

# Jubilee in Sea Point

There is an ancient Hebrew story:

An ancient story of a long walk to freedom from a land of bondage to a land of promise.

An ancient story of freshly freed slaves who carved out a new bill of rights from stone.

An ancient story of a people who never, never, and never again wanted to return to slavery.

So they wrote a new constitution that protected the freedoms of all and honoured the dignity of everyone. The constitution prioritised relationships above rent, as people were valued more than profits. Each new law entrenched equality and justice.

Then these freshly freed slaves did something even more amazing. They acknowledged the frailty of their own human condition. They realised that no matter how “world-class” their constitution and no matter how good their intentions not to become like their previous captors, the possibility existed that they may forget their charter of freedom, and driven by fear, greed and individualism, become like the very oppressive people they had previously labored under. So amidst their many laws they wrote another law. They called it Jubilee. The law of Jubilee stated that every 50 years society should be re-levelled. Jubilee was a communal “reset button” that legislated for the redistribution of wealth so that those with little would not have too little and those with much would not have too much.

From ancient times to today...

It is now the year 2016. Fifty years since the forced removals of District 6 were written into law making a crime against humanity a legal act in the Apartheid legislature. The consequences of this crime continue as if set in stone. But what stone is this? It is no longer the stone of law. It is the stone of our hearts. It is only with hearts of stone that we can refuse to use every opportunity to right the wrongs of the past – this is the stone preventing us from re-leveling our Apartheid landscape.

With the transformation of the Tafelberg land and other publically owned land in the city into affordable housing, we have an opportunity for our hearts of stone to take on flesh again as we fix a tiny fragment of our broken past. A past that is still present.

Not only will our own hearts begin to beat more humanely, but our city will begin the healing journey from its deadly disease of exclusion and exclusivity. This disease is colour coded as much as it is coloured by class. It is deathly and deadly not only for those who have been excluded and who remain on the distant margins of society far from life-giving opportunities and life-saving services, but also for the privileged who have access to more than our share of what is fair. Yes to have too much is as threatening to one’s humanity as having too little because it denies the truth of our universal oneness.

Equally, for people of economic privilege to live exclusively amongst other people of economic privilege is a profoundly impoverished existence. Within this poverty of exclusive privilege fear of “otherness” grows as does a false sense of detachment from the lived realities of the vast majority of people.

The transformation of Tafelberg land into affordable housing is a Jubilee moment. It is a moment for some to reclaim the city and for all of us to reclaim our humanity.

For this reason I support Reclaim the City.

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Rev. Alan Storey, Central Methodist Mission – Cape Town.

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