the shooting stopped five members of the Msomi family and a neighbour were dead.

There is no doubt the attackers wanted Mvumo Msomi, 55, dead. They entered the home and asked his daughter to lift up his head so they could confirm he was in fact dead.

Police are investigating but there is no indication as yet who carried out the attacks or why.

A day later, Colin Pather, who worked in the finance department at eThekweni municipality was gunned down outside his home in Shallcross. The circumstances surrounding his killing and the fact that none of his possessions was taken point to the fact that someone or some people wanted him dead.

On the same day, businessman Vinod Ramdeen was shot several times in Sea Cow Lake while waiting at a red traffic light. None of his valuables was taken.

Ramdeen, who is survived by his wife and three children, owned a granite business from which he also sold fireworks.

His father is adamant that this was no random act of crime but that someone or some people wanted his son dead.

A day later, Rashied Staggie, the former leader of the Hard Livings gang, was shot dead outside his home in Salt River, Cape Town. It was on the same street that in 1996 his twin brother, Rashaad, was shot and burned to death by People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (Pagad).

The Staggie brothers had scant regard for life. Neither did those who killed them.

No amount of policing will stop such killings. What we need is for those who pay for a hit and those who pull the trigger to have a greater appreciation for life. It starts in the home where morals and values should be instilled and, until we get this right, the killings will continue.

The HPCSA needs a strong dose of something

With no cure in sight, children are dying

JUGGERNAUT



KANTHAN PILLAY

OUTSIDE Durban, south-east of Marianhill and north-west of Shallcross, there's a settlement called St Wendolins.

In the 80s, this predominantly Nguni community was threatened with forced removals under the Group Areas Act.

And so it was that I found myself driving up there from Durban on a Saturday afternoon in 1982 to cover a prayer meeting, when I passed a crowd standing in a circle in front of the women's hostel at the racecourse end of what was then called Grey Street.

Crowds in that part of town are not unusual even today, but this lot were gazing intently at the ground. That was extraordinary. I pushed my way through to see a man lying on his side in a pool of blood.

"Has anyone called an ambulance?" I asked as I began to feel his throat. There was a pulse. No one answered.

I turned him onto his back. The wound appeared to be on his chest. I ripped his shirt open and streams of blood began to erupt from several holes. It looked like multiple stab wounds.

"There's a call box in the cafe on Carlisle Street," I said to one likely looking specimen. "Call 10111. Tell them to send an ambulance."

He looked about uncertainly to make sure I was referring to him and then vanished.

Meanwhile, I was trying unsuccessfully to stem the flow of blood with a piece of the man's shirt. At that point, a voice said: "If you pinch the hole and hold it, the blood will clot and slow the flow."

I did so. It seemed to work. I went on to the next hole. And the next... And the ambulance arrived and paramedics took over.

"How did you know what to do?" I asked the person who had given me the advice.

"I'm a doctor," he replied.

He fled for his life soon after when I threatened to f*** him up for not having done anything himself, muttering something about not wanting to get involved.

It was days later during discussion with a legal-minded friend that I became aware of the complications of doctors treating patients



without consent outside their official duties.

Most countries where legal systems are based on English Common Law support "Good Samaritan" laws.

This protects those of us who stop to render first aid, but those laws do not apply to medical professionals or emergency responders such as paramedics.

Those professionals are subject to a stringent framework of rules and procedures at the apex of which is statutory body, the Health Professions Council of South Africa.

But what happens when that body fails to carry out its responsibilities?

In 2012, 3-year-old Ethan Teubens died after a colon operation performed by a paediatric surgeon at Morningside Clinic in Johannesburg. The post-mortem revealed

the surgical site had "loose sutures, a 25mm wound just below the suture line and evidence of septic peritonitis locally and on abdominal organs".

In 2016, 19-month-old Alissa Strydom died after the same surgeon operated on her. The surgeon is reported to have said there were complications, including that he nicked a vein and lost a needle inside her.

In September this year, 12-year-old Monique Moorcroft died after the same surgeon operated to remove a colostomy bag.

Then in October this year, the same surgeon performed a routine laparoscopic surgery on 10-year-old Zayyaan Sayed.

Zayyaan's lung collapsed shortly after the surgery.

He was taken to the intensive care unit

but died not long afterwards.

The Sayeds have since laid criminal charges of culpable homicide against the surgeon and the anaesthetist, and warrants of arrest have been issued.

The laying of criminal charges is an extraordinary thing to have occurred. In a modern regulated medical environment, the established course of action would have been to report the physicians to the statutory body (the Health Professions Council of SA) which would then act swiftly to suspend those professionals, pending thorough enquiries.

It turns out that the HPCSA has had multiple investigations pending against this surgeon, which have been running concurrently. It also turns out that Hawks and Special Investigations Unit are investigating HPCSA staff for fraudulently licensing physicians and accepting bribes.

In 2015, a task team commissioned by then health minister, Aaron Motsoaledi, found the HPCSA's chief executive, chief operating officer and head of legal services unfit for their jobs and recommended that "appropriate disciplinary and incapacity proceedings" against them be instituted along with possible suspensions.

The task team noted the HPCSA legal department did not employ a single medical practitioner or member with a medical background to assist with professional conduct enquiries.

Four years on this year, the SA Medical Association says the HPCSA remains an inefficient and ineffective organisation; with continued lack of proper administration and inability to institute the recommendations made by the task team.

So if you want to understand why at least four children died unnecessarily, look to the top of the food chain.

The Sayeds are determined that no other child should die at the hands of this surgeon. I respect this.

I don't expect though that the criminal charges against the surgeon and anaesthetist will be upheld in court, pending the professional investigation process. I expect the issuing of the warrant of arrest will be found to be unprocedural.

But I would dearly love to know what process would be needed to lay charges against the minister and the HPCSA leadership.

Srikanthan is one of the names of Vishnu. Another name for Vishnu is Jagannath, "the unstoppable force", which gives us the modern word juggernaut. Pillay writes about understanding the unstoppable forces which shape our lives in technology, commerce, science and society.

The Quote

Christmas waves a magic wand over this world, and behold, everything is softer and more beautiful.

NORMAN VINCENT PEAL
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'I continue with Mr Rajbansi's legacy'



SHAMEEN THAKUR-RAJBANSI

EIGHT years on, and the late Mr Amichand Rajbansi remains one of the outstanding political figures of our times.

A devout Hanuman devotee, he made the character of Mahavir his ideal: strength, wisdom and courage.

His response to events in the past eight years would have been relevant – if we want to steer on a corrective course henceforth.

He would have chastised those who found his death the ideal opportunity to grapple for newfound power.

As his wife and colleague, he would have been proud of my perseverance as he always promoted women empowerment and gender equality.

He would have scorned the frequent reshuffling of cabinets and officials.

Mr Rajbansi believed in continuity and institutional experience to make a positive impact. He was passionate about sports and would not have been happy with the Proteas performance.

He was a firm believer in equal opportunities based on merit for teams, and Bafana Bafana would not be spared.

Being a former soccer referee, he believed transformation in sports had a place for all South Africans.

He proved this when he set up the first Sport and Recreation Department in KwaZulu-Natal in 2004, with all KZN teams coming first for all sports codes.

Mr Rajbansi was named the Best Sports MEC in the country by the late minister of sport and recreation, Makhakesi Stofile.

He would have been saddened to see the KZN Sports Department slip into irregular expenditure while having a higher budget but no buzz.

He would have, however, celebrated the Springboks World Cup win with gusto.

The 1860 indentured labourers commemoration was popularised in 2006 when he held the first event at the Chatsworth Stadium.

He motioned the eThekweni Council for a grant to build monuments to recognise the contributions of seine netters, as well



Amichand Rajbansi

as sugar cane, railways and mineworkers to economically enriching this province.

The money was obtained from the premier's department but after Mr Rajbansi's demise, the funds were transferred to the eThekweni Municipality and currently R6 million was used.

But no monuments were built – with R4m now returned to the province.

Mr Rajbansi would never have allowed this abuse as he was from the indentured class and would have ensured this crucial history was not lost, notwithstanding the much-needed provincial revenue generation from cultural tourism.

On commissions running in South Africa, he would have criticised the ANC for not taking the court route and allowing the judiciary to mete out justice.

Mr Rajbansi was pained by the concocted

James Commission of the apartheid government, and always said such commissions already had foregone conclusions and were costly political charades.

In terms of violence and crime, he would have demanded a greater civilian oversight budget from the national department while promoting local community police forums and crime-fighting groups.

Mr Rajbansi was a firm proponent of a few sections of B-BBEE because he believed that fronting would be counterproductive to people and the economy.

Today, he would have argued the same, that high levels of corruption and downgrading to almost junk status are the only outcomes of B-BBEE and should be scrapped.

He founded the Minority Front on the premise that our democratic government must include minorities in everything and

our rights must not be compromised by racial legislation like affirmative action and quotas.

Today, South Africa is in a dangerous space because of these draconian policies and he would have used all platforms to scrap these.

He, therefore, really wanted a Minorities Commission for South Africa.

Knowing the anguish of forcefully being removed from Clairwood and relocating to Chatsworth, Mr Rajbansi believed in land restitution and redistribution.

This apartheid treachery saw especially indentured people moved into ghettos like the Magazine Barracks.

Today, he would welcome the enforcement of Section 25 of the Constitution within the legal framework it is written in.

He would have been upset with the state of education, having been a teacher and giving the community the highest standard of education in the House of Delegates. He was always happy that he built the infrastructure and trained teachers of the highest calibre.

Today's radical young politicians rubbish the Tricameral system but forget to appreciate that the infrastructure outputs are invaluable.

The future seems bleak given that, for example, so many quality educators are now retiring or forced to take early retirement. He would have fought tooth and nail to save these educators.

Mr Rajbansi was a culture king, having started the Milk Carnival in Chatsworth in the 1960s and 1970s, bringing the legendary Mohammed Rafi Saab and other stars to the people.

He always fought for adequate budgets for Indian languages, cultural events and projects. However, since his demise, this budget has been drastically reduced.

All sections of our community are feeling his vacuum because he would have ensured transparency in Indian culture, budgeting as our identity preservation was what he stood for.

As I lead the Minority Front, being its sole representative in the KZN Legislature, I continue his legacy.

But all-in-all, Mr Rajbansi would have mitigated a lot of the downside had he been around, keeping politics colourful and alive with current leaders wary of his interventions.

We would all be in a better place with a richer story to tell.

Thakur-Rajbansi is the leader of the Minority Front and KZN Legislature MPL.