

Housing for all? Let's first get serious about cleaning the shacklands

Gerry Adlard

ELEVEN years after Irene Grootboom's Constitutional Court case was regarded as a landmark in securing socio-economic rights, we have more informal settlements than ever: the environment in which the residents live – certainly here in Khayelitsha – is worsening, and the chance of them getting housing is very small and diminishing.

The right to housing is a progressive right – it is a "right to have access to adequate housing" – which in Cape Town means little more than a right to be on a very long waiting list, which grows every year.

In addition to our housing backlog of about 400 000 households, we have a severe shortage of well-located and affordable land for housing, inadequate bulk infrastructure and not enough money. We must

come to terms with the fact that most of our informal settlements are here to stay and they are likely to grow in number.

For most informal settlement residents, the right to housing is not very helpful. It is a nice idea to dream about, but in the meantime, what they need is a less hazardous environment – more toilets, more taps, more drainage, better access roads (at least for emergency vehicles), better policing, some lighting, less dependence on dangerous fuels, and more protection against the city's demolition squads.

The Department of Human Settlements won't help – they only do houses, serviced sites, flats and emergency camps like Blikkiesdorp for victims of fires and floods.

Its Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme, created in response to the Grootboom judg-

ment, can only be used to create proclaimed serviced sites – and if there is insufficient land they have nothing to offer. Unfortunately, they believe that all informal settlements can be eradicated whereas we know that they cannot. Not in Irene Grootboom's lifetime – and probably not in ours either: the dream world versus the real world.

Who can we find to address the real issue of having no toilet or tap nearby, a baby with diarrhoea yet again, no light, no drain... Is there anyone in government who has responsibility and authority and is accountable for the state of our informal settlements?

No, there isn't. Instead all the different departments duck and dive, pass the buck, blame their budgets, blame the residents, submit reports and have meetings. There is no one in charge of informal settlements.

We need one senior official to be given the mandate and the means to co-ordinate and drive the process.

What about the politicians? Isn't there someone who will stand up and say we are in a new era of unprecedented global urbanisation.

This is not colonial Cape Town or apartheid Cape Town or rich Cape Town or beautiful Cape Town – this is real Cape Town and we have a major humanitarian problem!

In this World Design Capital and Top Tourism Destination we have people with nowhere to relieve themselves! We need a brave, committed, dedicated political champion who can hold all the reins and whip all the horses and command attention in the corridors of power.

And what about the baby with diarrhoea? We must get her to a clinic. But what about the filthy water standing outside her shack,

We need a brave, committed and dedicated political champion

the garbage overflowing from the skip, the toilet that is too far away and is blocked anyway? Who knows about that?

The municipal health inspectors. What can they do about it? They write a report. Where does it go? It is compiled into a bigger report which is used to try to persuade other departments to respond. Is it effective? Not really.

Do municipal health inspectors have no power? Yes, they do, but it

takes some guts to issue a Compliance Notice in terms of Section 83 of the National Health Act to your boss, the mayor or city manager.

The law requires health inspectors to take action against anyone responsible for violating our constitutional right to an environment that is not harmful to our health or well-being. That, I would submit, is a much more fundamental right for us all to insist upon in this case than the right to access housing.

The good news is that all these things are possible in this amazing city. Our mayor can instruct her health inspectors to fearlessly issue compliance notices to anyone in the city and ensure that they are enforced.

The Mayoral Committee Member for Utility Services is a powerful and determined fighter for the marginalised and would make an excellent

political champion for improving informal settlements.

And a year ago the city appointed an Urbanisation Director, who is highly qualified in human settlements and health issues and well acquainted with Khayelitsha.

However, the person is still waiting to be given responsibility, authority and some personnel.

Let's see our city work for us.

● *Adlard is a Development Consultant. This is an edited version of last night's 2011 Irene Grootboom Memorial Lecture Series Dialogues in Khayelitsha, titled The Informal Settlement: Rethinking Basic Service Provision and Housing.*

The lecture series is run by the Social Justice Coalition in partnership with the Cape Times.

The theme for the series this year is how can we make Cape Town a more inclusive city?

JUDAISM AND POLITICS

Being Jewish in the new South Africa

Dennis Davis

THE Cape Jewish Board of Deputies has commendably sought to initiate debate into the role of the Jewish community in the democratic South Africa.

Some members of the Jewish community are uncertain of our future here, whereas others believe we must actively commit to being a part of this country.

The fact that some members of our community are uncertain of the future of this country is not necessarily surprising. In the first place, the Jewish community has lived in uncertainty for many decades: witness the emigration waves of the 1940s, 1960s, mid-1970s and mid-1980s. The perceived dilemma about communal responses to the evil of apartheid is a further illustration.

Although Jews may have voted disproportionately for the Progressive Party, its establishment, at least until the 1980s, were sadly silent. Often the excuse was one of fear of an anti-Semitic reaction from the then-government – a poor excuse, but reflective of a deep-seated anxiety.

The process of constitutional negotiation which was ushered in after FW de Klerk's speech in 1990 and the first democratic elections of 1994 swept away whatever racist certainties may have been embraced by most white South Africans.

We commenced a process of constructing a society based upon the plans set out in our constitution, a majestic affirmation of an egalitarian non-racist and non-sexist society. That journey was always going to be difficult, given the burden of our past, and in particular the manner in which millions of South Africans were treated as no more than labour units deserving of an inferior education and egregiously unfair social, political and economic treatment.

Living in a society under construction is not conducive to certainty, but if one wants rigid certainty, Sydney or Auckland are beckoning!

All South Africans are faced with anxiety about reconstituting our society. Professor Achille Mbembe has written in a foreword to Fiona

Who are we? Race & Identity!

Forde's book about Julius Malema, *An Inconvenient Youth*: "There is a need to reconstitute a democratic project in South Africa, which should be about reopening the future to all South Africans."

You do not have to be a black South African to participate in this non-racial democratic project. At the very least, the challenge posed by the wealth tax debate can be embraced by the community into a serious engagement about how white people resolve the issue left open by the TRC – the position of privilege which white people gained or inherited, and what the ethical response is to this legacy which so skews wealth, opportunity and lack of dignity for so many fellow South Africans.

Jews used to be very active in South African politics, whereas we do not see this happening today. Is this an indication that Jews are ambivalent about their role in the new South Africa? Do we have less of a voice today?

It is true Jews used to be active in South African politics, not only in white political parties, but also in the liberation struggle. Who could forget that at the Rivonia Trial all of the white accused were Jewish?

Today, there are still Jews who are active in a range of NGOs and hence engaged in the broader scope of politics.

Just because they have eschewed the religious and political mould which is employed by the establishment, does not mean that we should ignore talented young Jews in organisations like Equal Education and the Treatment Action Campaign. That some of these Jews oppose the occupation of the West Bank and eschew a monastic approach to Judaism is not a reason not to embrace them, and the very fact that these Jews are not considered when the issue of Jewish political involvement is concerned is truly problematic.



IDENTITY: What role can the Jewish community play in South Africa? asks the writer.

In any analysis of our community and its role and future in South Africa, it should not be forgotten Jews are part of a minority. Minority groups will probably play a more modest role and rightly so in the fashioning of a new South Africa.

The whole basis of apartheid was predicated upon listening only to one voice – that of a white minority. A non-racial project will ensure that the voices of the majority shape public discourse and are afforded the respect that these voices deserve.

By listening and understanding, the voices of minorities then become more nuanced and hence capable of influencing the process toward a non-racial project.

How has Zionism changed in

South Africa since 1994? The Jewish community's commitment to Israel has definitely created changed responses in South Africa since the advent of democracy. Throughout the Jewish world, there are significant tensions about responding to the vexed issue of support for Israel – uncritical or responsive to transient Israeli policy.

Peter Beinart wrote about this development in a controversial article in the New York Review of Books arguing that younger Jews did not have the same approach as religious Jews and older sections of the community. Young secular Jews do not lend Israel uncritical support.

A recent report about rabbis graduating from the Jewish Theo-

logical Seminary – conservative Jews still represent a significant proportion of the American Jewish community – is equally instructive.

Sixty-eight percent of the study reported that the settler movement is a threat to Israel. Fifty-six percent say the Palestinian side is no more to blame than Israel for the conflict.

An issue that becomes relevant is the growing uncertainty which the community feels towards the broader public discourse, which is far more sympathetic towards the Palestinian perspective.

There are those who correctly point to a silence in this public discourse about the atrocities being perpetrated by the Syrian regime as compared to the excessive interroga-

tion of all that occurs in Israel.

The merits of this argument notwithstanding, it seems to me this is a development that can only continue so long as there is a political impasse in the region. Without a resolution to the impasse which produces a just settlement (and that means recognition of Israel as an independent state and a truly viable Palestinian state), calls for boycotts will increase.

For my part, the defence of Israel as a sovereign independent state and the demand for the end of the Occupation are not incompatible, and Jews who take that view should be taken seriously.

How will the new generation run our Jewish institutions and lead our community? I hope for an engage-

ment of a new generation of Jews who no longer need to be separate from a non-racial project, which lies at the heart of the long-term security and safety of all in this country.

Institutions that are separate when they are predicated on the idea of promoting a religious tradition, culture and belief system are supported by democratic rights to be enjoyed by all South Africans.

The Constitutional Court in the Pillay case, albeit that it was dealing more with culture than religion, emphasised these are associative practices which are protected because of the meaning that these shared practices give to individuals as part of a particular community.

The point is to ensure our practices are also directed to ensuring the community produces citizens who engage with the ongoing challenge of building a country based on social justice for all of us.

How do you embrace a fully South African identity and still hold onto your Jewish and/or Zionist identities?

This question goes to the heart of being Jewish. The universal world view of Judaism has always been in tension with its own particularism. Unfortunately, there is an increasing minority who wish to resolve the tension by jettisoning all claim to the universal.

For me, in all of this engagement with challenges posed by the democratic country we live in or the dilemmas of the Middle East, we can be guided by the words of the Torah – "Justice, Justice thou shall pursue" – meaning the pursuit of justice for us and the simultaneous demand for justice for the Other.

● *Davis is a judge of the High Court, Honorary Professor of Law at UCT and former Chairman of the Cape Jewish Board of Deputies. This is an edited version of a presentation he gave to the 2011 Cape Jewish Board of Deputies Conference 'Transformation', which focused on the psychological, social and political effects of apartheid on the South African Jewish community.*

This article is part of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation's Cape Times series on race and identity.

London to East London, 1895

I FIRST met Rowan Algie when he was an East London school principal, and our paths crossed again when he headed Wynberg Boys' High School with infectious enthusiasm. He e-mailed me a copy of a diary, written by John Algie, one of his forebears, and describes a voyage from London to East London in Hawarden Castle in 1895.

"The tide being full" John Algie wrote of the ship's departure from London, "operations were commenced for hauling the ship out of the dock. The steam winches put the move on, and the dock gates having been opened, a tug took us in charge and in a short time, we were sailing down the river... A real humbug in the river is the number of ketches... always getting in the way."

Arriving at Madeira five days out from London, was a highlight, and besides vividly describing the island, he wrote about the diving boys. "Instead of catching the coins with the hand," reads an extract, "the coins are brought up between their toes... I saw one dive from the main deck while another went right under the ship... and came up on the other side." Ashore in Madeira, he found grapes cost "thruppence a pound" and pears at "thruppence a dozen".

Built for the Castle Line in 1883 to

Port Pourri brian ingpen



compete with fast vessels operated by the rival Union Line, Harwarden Castle and her three sisterships operated on the joint UK-South Africa mail service. In 1890, she was placed on the company's intermediate service from London to South Africa via Southampton.

On both masts were two square sails that were often set to benefit from a following wind, although her 3 900-horse-power engine was upgraded to produce 6 000 hp, moving her at 15 knots, a good speed back then.

She had a narrow beam, giving her the propensity to roll heavily. Algie experienced that when, a "boisterous" sea began to run a few days out of Cape Town, and caused an "accident in one of the ladies cabins. The porthole being open, a big sea rushed, flooding the whole place... Miss Henderson, in trying to make an exit, gave herself a big bruise on her forehead."

He was disappointed at Cape Town, "there being a principal street" although he conceded that some of the buildings, including the

partially-completed post office (now Grand Central) were impressive, as was Table Mountain.

Alfred Basin was the main harbour then and in the Robinson Drydock was "an American man-of-war whose band played *Yankee Doodle and God save the Queen*" at both morning colours and at sunset. Algie also noted that "A new dock [Victoria Basin] is being made and work is done by convicts who are guarded by armed police." Those hapless folks were housed in the notorious Breakwater Prison, now part of UCT's business school.

Between Cape Town and Algoa Bay, the steamer's rolling again became "dreadful", but she discharged a "great quantity of cargo" in the anchorage before heading for East London, where she also anchored. "We were transferred to the tender in a large basket... [and] in due time, our little steamer [the tender] made her way up the Buffalo River and, at the customs jetty... I planted my feet in East London...". He certainly did, for he practised as an accountant in East London for over 40 years.

Bought by Booth Line in 1904 for their South American service, she collided with another Booth ship in the Amazon River and sank.

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Black self-hatred must stop right hair

I AM ONE of those people who are fashion stupid. So, whatever is said here might just be the rumblings of a fashion ignoramus.

Actually, the idea of these musings on hair was planted in my head by Lindiwe Mazibuko – that formidable young woman who knows her story so well she could make you weep. Whether you agree with her or not, you have to accept that she knows and is committed to her cause.

Lindiwe was responding, on radio, to some people who doubted her "Zulness" after she was elected to lead the caucus of her party in Parliament recently.

She said something to the effect that it is a matter of biology that she was born black and that fact cannot be changed by anybody.

There it is. It appears quite a lot of us are not happy with the hand that biology or genes have dealt us.

The way we relate to the hair on our heads might reveal our attitude towards what we inherited from our parents.

Is it a fashion statement that a lot of men have gone *kaalkop* these days? Is it perhaps because they do not like the colour or texture of their hair or the inconvenience of combing their heads in the morning? Or would they rather not have

Just a View mosibudi mangena



people see their balding heads or greying hair? Are they protesting against their genes? So, they shave their heads clean and shiny so that not a single hair is visible?

But the revolt against biology is truly stunning in the case of women. There are wigs and weaves everywhere you turn. They have become truly ubiquitous in recent times – on TV, in the office, on the streets, everywhere. They come in all sizes, colours, ugliness and more. The hair of our women, including that of Lindiwe, has disappeared under the wig.

Women of all ages and every station in life are covering their hair with wigs. Even during the recent heat wave in certain parts of the country, when it should have been sheer hell to cover your head with so much material, the wigs prevailed.

Is this fashion or are our women toy-toying against biology? How different is this from the women in the 1960s who used hot bricks to straighten their hair or applied the dangerous skin-lightening creams

on their faces to fight the amount of melanin in their skins?

It seems there is absolutely no difference between the two generations of women in these epochs in our history. The mentality is the same, but the technologies are different. They all don't like what they were born with.

As young students affiliated to the SA Students Organisation in the early seventies, we successfully conscientised our people against this. Now this mentality is making a big come-back.

Hair is big business and a lot of it preys on the desire of people to change the looks that their genes have given them. Although wigs are made from both synthetic and human hair, most are made from hair harvested from women in India, Pakistan and China. The most expensive hair on the market is said to be obtained from women in Russia and Poland.

Apparently, Polish and Russian hair is of a "better quality" and not as plentiful on the world market as the oriental variety. That might be easy to understand considering how populous Asia is.

There are rumours of exploitation and other unsavoury dealings involving young women in some Asian countries where human hair

is sourced. Be that as it may, why would our women want to have oriental hair on their heads when they have their own? Are they turning their backs on their own hair, wishing that biology had given them oriental hair?

I recently addressed young people at a church camp about politics. During interventions from the floor, a young woman, wearing a wig or weaves that flowed down to her shoulders, stood up to declare that she hates Africans and that they are good for nothing. She justified the oppression of the past and said freedom for blacks was not such a great idea. She left me and her colleagues at the camp traumatised.

By declaring her hatred of Africans, she was saying, by extension, that she hates herself. She wishes that biology had modelled her differently. She might be a shocking and extreme example, but in essence, she is no different from her sisters, mothers and grandmothers who feel that biology has short-changed them.

Otherwise they would have been embarrassed by wearing oriental or any other hair, when they have their own.

Is it perhaps just hot fashion, which I know nothing about? Should I go *kaalkop*?