

## **Using the Covid crisis to create a better South Africa for all**

Many years ago, I was travelling by bus from Johannesburg to Port Elizabeth and got off at the rest stop in Kroonstad to use the facilities. I must have taken too long because when I went back out to where the bus was, I discovered that it had already departed and I was left behind...

It is difficult to put into words the shock, fear and sheer feeling of hopelessness that I experienced at the realisation of my plight!

The Bible also talks about an apocalyptic event where two people will be lying in bed, one will be taken away and the other left behind. Two women would be grinding at the mill, one would be taken away and the other left behind.

Now being left behind in God's end time agenda is scary to say the least and my "left behind" experience with the bus quickly fades into insignificance.

So, imagine my discomfort when I heard the president's speech on 3 December 2020 in speaking about the Covid Alert SA App when he said, "If you have not downloaded the app yet, you are one of those who are left behind."

Now whatever the president's actual meaning behind those words were, it seems to represent a clear line drawn in the sand, that some are going in a certain direction and others are not.

But the same is true for our hard-earned constitutional democracy.

There is another train, bigger than the Covid Pandemic train, that has been tracking through the length and breadth of this nation for almost 27 years.

And there are people who had been consistently left behind. In fact, the liberation train has failed in its mandate to bring peace and prosperity to all.

Government officials and the politically connected enrich themselves while many ordinary people are left behind.

Some get rich on the proceeds of tenders while, in many parts of the country, children still fall into pit toilets.

Official homes of government officials are regularly upgraded, while many children have to attend school in broken-down classrooms, or none at all.

What it has accomplished is personal enrichment of government officials on all levels.

There is also a racial element, with politicians and others creating a polarising racial climate in the nation, while the most vulnerable and needy continue to suffer.

There was indeed progress made in many areas, but you don't praise a kettle for boiling water.

In fact, our government underperformed in so many key areas – let us not even talk about State-Owned Enterprises.

The die is cast. The cat is out of the bag. It is time for change.

While everyone is coming to terms with the realities of the new normal, we must use this time to prepare for a better South Africa.

We must muster our collective will, skills and resources and we must take a stand together.

Albert Einstein is attributed for the quote, "The world will not be destroyed by those who do evil, but by those who watch them without doing anything."

But for all Einstein's brilliance, I like even more the words by Peter Marshall, "A different world cannot be built by indifferent people."

This is a call to every concerned South African.

It is not enough to complain about the state of our nation, or our communities, or about crime among friends and family.

It is time to show that we truly care, by actually doing something and by speaking out.

And how we behave under pressure, as a nation, and as government held accountable by its people, speaks to our maturity as a democracy.

And even as we navigate the complexities of a pandemic, may we never forget that we have a responsibility and civic duty to keep our government in check so that our constitutional democracy is not left behind, nor our entrenched rights.

Many South Africans have had to pay their last respects to loved-ones over the last year and we are all left behind to heal, mend and find a way forward.

But may we never forget to reach out to the needy and broken among us, who hide in plain sight and who have been systemically left behind.

I say we forge a new social compact where government leaders from all parties actually put the interests of the people above partisan interests, so that we can finally begin a journey of healing, reconciliation and growth where no one is left behind.

**Pastor Alain Walljee: Bay Christian Church**