



SHAME: The Bredasdorp Magistrate's Court was packed with spectators when two men, Jonathan Davids, left, 21 and Johannes Kana, 22, appeared in connection with the rape and murder of Anene Booysen.



PICTURE: JEFFREY ABRAHAMSS

Let us fight this evil together

THE RECENT spate of rape cases is cause for concern for many peace-loving people.

We attained our freedom and transition into democracy in a peaceful manner – yet instead of enjoying our freedom as human beings, we as men are terrorising society and forcing women to live in fear.

Is this the freedom we fought for?

Rape is a heinous crime that makes one ponder on a number of questions.

What is the motive behind rape? How does a rapist feel afterwards? Does he think about what he has just done? Does he think about the victim and the effect rape has on the victim? Does he think of the implications that come with committing such a crime?

It will take us a long time to get all these questions answered, but the scars of rape torment the victims much more than the physical pain. The rapist might feel strong and powerful, but the victim will suffer for a long time.

As a society we have allowed young men to become evil beasts that continue to satisfy their lust by violating the rights of women.

There are strange subcultures mushrooming in our society such as the *izikhohane* and the use of *nyaga*, yet all we do as citizens is shrug our shoulders regarding such practices. Enough is enough!

Let's kick these habits out and help children to be children and teach them, from a young age, how to carry themselves and how to respect each other as individuals.

We need to unite against these inhuman deeds and start talking about the issues that affect the social fibre of our society.

We should not only be vocal when a young girl is murdered,

Enacting DNA Bill could stop serial rapists

THE BRUTAL attack and murder of yet another innocent young South African girl brings to mind the evocative words of Chris Asplen, an international DNA expert who, after visiting our country, wrote an editorial in your newspaper in June 2011.

Asplen has helped over 35 countries realise the potential of DNA technology to protect potential victims – mostly women and children – from the horrors of rape. In that article, he highlighted the fact that the most important factor influencing the potential effect of DNA in any criminal justice system is what the law allows you to do with it and that nowhere is that dynamic more tragically clear than in South Africa.

At that time, Asplen bemoaned that the politicians in the South African Parliament had, 10 years since his first visit to our country, still failed to give police the legal authority to potentially save thousands upon thousands of lives with DNA.

It's now 12 years later, and Asplen would be horrified to learn that South Africa has still not, in contrast with more than 50 countries around the world, passed the DNA Bill which would allow for the establishment of a forensic DNA database.

Reading that editorial now, his words are chilling in the wake of the rape, mutilation and murder of Anene Booysen, aged 17.

Asplen said: "As someone who works regularly in other people's countries, I don't call out or criticise foreign officials easily or often.

"But on a scale unequalled anywhere else on Earth, hundreds of thousands of children's lives are sacrificed because of the failure to act by politicians in South Africa.

"The parliamentary portfolio committee responsible for the legislation that would give police the ability to immediately begin taking rapists off the street has avoided acting on the law for years.

"The legislation sits in committee while the worst sexual violence statistics in the world continue to rise. Except they are not really statistics. They

are terrified women and girls starting into the face of horrific violence and evil while they are likely infected with HIV – three more of them just in the time it took you to read this article."

The DNA Project, a non-profit organisation, has been fighting tirelessly for the implementation of this DNA Bill for the past four years. What is worse is that a perfectly good draft DNA Bill, which has been extensively reviewed, debated, translated, made into policy and reviewed again, is waiting in the wings of Parliament to be adopted by the cabinet to be reviewed – again – by the portfolio committee on police before it can be passed.

But without the political will to ensure that this legisla-

tion is promulgated, urgently, this tragic state of affairs will continue in our country.

It is accepted worldwide that there is nothing better at getting repeat rapists off the street than DNA databases. So why are we not doing it here? Because we don't have the laws that will give us the power to fight back.

In the meantime, convicted offenders continue to be released without having their DNA profiles taken and entered into the DNA database, suspects of violent crimes are not routinely profiled because it is not mandatory to do so, and our existing database is hampered by the fact that it cannot be used as a criminal intelligence tool because we do not have the legislation to allow us to

expand the DNA database for this purpose. With our high rate of recidivism in South Africa, we are wasting a valuable opportunity to identify repeat offenders at an early stage and get them off the streets, and sadly, it is costing people their lives.

What compounds this tragedy further is that we have the necessary infrastructure to leverage the power of DNA technology in South Africa.

How many more excuses do we need to hear? How many more graves do we need to dig?

There is nowhere to place the mantle of responsibility other than on the shoulders of our politicians who are preventing this critical bill from being enacted.

WRITE TO US

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■ Pseudonyms are not acceptable
■ Include full address and daytime phone number

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Let's hope they don't have to place a wreath on the grave of their daughter or loved one to move them into action.

Vanessa Lynch
Executive director, The DNA Project – Fighting Crime With Science, Cape Town