

## **Corruption has captured our constitution – and the people are suffering**

During the struggle years I used to look forward to the day when we South Africans would all enjoy the many privileges our rich country can afford us.

Teachers like the George Bothas influenced our thinking as students. In 1986, we young people committed to running non-racial youth camps with the theme: “I see a New South Africa”.

Young people from every ethnic group including the ministry of Youth for Christ came together to find each other.

We were not dreaming of a white Christmas, but a Christmas that was for all.

But today we still classify people as black South Africans, white South Africans, coloured South Africans and Indian South Africans. Why can't we just be South African?

These classifications reflect racial inequalities which, in turn, determine the economic inequalities in our South African society – people still live apart as apartheid dictated.

Further entrenching these inequalities is the capture of the state and our hard-fought democracy.

The corrupt have captured our constitution, transforming it into a meaningless document.

Never before were we been exposed to the term “state capture”.

We were always as a people exposed to the illegal use of state funds but never to the capture of a state, a country or a metro.

We became aware of the term state capture during the reign of ex-president Jacob Zuma.

The biggest beneficiaries appear to be one family, the Guptas, who had free access to our political leaders.

To crown it all, they were granted almost instant citizenship of our country.

We now know that the Guptas were just a drop in the ocean of corruption involving or nation's own sons and daughters.

While people and the economy are dying, our sons and daughters are raping the national treasury of its scarce funds.

We are a nation once again at the crossroads of liberation.

The majority is once again oppressed by the minority.

Mr President, what is the difference between the perpetrators of apartheid and the ruling party's employees raping the coffers through malfeasance, tender fraud and the capture of municipal systems?

The capture is being perpetrated by parallel powers which have more authority than you, president Ramaphosa.

We see this in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro, where local politicians simply ignore instructions from Bhisho or Luthuli House.

These politicians are only concerned about themselves. Clearly, the suffering of the majority of people in our metro is not their concern.

Instead, their focus is: “How can we maintain our stronghold on the economy of our municipalities?” The little bit that is left.

The withholding of the equitable shares and grant funds of between R800 million and R1,2 billion is proof that National Treasury does not believe the funds will be correctly spent.

Who suffers? - the citizens who are not in the elite group.

Mr president, it must be pointed out that the majority of the political interference comes from your party. Billions in tax-payers money is being used for private enrichment. Our constitution and the promises made to voters are being ignored.

We as the electorate need to take control of our own destiny.

Hard questions need to be asked - Mr President what are you going to do about the deployees of the ruling party who continue to ignore your directives?

You say that you will deal harshly with those who defraud the PPE coffers. Mr. President who is responsible for billions of pandemic funds being defrauded?

South Africans who have entered your party for their own benefit. Sons and daughters who have allowed greed to control them.

We recognise that it is not only politicians who are corrupt – the Hawks are commended for their swift action in arresting a pastor and his wife on suspicion of fraud and money laundering.

Here the church has to ask a hard question of itself: “What is different between money laundering in the church and fraud in the governing party of our nation?”

It is time to the law enforcement agencies to continue to do their work and execute decisively, accurately and bring to book those who are cheapening our democracy.

It is time for the electorate, the people of this metro, to consolidate our efforts and regain lost ground.

It is time for leaders in civil society to become more and more visible and outspoken about the weakening of our constitution and our democracy.

It is time for us to continue to lobby and create discomfort for those who are failing to deliver much-needed services to our people.

It is time for church leaders to mobilise the masses through keeping our constituencies informed and continue to move in the landscape of implementation.

It is time for the electorate to reclaim our municipalities. We, the citizens, must determine who will govern in our wards, our local government, provincial government as well as national government.

We want a clean metro. We want a safe and secure metro. We want the running of our metro to be free from political interference.

We want transparency, accountability and public participation.

We want jobs for our youth. We want to have better homes for all.

We want our metro become a destination for investors.

We, as civil society, are mobilising our constituencies.

We will determine who will govern our Metro.

Our patience has running out.

It is time to make a change, and we are the people who can do it!

**Apostle Neville Goldman: Ebenezer International**