

Softly, s

approach to crime



By Daniel Nina

MORE than a million Puerto Ricans participated in a national referendum in November to amend the Constitution of this Caribbean island. The government wanted to eliminate the right to bail, which has been guaranteed since the Constitution was introduced in 1952.

As in South Africa, the country also has serious crime problems. The situation is so bad, mostly due to drug-related crime, that most of the areas where underprivileged people live are constantly patrolled by members of the National Guard.

But the right to bail in Puerto Rico is something precious. It is a Right - with a capital "R" - which the government, under the guise of fighting crime, has been trying to eliminate since 1974. After many years of political canvassing by the government, the people finally said "no". *Que viva Puerto Rico!*

Crime, whether you are in Puerto Rico or South Africa, is real. It is a human experience that many people suffer. And when it happens crime is not an easy thing to handle. As someone who makes a living out of fighting against crime, I know that you cannot take on the issue of crime in a liberal way. Liberal thinking, despite its relevance for advancing a democratic society, can be a recipe for disaster. You have to tackle crime in a serious and radical way, using a combination of means and resources.

In South Africa these days crime has become the "Public Enemy No 1". The solutions proposed by many members of the South African Police Service (SAPS), state prosecutors and community figures is to get "tough on crime". In particular, the demand is to eliminate South Africa's (now) constitutional right to bail, and many other ideas are being discussed about how to incarcerate, incapacitate - and many other "ins" - to exclude the criminal person.

As a Puerto Rican living in South Africa with a definite Caribbean identity and an emerging African one, I know that no matter how many "ins" you use to fight this social problem, crime will always continue to rise. In fact, the United States has been tough on crime for almost 30 years. They are fighting what amounts to a war on crime. Yet today they have one of the highest incarceration rates in the world (of which the majority of prison inmates is black or Hispanic), they compete with South Africa for one of the highest crime rates and have

crime, but why people like you and that it is because of a combination. Probably there is some individual, by which we learn to restrict ourself collective.

In many of the underprivileged South Africa, people really do not the SAPS or the media. They talk about breaking, but they also talk about domestic violence and child abuse level is to redefine the nature of crime in relation to social problems.

Another feature of these communities those problems they perceive to be neighbourhood watches (in particular street and yard committees, many their social problems in a more effective

Incarceration and punishment is definitely not the solution to social have redefined the nature of punishment and immediate rectification and a way of solving a dispute. In many and well known practice that the provide counselling to children or communities really want to reintegrate

This is the fundamental factor that many poor or underprivileged communities better-off communities. This philosophy important aim is to keep the collective who have done wrong a second chance communities have already been victimised and that incarceration for "criminal" structural socio-economic problem victimisation.

I am not arguing that we should system. Instead, I am suggesting that communities are telling us today. In the PWV area, KwaZulu/Natal, in the Western Cape, I have found should carry on handling serious violence murder. Other matters should be