

Need to inculcate 'moral fortitude'

If the evidence given at the Zondo Commission does not lead to criminal charges and convictions, malfeasance is unlikely to go away, according to Unite 4 Mzansi advocate, Prof Wiseman Nkuhlu.

Fellow advocate and CEO of the Institute of Social and Corporate Ethics, Athol Williams, concurs, speaking of the need to move beyond issuing platitudes and take concrete steps.

"At the end of my testimony before the Zondo Commission, I talked about our country needing to enter an 'age of the brave'; that is, an age when South Africans begin to stand up to those people intent on corruption and destruction. This requires that we identify the corrupt and their enablers. I have made a point of not talking in vagaries. I've named the organisations and people within them who are speaking about integrity, but acting to enable state capture or those involved in state capture. What I want to see in SA is more people living in this age of the brave, where they will name the corrupt and resist their actions," he says.

Williams believes the Unite 4



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Mzansi citizenry movement can play an important role in building awareness, providing information, sharing lessons from cases where things have gone wrong and demonstrating desired ethical behaviour.

"I think it has the potential to rally together not only the accountancy profession but also broader business and society to take a tangible stand to further even just one tangible cause such as support for whistle-blowers or outlining acceptable reparations for companies wanting to make amends," he says. "We've had lots of talk about punishing the corrupt and we need this to pick up, but we also need positive initiatives

such as supporting companies struggling with ethical fractures and supporting whistle-blowers in their fight against corruption."

Whistle-blowers are poorly treated in SA because of the moral failure of society and because people live in fear.

Says Williams: "There is a fear that if you support a whistle-blower, you might upset those whose corruption was exposed. We are willing to reap the benefits of the whistle-blowers' actions but too cowardly to stand with them when they fall or are attacked. We see the same cowardly behaviour in relation to women who are victims of violence by men. No one speaks up because of fear or because of some moral failure such as believing women deserve their abuse. This is why I talk about the 'era of the brave'.

"We need to inculcate moral fortitude, South African citizens who say I will stand for truth no matter the consequences. And if individuals are not prepared to stand up themselves then at least they will support those who do. Unite 4 Mzansi can go a long way to amplifying this message."