



British aren't really known for their physical loveliness but firemen, generally speaking, are gorgeous.

**INSIGHT**

**The city that is a canvas for artists**

**A** VIBRANT stream of giant murals greets people heading in from Bogotá's main airport or walking down the cobblestone streets of colonial downtown.

Stencils of pineapple-shaped grenades and AK-47 rifles arranged in a rainfall formation allude to Colombia's violent politics. Monkeys and butterflies spray-painted in bright colours pay homage to the country's natural beauty, and provide welcome relief amid the Andean capital's grey skies and monochromatic red-brick architecture.

The proliferation of murals grew in part out of tragedy, when police shot and killed graffiti artist Diego Felipe Becerra in 2011 as he painted his trademark Felix the Cat. Bogotá Mayor Gustavo Petro responded by decriminalising graffiti painting and even offered several public buildings as canvases.

Street art has subsequently exploded across the city of eight million. By one count, there are now more than 5 000 large paintings on walls or the sides of buildings, many now well-known to the tourists who sign up for guided graffiti tours on bicycle.

Canadian pop star Justin Bieber even got in on the graffiti action, rushing after a 2013 concert with a police escort's red lights flashing for the chance to scrawl on a wall.

Bogotá's laissez-faire attitude towards graffiti contrasts with that in many other Latin American cities. Buenos Aires in Argentina, last year raised penalties for street art, which it considers to be vandalism. In the Peruvian capital of Lima, the mayor this month had city workers cover up several murals by graffiti artists.

Major cultural institutions in Bogotá are taking notice. The city's Contemporary Art Museum held an exhibition this year, highlighting the work of Bogotá street artists



A man walks his dog next to a mural depicting former president Alvaro Uribe, in Bogotá, Colombia. Bogotá's laissez-faire attitude towards graffiti contrasts with that in many other Latin American cities. PHOTO: AP

who go by aliases such as Joems and the MonsTruacion collective. The city also recently commissioned, at a cost of about \$10 000 (R121 077), an eight-storey high depiction of the late Colombian novelist and Nobel laureate Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

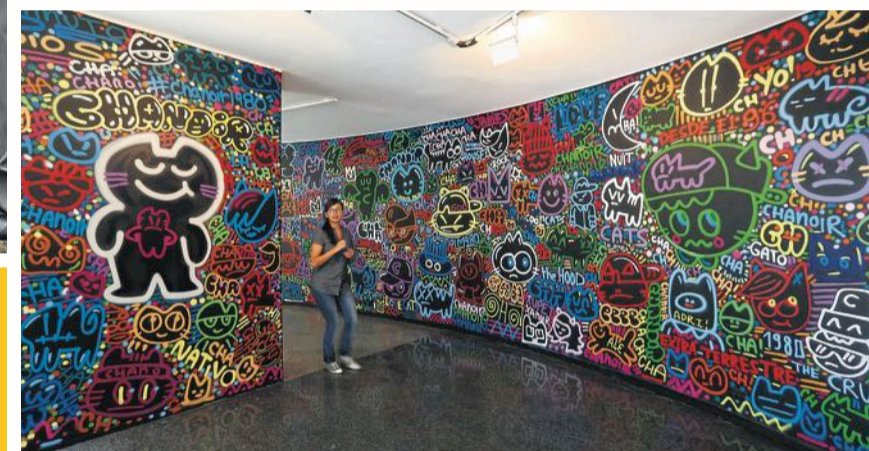
"It's a way to socially change the perspective of the city and give a present to people," said Nicolas Castro, a 21-year-old artist working on the Garcia Marquez mural.

But even amid the freedom, some landmarks, including churches, national monuments and traffic signs, are off limits.

"We hope that the graffiti continues, that it's vibrant," said Claritza Ruiz, Bogotá's secretary of culture.

"But we also hope that young people come to recognise that not everything can have graffiti put on it."

— Sapa-AP.



A woman tours a graffiti exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in Bogotá, Colombia. Colombia's capital is a mecca for graffiti artists, from established artists who paint murals and are promoted on city tours, to clandestine groups that vindicate spray-painting's roots as a form of social protest. PHOTO: AP

**Time to foster unity and improve regulation**

MICHAEL MABUYAKHULU

**L** ESSONS from history teach us that periods of economic upheaval have the proclivity to affect social cohesion adversely, often leading to a general expression of discontent between a citizenry and those it might deem as being directly responsible for their economic circumstances.

In fact, at the height of the economic downturn circa 2009, Amnesty International noted a sharp rise in discrimination, hate speech and indeed openly xenophobic sentiments in public discourse in EU countries such as Italy, Slovakia and Hungary.

In South Africa, the eruption of xenophobic incidents that were initially localised to the south of Durban attests to how an atmosphere rendered tense by mistrust and exacerbated by, at times, competition for resources, can serve as a spark to ignite a tinderbox of social disintegration and conflict.

But, a climate of tense social relations needs not serve as a licence which permits any among us to carry out wanton acts of blatant thuggery. Neither should it lull us into a state of paralysing helplessness. Rather, the events of the weeks gone by should be used as an opportunity for us to reorganise, to identify one by one, all the major obstacles hindering our unification as a people, regardless of our geographic situation on the African continent.

As the dust begins to settle after the deadly incidents of xenophobia, we need not only to reflect on the root causes, but also to come up with concrete measures, anchored on ensuring that this pall of gloom that hovered darkly over our province does not return. Critically, we need to foster mutual co-existence based on dealing, without any vacillation, with the current realities on the ground.

Our first port of call would be to revisit our Freedom Charter, which succinctly spells out: "We, the people of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white..."

Another injunction of the Freedom Charter we need to heed is: "All people shall have equal rights to trade where they choose, to manufacture and to enter all trades, crafts and professions."

Indeed, and running parallel to our historical mission of creating a united, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous South Africa, as spelt out in the Freedom Charter, we have also said that the challenges of inequality, lack of jobs and high unemployment require our immediate attention.

To this end, we hold the view that small-business development remains a key ingredient to attaining radical economic transformation and creating a globally competitive economy.

Indeed, one of the glaring features of the recent ructions has been the accusations of unfair business practices flying between South Africans and foreign nationals. This alone makes it prudent that we strengthen initiatives aimed at better regulating the business environment. As the department charged with the custodianship of all laws and policies that are aimed at regulating and providing support mechanisms requisite for the sustained development of businesses in all sectors in KwaZulu-Natal, we are conscious of the potential pitfalls of an unregulated trading environment.

It is because of this that we have moved to tighten the noose around those who do not abide by the dictates of the legal prescriptions governing trade, regardless of whether they are South Africans or foreign nationals. Nelson Mandela, in 1995, assigned to provinces by presidential proclamation the Business Act. This assignment gives authority for the MEC to initiate a review or a total repeal or amendment of the aforesaid legislation.

In the case of KZN, this legislation has been under review for some time and a team of experts have produced the first draft of the KZN Businesses Bill which we have seen and advised upon and is now undergoing an intensive review process to ensure that it closes gaps in the current act. However, this does not mean that we shall sit on our laurels and wait for this new piece of legislation.

Let's operate within the ambit of the law, failing which our Receiver of Revenue, Home Affairs and other law-enforcement agencies will take strong action against all those who are breaking the law.

We are talking to some agencies like the Wholesale and Retail Seta to find ways to revitalise and redevelop the township economy. Already, we have a collaborative agreement with the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, South African Local Government Association and soon the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. The notion behind this agreement is to streamline and simplify services to communities of KZN to foster radical economic transformation through the emancipation of our people from helplessness that comes as a result of non-regulation of our trading spaces.

We are also acutely aware of the need to accommodate more local emerging businesses in our shopping malls, particularly those in townships. We know that currently, local businesses account for only 30% of tenancy rates at large shopping outlets, while the 70% goes to larger national retailers. Our goal is to improve the small-business sector through regulating all trade in the province.

It is KwaZulu-Natal's position that as we issue trading licences, we will do so without favour or prejudice, regardless of whether the person is South African or a foreign national. We will seek only to establish that they fulfil all the requirements for that licence. We will also monitor closely how the licences are utilised. We are aware of instances where we have issued trading licences to individuals who then transfer the same to other businesses for them to trade under. This is fraud and it impedes our efforts of promoting small-business development.

Indeed, as the government we are acutely aware and appreciative of the valuable economic and social contributions made by foreign nationals to the economy of the country. We will, therefore, continue to foster efforts to ensure that all businesses are regulated, and that they operate within the law. • Michael Mabuyakhulu is the MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs.

**How do you confront AN ADDICT?**

The problem of alcohol and drug addiction won't go away unless there is some sort of intervention



**THE NARC REPORT**  
with Jarrod Cronje

**M**Y last episode spoke briefly about alcohol and how our seemingly acceptable social-drinking culture covertly creates imprints and endorsements that adversely promote drinking as a way to relax or deal with everyday problems.

The scourge of addiction will not improve until we take responsibility for our behaviours in a proactive way. Currently, most of our interventions are reactive or corrective. Not enough is being done with regard to preventative measures or adjustments to our lifestyle. The sad facts are that the devastation caused by alcoholism and drug addiction is being experienced and observed within our society on a daily basis, and since it is a chronic disease, the problem won't go away unless there is some sort of intervention. Today I am going to talk about the family intervention, which ideally, should precede any clinical interventions.

So, as promised, I'd like to discuss some pragmatic tactics you can employ when confronting your child or family member who exhibits signs of substance abuse and possible addictive behaviours. It may also be the case that you have an addicted family member who is relapsing — this is also for you.

But before we look into how one confronts the issue, I'd like to highlight some of the signs one needs to look out for.

**PSYCHOLOGICAL WARNING SIGNS**

- Out of character or unexplained change in personality or attitude.
- Sudden mood swings, irritability or angry outbursts.
- Periods of unusual hyperactivity, agitation, or giddiness.
- Lack of motivation; appears lethargic or spaced out.
- Appears fearful, anxious or paranoid for no reason.

**BEHAVIOURAL WARNING SIGNS**

- Drop in attendance and performance at work or school.
- Unexplained need for money or financial problems. May borrow or steal to get it.
- Engaging in secretive or suspicious behaviours.
- Locking doors, drawing curtains and extend-



Anger begets anger, which inflates guilt and breeds shame. Addiction flourishes in shame because it perpetuates a feeling of low self-esteem and low self-worth. This feeling of indifference can easily drive a person deeper into the problem. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

- Sudden change in friends, favourite hang-outs and hobbies.
- Frequently getting into trouble (fights, accidents, illegal activities).

**PHYSICAL WARNING SIGNS**

- Bloodshot eyes, pupils larger or smaller than usual, avoiding eye contact.
- Changes in appetite or sleep patterns. Sudden weight loss or weight gain.
- Deterioration of physical appearance, personal grooming habits.
- Unusual smells on breath, body or clothing.
- Tremors, slurred speech or impaired co-ordination.

**DO ANY OF THESE SIGNS RING A BELL?**

I know many people battle with confrontation. It's easier to keep the peace or not rock the boat. A lack of action through fear and naivety, however, combines to ignite an ember of opportunity for someone to continue using. But the difficulty in facing the issue is certainly nowhere near as difficult as it is to treat a person once addiction has set in, so having a proactive, calm and supportive attitude is vital.

The principles or values you need in this process are self-control, honesty and empathy. Reacting to someone in anger conjures up images of bulging eyes, distended veins and brayed incoherencies. Although the anger is congruent to the feeling you may have inside, the effect on the perpetrator already probably gripped with guilt is counter-productive.

Anger begets anger, which inflates guilt and breeds shame. Addiction flourishes in shame because it perpetuates a feeling of low self-esteem and low self-worth. This feeling of indifference can easily drive a person deeper into the problem.

Honesty and clarity are the foundations from which to build a supportive environment for the person to open up. If you are unaccustomed to such confrontation, prepare yourself well in advance and if necessary seek advice from professionals, or people who have been through similar situations.

Tell the person exactly how you feel and take ownership of your feelings. Rather say: "I feel hurt because of your behaviour." Never say: "You make me feel hurt."

Tell them the effect it has on family dynamics and cohesion. "We miss having you around for family dinners," etc.

Be specific. Use examples of specific behaviours that are unacceptable. "Last Wednesday night you came home drunk, and as a result we didn't go out as you had promised."

No manipulation. Never try to make the affected person feel guilty. Avoid statements such as "If you loved me you would stop drinking," or "After all I have done for you, is that how you show your gratitude?"

If the affected person denies the facts, suggest the possibility of a urine test at the doctor's or Sanea's office. You can also buy a drug test and do it yourself. Do not automatically accept all that they say as truth.

Empathy is also required, as this facilitates a level of understanding and care. Blaming and judging have no therapeutic place in this situation as they attack the person instead of focusing on the behaviour. A show of love and support enables a healing space. At the same time, make sure you are very clear that the behaviours and actions are unacceptable.

My colleague Hayden Gaines has, like me, been through addiction himself. Having turned his life around he is now well into recovery and counselling at Harmony Retreat. I asked him to reflect on his experience around this topic. He had this to say: "Never underestimate the

power of parental denial." This was one of my favourite sayings during my days of using. I understood from an early age that in some way my parents blamed themselves for my addiction; seeing my addiction as a failure on their behalf and therefore a testament to their bad parenting skills. This feeling, I understood, would lead them to a sense of denial and in an attempt to deceive themselves of this perceived feeling of failure, they would overlook some obvious signs. Things like: "I lost my wallet/cellphone/money" would be accepted even though, deep down, they knew I had used the money/cellphone for drugs. How often does one really lose one's cellphone? The bloodshot eyes, the sleeping all day or not sleeping at night would be excused by simple excuses with little to no investigation. Simple, obvious signs went overlooked, just so they didn't have to confront what they thought was their failure. This was in fact not the reality and unfortunately this behaviour, for a multitude of reasons, prolonged and enabled my drug abuse. I wish my parents weren't so naive and I wish I wasn't so addicted but the reality is that it's not their fault. This disease is cunning, baffling and powerful. Educate yourselves, parents. Ask the questions, no matter how much you want to believe your children, no matter how bad you feel accusing them of substance abuse.

"Rather ask and be wrong, than not ask and be right," says Gaines.

Remember that help is just a call away. Until next time, take special care of yourself, you're worth it!

• Jarrod Cronje is an addiction recovery coach at Harmony Retreat, Greytown. He is passionate about treatment in the addicted community as well as the development of preventative education among youth. Feel free to contact him at Harmony at 073 989 9803 or 033 417 2227 or e-mail him at jarrod.cronje@gmail.com Client confidentiality applies.

**This article contains vital information on drug and alcohol abuse. It takes courage to confront these issues so I encourage you to take the time to read through this series carefully. What questions do you have? What problems are you facing? Are you a concerned parent? Are you a school in need of a drug-prevention strategy? Do you need help? Break the denial and make contact with me.**