

SOUTH AFRICA'S SATANIC PANIC

An online seminar on the facts and fantasies of
South Africa's own "Satanic Panic"

hosted by the South African Pagan Rights Alliance

Saturday 01 June 2013

VENUE: <https://www.facebook.com/events/461928930549256/?ref=3>

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*"There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice,
but there must never be a time when we fail to protest."*

Elie Wiesel

1. What is 'Satanic Panic' ?

by Francisco Fumarola

Satanic Panic can also be called a “moral panic” or a “rumour panic”. It is called a moral panic because it is a reaction from within a society when dealing with perceived threats to existing values, changes within society or challenges to the status quo. The term rumour panic indicates that Satanic Panic is based on mere rumours, hearsay and half-truths – stories do the rounds about evil devil worshippers killing cats and murdering children in grotesque rituals. These stories usually contain exaggerations and outlandish claims. One frequent claim in Satanic Panic is that thousands of children and animals are ritually sacrificed yearly or around festivals such as Halloween, yet no evidence ever emerges to corroborate such claims – no bodies and no signs of such rituals.

The Satanic Panic primarily reached its height in the United States in the 1980’s but it did have historical parallels in the late medieval witch-hunts and even earlier in the blood-libel used to alienate and persecute Jews. This persecution took place throughout European history as Jews were blamed for all manner of social ills such as plagues and famine and they were accused of kidnapping Christian children and using their blood in rituals. Jews were believed to be cursed due to their rejection of Christ and they were sometimes viewed as Christ killers. Anti-Jewish sentiment persisted even into the modern era and influenced the Second World War. Ironically, the very same myth used against Jews, suspected Witches and Satanists was also used against the early Christians in the Late Roman Period as rumours persisted that Christians drank blood, practiced cannibalism and harmed society through clandestine rituals.

Rumour Panic or Moral Panic usually involves minority groups or groups on the fringes of society. Such groups frequently become scapegoats when there are perceived threats to society. Moral Panic frequently becomes a method to de-humanize, demonize and eventually find excuses to eliminate the “others” of society.

The Satanic Panic in the 1980’s was likely due to a rise in Christian fundamentalism and the growth of new religious movements - the Church of Satan came into being in 1966, the Neopagan movement enjoyed greater public attention and interest in Eastern Spirituality and meditative techniques was increasing. The Panic spread beyond the United States and to other countries and reached South Africa in the early 80’s. South Africa’s Satanic Panic has been linked by academics to the final days of Apartheid South Africa as the nation underwent transition (Falkof, 2012). Yet, the current bout of the panic phenomenon in South Africa, and other African countries like Zimbabwe, will still need to be studied and scrutinized by academics. However, it seems likely that the spread of Christian fundamentalism (Satan as literal reality, belief in an End Times etc.) into Africa and among African nations may have contributed to the current situation.

Satanic Panic was bolstered by the testimonials of Christians who claimed to be former Witches or Satanists. Yet, their stories frequently contained fantastical accounts of supernatural events and these “survivors” frequently revealed that they knew nothing about the religious systems from which they were apparently “freed”. Neither could they ever provide law enforcement with actual evidence to prove that the atrocities they witnessed

actually occurred. Mike Warnke, Lauren Stratford, Rebecca Brown, Elaine Moses, Michelle Smith – these are among some of the more well known “Satanic survivors”. South Africa had characters like Phil Botha, Dave Griesel and Adele Neveling.

In my opinion Satanic Panic is a result of the “Christian Myth of Satanism” - what Christians expect and believe Satanism to represent, as opposed to real Satanism (*the topic of the second discussion entitled What is Satanism ? by Christina Engela*). The Satanism myth and panic is an evangelical tool meant to frighten and coerce. Its purpose is ultimately to confirm the Christian myth of the “End Times” and the ultimate battle of “good” and “evil”. Yet, reality never corresponds exactly to the myth and there is therefore a need to fabricate and create enemies which they can then resist and fight as the “good guys”.

The Satanism Myth is a conspiracy theory and it frequently alludes to an organized and worldwide network of Satanists. These Satanists are frequently said to be associated with the ruling elite and the Illuminati, with Satan himself at the helm; they allegedly secretly control the world’s governments in preparation for the coming end times.

The Satanism Myth is an evangelical tool used to demonize, attack and eventually eliminate all things “occult”, including Witchcraft, Paganism, Satanism, Magic, Alchemy, Divination etc. (*How this Panic affects Pagans directly will be the topic of the third discussion entitled How does Satanic Panic affect South African Pagans ? by Bronwyn Katzke*).

The Satanism Myth and subsequent panic has been fuelled by the South African media, the South African Police Services Occult Crimes Unit, and ex-members of this unit who run their own Warfare Ministeries against “The Occult” in South Africa .

As with all urban myths, you eventually find the phenomenon of “legend trippers” as some act out and bring such myths into concrete reality, these constitute some of the so-called “Satanic crimes” frequently seen in recent media reports (Ellis, 2000). The rest of these crimes are labelled as “satanic” or “occult” based on mere speculation and rumours without any corroborating evidence.

Suggested Further Reading

Alexander, D. et al. 1990. *Giving the devil more than his due*. The Humanist. 01 March 1990.

Dunbar, B. 2012. *The Devil’s Children: Volk, Devils and Moral Panics in White South Africa, 1976 – 1993*. University of Stellenbosch. [Thesis](#)

Ellis, B. 2000. *Raising the Devil: Satanism, New Religions and the Media*. Lexington. University of Kentucky Press.

Falkof, N. 2012. *Satan has come to Rietfontein: Race in South Africa’s Satanic Panic*. Journal of Southern African Studies 753 - 767. London.

Lanning, K. 1992. *Investigators Guide to Allegations of Ritual Child Abuse*.

http://www.religioustolerance.org/ra_rep03.htm

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/pag/lanning.htm>

Riding, H. 2013. *Satanic Panic (South Africa)*. Wikipedia [Article](#)

Victor, J.S. 1993. *Satanic Panic: The Creation of a Contemporary Legend*

2. What is Satanism ?

by Christina Engela

There are two main types of Satanism, Atheistic Satanism and Theistic Satanism.

Atheistic Satanism is basically atheism, but it uses the image of Satan as a metaphor for self-empowerment. Because 'Satan' is viewed in the Christian context as the adversary (the opposer), Satan is interpreted in Satanic philosophy as: the embodiment of the Satanist at the center of his or her own world (as their own god figure), taking charge of their own lives and destiny, but also requiring the taking of personal responsibility for their own actions.

Atheistic Satanists do not believe in the existence of any god or even in Satan as a conscious deity and in fact do not "worship" anything. Central to Atheistic Satanism is the principle of self-preservation, and of chief importance to this is to follow law-abiding practices and therefore, generally speaking, Atheistic Satanists avoid and frown upon criminality.

Theistic Satanists are in most aspects opposite to Atheistic Satanists. They believe in Satan as an entity, either an angel of light or the Christian image of Satan as opposition to the Christian God. It is worth noting that there are many divisions among especially Theistic Satanists, as there are many differences in belief and practice. Generally speaking, Theistic Satanists also place self-preservation high on the list and therefore generally frown upon criminality and promote the idea of keeping their practices within the law.

Some Theistic Satanists are labeled "devil worshipers" by other Satanists, rather than as Satanists proper, mostly due to their extremist views and practices, which may include criminal activity, and even the promotion of the notion of human sacrifice - even though no known case of such has resulted in any confirmed criminal prosecution or convictions to demonstrate this as an undeniable fact.

Satanism is a religion. In South Africa Satanism is protected by the Bill of Rights as a religious belief system.

There is a third kind of "Satanism" which is far more dangerous than ordinary law-abiding people adhering to their religious or spiritual beliefs. It is the kind of "Satanism" which has been created by fear-mongers, spread by the media and added to by alleged "experts" in "the occult" (who actually don't know anything about real Satanism or Occult religions).

People who know nothing about Satanism as a religion are crying "wolf", and people who know nothing about it are believing them. People who know nothing about Satanism are claiming to be experts in it and misleading others who know nothing about the religion but who have been schooled in misinformation about the religion. People who know nothing about something generally fear that thing, but when they learn about that thing and become educated, they no longer fear it.

Suggested Further Reading

Satanism: The Facts <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satanism>

Church of Satan – atheistic Satanism <http://www.churchofsatan.com/Pages/index.html>

Joy of Satan – theistic Satanism <http://www.joyofsatan.org/>

3. How does Satanic Panic affect South African Pagans ?

by Christa Martin

Given the recent discord amongst Pagans who felt and perhaps still feel that the South African Pagan Rights Alliance has harmed Pagans by being publically associated with Satanists, it is necessary to begin to answer the question asked in the title of this discussion topic by qualifying that;

- 1) SAPRA has never and will never speak for Satanists, because this Alliance does not represent any Satanists. SAPRA formal membership requirements specify that members must self-identify as Pagans. SAPRA therefore has no standing to speak on behalf of a religious minority it does not represent.
- 2) SAPRA does not recognize Satanism as a Pagan religion, and Satanists themselves do not self-identify as Pagans. SAPRA has never and will never promote Satanism as a Pagan religion, because it is not a Pagan religion.
- 3) SAPRA's advocacy against Satanic Panic propaganda promoted by the media, government officials and the Occult crime Unit, has always carefully clarified the differences between Paganism and Satanism as independent, separate and under constitutional law, equal, minority religions. SAPRA's advocacy has always and will always address prejudice against Pagans and Paganism in South Africa, as that is its mandate.

SAPRA began its most recent (2012) advocacy against South Africa's Satanic Panic by challenging the constitutional and legal legitimacy of the investigative mandate of the South African Police Services Occult Crime Unit.

The investigative mandate of the SAPS Occult crime unit, in particular, certain 'categories of crime' (listed below), contravene internationally recognized policing ethics and conduct related to a) jurisprudence in the identification and verification of evidence, and b) respect for religious diversity and belief.

Said 'categories of crime' are as follows:

1. Witchcraft-related offences, (identified as black magic), witch finding and witch purging
2. Traditional healers involved in criminal activities rooted in the occult
3. Curses intended to cause harm
4. The practice of voodoo intended to cause harm
5. Vampirism and joint infringement of the Human Tissues Activities
6. Harmful cult behaviour that infringes on the rights of members of the movement
7. Spiritual intimidation, including astral coercion
8. Vandalism / graffiti leaving evidence that the motive is occult related
9. Suicide leaving evidence of occult involvement
10. Ritualistic abuse in a cult setting
11. Allegations of rape by a tokoloshe spirit
12. Animal mutilation and sacrifice leaving evidence of occult involvement
13. Murder / human sacrifice leaving evidence of occult involvement
14. Interpretation of occult "signatures" and paraphernalia at a crime scene
15. Poltergeist phenomena (unexplained activities by paranormal disruptive entities).

The SAPS memorandum states —For a crime to be considered a harmful occult-related crime, the elements of legality, conduct and unlawfulness and culpability have to be present

and the motive must be rooted in the supernatural. The term "supernatural" is generally defined as something above or beyond the laws of Nature. In a strictly scientific context, the belief in the supernatural agency of a non-corporeal entity (spirit, fairy, demon, tokoloshe, God) cannot be proven using the law of evidence in any Court of Law, and therefore cannot be submitted as evidence of anything other than faith in the unknown. Since the courts will not accept evidence of the supernatural on principle, the ORC detectives will be wasting valuable time and effort investigating para-psychological phenomena.

Newly appointed detectives of regional occult crime units are encouraged to consult with —trained individuals in their respective provinces... with the investigation of an alleged harmful occult-related crime. It must be noted that former occult unit detectives, many of whom now independently pursue careers in Christian ministry and in particular, ministry against the Occult, Witchcraft, Satanism, and "Spiritual-warfare" ministries targeted specifically at Witches and Satanists, will be consulted by detectives assigned to regional occult crime units.

Why are South African taxpayers footing the bill for an SAPS unit whose investigative mandate contravenes the law of evidence, and whose members constitute an evangelic Christian spiritual-warfare ministry against constitutionally protected religious minorities in South Africa, when more crimes are actually committed in this country by Christians than by members of specifically targeted alternative religious minorities?

In May 2013, SAPRA submitted a complaint of hate speech against the MEC for Education Gauteng Province, Barbara Creecy.

Allegations of harmful practices made publicly against alternative minority religions, impugn the reputation and dignity of members of these belief systems and engender public distrust against such faiths and minority religious groups and individuals.

MEC CREECY UTTERS HATE SPEECH AGAINST RELIGIOUS MINORITIES - SOURCES OF PUBLICATION*

<http://www.citizen.co.za/citizen/content/en/citizen/local-news?oid=406511&sn=Detail&pid=40&Gauteng-education-MEC-declares-war-on-Satanism>

http://www.thenewage.co.za/87987-1008-53-Teaming_up_to_fight_Satanism

The Sowetan- 'Schools tackle Satanism' 19/03/2013

<http://www.citypress.co.za/news/anti-harmful-religious-strategy-for-schools/>

<http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Faith-issue-in-schools-tackled-20130318>

<http://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/faith-issue-in-schools-tackled-1.1488386#.UUjJYBemjY>

<http://www.timeslive.co.za/thetimes/2013/03/19/education-department-seeks-divine-intervention>

<http://m.looklocal.co.za/looklocal/content/en/randfontein-westonaria/randfontein-westonaria-mobile-news?oid=7038381&sn=Mobile-Detail&pid=4732842&Update-Alleged-satanic-murderer-to-appear-in-court>

<http://ewn.co.za/Media/2013/03/18/130318barbara>

In the MEC's response to SAPRA dated 9 March 2013, Creecy clarifies that confirmed public accusations of "harmful religious practices" against the Occult and Satanism were made by

her, without her Department actually possessing any accurate information on or knowledge of said minority religions.

Gauteng Department of Education spokesperson, Charles Phahlane, has publicly denied that there is any evidence of a growing problem of Satanism or Occultism in South African schools. This Alliance agrees with this statement.

SAPRA has argued that harmful accusations against Occultists and Satanists were supported by nothing more than a.) incorrect media speculation and sensationalism regarding several high profile cases of violence involving pupils at several public schools, cases which have subsequently proven not to have involved any actual Satanists or Satanic religious practices, and b.) that said accusations were motivated by prejudicial and unproven allegations of harmful practices, supported by religious leaders with whom Creecy's Department has signed a memorandum of understanding, to openly discriminate against learners who exhibit signs of involvement or interest in Satanism or other Occult belief systems.

It should be noted that Satanism and Occultism are valid and internationally recognized belief systems that are protected under the South African constitutional guarantee of freedom of belief and religion. Any learner in any school in South Africa may legally choose to investigate or embrace said belief systems.

Several public schools in this country currently openly discriminate against the Occult (including Satanism, Witchcraft and other Occult belief systems), by obligating both pupils and parents to sign Christian codes of conduct that specifically prohibit any pupil from engaging in the belief or practice of said belief systems. These illegal codes of conduct and enforced discriminatory obligations contravene the Department of Education's policy on religion and education, and the Bill of Rights with respect to the right of any South African to voluntarily choose and practice their own religion.

Statements of prejudice against said minority religions, when uttered by the MEC or any other official of the Department of Education, may reasonably be viewed as tacit Departmental approval of an unconstitutional deviation of accepted policy on religion and education, especially when the Department of Education has already failed to take effective remedial action to end incidences of illegal and unconstitutional written obligations issued by school governing bodies to pupils, to discriminate against religious minorities, or when representatives of the Department of Education fail to assume accountability for the utterance of provable hate speech against said minorities.

The most recent Satanic Panic engendered through the media by religious leaders and supported by officials of the Department of Education (Gauteng, Kwazulu-Natal and the Western Cape), the Department of Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities, and King Goodwill Zwelinthini himself, has already resulted in incidents of unfair discrimination against pupils who are not Satanists, but who have been falsely accused by pupils and educators of being Satanists and expelled or suspended from their schools. Accusations of religious affiliation and allegations of dangerous criminal behaviour do not constitute evidence-based proof of either religious identity or complicity in the execution of criminal activity.

Given the evidence before it, this Alliance would argue that institutional bias and prejudice against the Occult and Satanism has been well established as historical precedent within the public school system and the Department of Education, despite the existence of the National

Policy on Religion and Education, the Equality Act and the Bill of Rights. This institutional bias must urgently be addressed and corrected at every education level within every public and model C school in every Province, by both educators and members of school governing bodies.

As a minority faith-based organization, SAPRA has offered to contribute accurate and vetted information on said minority religions, including Satanism, Witchcraft, Paganism and other Occult belief systems currently existing in South Africa, in order to assist the Department of Education in preventing any further public or private hate speech or scapegoating in our country's schools against members of alternative minority faiths. The provision of accurate and non-prejudicial information could be facilitated through Life Orientation classes with a focus on the constitutional right to belief and religion, and the prevention of scapegoating and discrimination against members of alternative minority faiths.

"It is not in the best interests of the Pagan community to acquiesce to popular maligning of Satanists. It is in the best interests of the Pagan community for Pagans to educate themselves about and debunk "Satanic panics" and to remind people of the principle of "innocent until proven guilty" whenever and wherever such accusations arise, regardless of the religion of the alleged perpetrators."

Diane Vera - <http://theisticsatanism.com/asp/Pagan/why.html>

"For modern Paganism, our communities were shaped by, and surged in growth during, the Satanic Panic era. The reflexive mantra of Pagans not being Satanists was established as a talking point in virtually all media interviews during this time, as were similar assurances that we didn't engage in blood sacrifice or harm people. For many, the massive influx of teenagers into modern Paganism in the 1990s (myself included) presented a huge potential danger at a time when "covens" and "rituals" to harm children were still being taken seriously. So many built an image that was as benevolent as possible, eccentric "white-lighters" at worst, no danger to your neighbor's kids. Some books for Pagans even gave tips on how to appear harmless, and advised that sometimes not telling the truth about your faith was for the best. If you look at the late 1990s and early 2000s, the backlash against these impulses now seem inevitable, and there are still pockets within our community who commit themselves to criticizing "fluffy bunnies" and "white lighters" as in any way representative of their Paganism or Witchcraft. Some defiantly embraced "dark" Paganism as an antidote, or discovered the emerging reconstructionist faiths which presented a more scholarly and serious alternative to the pop-culture moment in the sun Wicca seemed to be enjoying. ... As the Satanic Panics move into ever further into our past, we need to grapple with them as an integral part of our history, which, for better or worse, shaped how we have behaved."

Grappling With the Satanic Panics 30 Years Later by Jason Pitzl-Waters - <http://wildhunt.org/2013/01/grappling-with-the-satanic-panics-30-years-later.html>

4. How does scapegoating and discrimination affect children?

by Retha van Niekerk

This is such a broad topic that can be discussed from a number of corners. For this purpose we'll discuss it broadly from the perspective of our own behaviour and conviction, as adults, affecting that of our children.

Children are remarkable individuals that learn behaviour, social skills, emotional attachments etc., from the adults and peers they are exposed to. Children are by nature non-discriminatory non-judgmental, colour-blind individuals. It is through exposure to these elements, mostly from society that they develop the discrimination towards certain elements and judgmental attributes that society imprints on them.

How does that affect a child?

No matter how hard we try, we imprint these behaviours on our children inevitably, even in the smallest way (i.e. not liking getting wet, or scared of spiders). Our behaviour as adults towards a situation is a guide for a child to react should they feel they are in the same situation.

Children are taught (by the adults they are exposed to) to differentiate themselves from a situation or person they do not understand, feel threatened by or are different from, i.e. don't play with that boy, he has very strange parents. These are the seeds for future discrimination. These behaviours grow into a preference and eventually into a requirement. In teenagers you find this quite often, some children will only associate with others, because they fit the 'criteria' set by the individual. Those that do not fit the 'criteria' are not included, but rather excluded. Most of the time this 'criteria' set up by the individual is something that they are comfortable with, opposed to the individuals they do not associated with. They were taught to feel uncomfortable with situations and/or individuals they do not understand.

The behavioural culprit normally following discrimination is scapegoating. If you do not understand or feel comfortable with another individual's behaviour, and as a result do not include and/or associate with that individual, the said individual/s are normally blamed for this, i.e. they are strange, therefore I don't like them. This becomes a behavioural trait with most individuals as they grow into adulthood. They need to find a culprit to justify their own opinions. This is, just to name but one, a characteristic of a bully.

In short, how we behave towards others, be it in a group and organization or, as an individual will be the building blocks for what we teach the children in our community to do. Our own insecurities are the breeding ground for these behaviours in our children.

We should rather spend more time on teaching our children to develop who they are with security in their own being and strength of character and conviction in their own opinions. These should not be built on discrimination or scapegoating, but on inner strength and acceptance.

5. Religious Identity, Equality and Freedom

by Morgause Fonteleve

The word religion has its roots in the Latin word "religare", or to bind fast. It is associated with dogmatic mainstream and majority religious beliefs, but in a Human Rights discourse, the term also includes the rights of alternative spiritual paths as well as minorities and non-religious belief systems, such as Agnosticism, Atheism, non-theism, etc.

Religion can be a source of hope and communion with the divine as well as the source of extreme tension and conflict. Freedom of Religion and belief are protected under our constitution and internationally under the United Nations' 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in which Article 18 states that "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have a religion or whatever belief of his choice."

Through the freedoms enshrined in the Bill of Rights we have the liberty, as a community or singularly, to express our religious or spiritual belief through worship, ritual observances, practice as well as through sharing or teaching our children and interested parties. We have the right not to suffer coercion that impairs the freedom of choice on what we may or may not believe in, the right to fight against being compelled to submit our children to religious instruction in schools, the right to assemble and maintain places of worship, the right to make or acquire tools related to our rites and customs, the right to write and disseminate publications that express or explain our customs and spiritual traditions, the right to celebrate our holidays and ceremonies out in the open, to train, elect or appoint Tradition Elders and community leaders, the right to solicit and receive contributions and donations for the benefit of the collective, the right to maintain communication with communities or individuals at national or international level, to celebrate and have recognized our rites of passage, etc. This right is equal for all, without discrimination.

Respect for others' religious freedom and tolerance of another's faith is an act of "active attitude" as per the UN's Declaration of Principles on Tolerance. This includes the responsibility to uphold human rights, pluralism, democracy, support to the implementation of programmes for research with emphasis on education, rational inquiry, ethical and moral values, as well as human development of a non-violent nature, the elimination of prejudice, acceptance of different cultures and faiths, respect for all differences, the protection of fundamental freedoms, the right to education, suppression of hate-crimes and promotion of human dignity, the value of liberty as well as a climate wherein human rights are nurtured and upheld.

Freedom means accepting the differences in belief, stances and opinions, without which the development of a morally sound and robust society is impossible. Diversification is Nature's way to ensure strengthened continuity. Religious freedom implies the respect for the idea of "otherness" and the use of the fruits of cooperation where possible, the acceptance of differences in others, to contribute towards the advantageous moving forward into the future, wherein all forms of freedom will continue to be the precious privilege of our Nation. What determines this "Justice" and "Freedom" in our country is an inviolable Law and this Law is above all other legislation. It is above all citizens, the judges and the courts; it is above the whims of a potentially treacherous political tyrant or the delusional demagogue. This Law is sacred and its violation would be tantamount to treason, particularly if done by the regarded Leadership in our local or larger community.

Recent events within our Spiritual Community and the innuendo of a new form of Religious Intolerance have lead me to ponder long and deep on the freedoms we as a Spiritual Community enjoy. It is no secret that through the abrogation of another's freedom we jeopardize our own liberty. Accepting the restriction of others' religious freedoms or the

demonization of another's Spiritual Culture, can in essence, be equated with Spiritual self-annihilation.

The implication is therefore, that to ensure and assure our personal spiritual or religious freedom, we also have to assure and ensure the freedom of all our fellow men. The Bill of Rights cannot and may not be jeopardized by arbitrary interpretation. It needs no interpretation, thereby giving the individual and minorities protection of their rights. It affords us freedom from persecution, freedom of moral, political, racial expression, freedom of association, economic equality, gender and religious equality, etc. In the same token, through the Bill of Rights, ours and other's religious freedom is not open to arbitrary interpretation.

The rights and privileges we enjoy should be exercised to ensure that Freedom of Religion remains ours through involvement and not merely as a passive privilege and right not exercised.

"First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out because I was not a Socialist.

Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out because I was not a Trade Unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak for me."

Martin Niemöller (1892-1984) was a prominent Protestant pastor who emerged as an outspoken public foe of Adolf Hitler and spent the last seven years of Nazi rule in concentration camps.

"Laws alone can not secure freedom of expression; in order that every man present his views without penalty there must be spirit of tolerance in the entire population."

Albert Einstein

6. 'Moral panics' and human rights abuses

by Damon Leff

"A moral panic is an intense feeling expressed in a population about an issue that appears to threaten the social order. Moral panics are in essence controversies that involve arguments and social tension and in which disagreement is difficult because the matter at its center is taboo. The media have long operated as agents of moral indignation, even when they are not consciously engaged in crusading or muckraking. Simply reporting the facts can be enough to generate concern, anxiety or panic." Wikipedia

The international community defines discrimination as *"any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference which is based on any ground such as race, colour, language, religion, national or social origin, birth or other status, and which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by all persons, on an equal footing, of all rights and freedoms"*.

Article 27 of the 'International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights' states *"In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language"*.

Article 5 of the 'Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities' obliges all governments to consider the legitimate interests of minorities in developing national policies and programmes. These minority rights are not subject to official recognition of a minority by a government.

According to both international and South African law the African National Congress, as the governing party of the republic, is legally obligated to consider the legitimate interests of adherents of all minority religions in developing national policies and programmes to correct inequalities to which said believers are currently subjected. In this instance, with special regard to ensuring that members of minority religions in this country are able to benefit equally from every other right enshrined in the Bill of Rights, including the right to safety and security.

Institutional bias against minority religions in South Africa prejudices interactions between adherents and both state and private institutions established to protect or promote equality, and between adherents and political organizations, simply because such institutions and organizations are composed of people with both religious and cultural biases against said religions.

A refusal to engage with or speak to representatives of a religious minority constitutes a crime under international convention and law. Dismissing the legitimate concerns of members of a particular faith in a country prone to sporadic or concerted discrimination constitutes criminal negligence in the pursuance of the protection of the rights of an already visible and recognized religious minority.

In 1990 the Canadian Supreme Court described the harm that might result from institutionalized prejudice by examining the effects of the advocacy of hatred. *"Although the*

words 'advocacy of hatred' are capable of a narrow construction, the focus is likely to be placed on the second element: 'incitement to cause harm'. In R. v Keegstra [1990] 3 SCR 697, the Canadian Supreme Court described the 'harm' that may result from hate speech. The Court stated that emotional damage caused by words may have grave psychological and social consequences. A response of humiliation and degradation from the individual targeted by hate propaganda is to be expected. A person's sense of human dignity and belonging to a community at large is closely linked to the concern and respect accorded the groups to which he or she belongs. The derision, hostility and abuse encouraged by hate propaganda therefore have a severely negative impact on an individual's sense of self-worth and acceptance."

Pejorative media coverage of both Witchcraft and Satanism, two very distinctly different minority faiths, by the South African media is symptomatic of generalized bias against anything related with 'the Occult'. Prejudicial reference to Witches and Witchcraft, Satanists and Satanism, affects the dignity and standing of individual South African citizens who identify as Witches or Satanists, and it encourages further bias, prejudice and hostile discrimination against anyone falsely accused of being 'a witch' or 'a Satanist' in this country.

Moral Panics find their voice through the pens of unscrupulous and sensationalist journalists and editors who care little for evidence or fact, and their lies become the voice of the masses clamouring for vigilante justice against "the Other".

"It must be argued that moral panic could occur as a catalyst to sway the majority into backing an idea that contravenes our human rights or not opposing oppressive draconian statute. This is not meant to imply that any of the immoral or socially unacceptable actions are engineered, simply that a situation might be manipulated to better serve the manipulator. In this paper it must be argued that moral panic is fundamental in allowing legislature to demonise a sector of society, highlight a 'problem' and then provide us with an oppressive solution which we must accept."

What is Moral Panic and why does it occur?

<http://legalcatch.wordpress.com/2011/01/05/what-is-moral-panic-and-why-does-it-occur/>



The South African Pagan Rights Alliance (SAPRA) was formed in 2004 as a faith-based (Pagan) human rights activist alliance.

SAPRA currently fulfills several important functions in line with its constitutional mandate, namely, to promote the guaranteed liberties and freedoms enshrined for all South African Pagans in the Bill of Rights and assist South African Pagans, whose constitutionally guaranteed rights and freedoms have been infringed due to unfair discrimination, to obtain appropriate redress.

Several successive Executive Committees have executed their mandate in a number of ways, including addressing and challenging media prejudice against Paganism, promoting positive media coverage of Paganism in general, challenging institutional and legislative prejudice against Witchcraft, and offering non-legal assistance to Pagans seeking advice or assistance in dealing with incidences of discrimination.

Director: Mr. Damon Leff · Chief Executive Officer: Ms. Morgause Fonteleve

Registrar: Mrs. Christa Martin · Treasurer: Ms. Nidhi Chaitow

Executive Committee: Mrs. Retha van Niekerk, Mrs. Sonet Jordaan, Mrs. Bronwyn Katzke, Ms. Christina Engela, Mr. Francisco Fumarola

South African Pagan Rights Alliance
<http://www.paganrightsalliance.org/>