

8 February 2014.

Dear Ubumelwaners (neighbours) of the Southern Peninsula,

It is appropriate to inform you of a development in Masiphumele that started on Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> January. It concerns the eviction of people from one site compelling them to rebuild their shacks at another site. I am disturbed and dismayed at what happens when the poorest in our community get moved.

I protest the absence of land for people to live on. The City says it has very little land on which to build social housing. National Government, whether the Ministry of Defence, Transnet or other Departments have vast tracts of inner Cape Town land, but lack the will or capacity to free up land at sites like Culembourg, Wingfield, Youngsfield or Fort Wynand. These and other parcels of land lie fallow or go to the highest bidder.

The owners of private land, like the vacant land opposite Masi, shrug their shoulders and say: If the price is right, we are happy to sell. Our country is caught in a vicious circle.

The result is we treat people who work for us as security guards or domestic workers like an underclass without rights to housing as our constitution foresees.

Our twice a week domestic help, Xoliswa, could not come to work on Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> January. She told us that she and 128 other shack dwellers had to move to a new site. They had been informed of the move but the City postponed the date many times. Then on Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> January they were told they have to move the following Monday. They co-operated but for days they could not go to work and children did not go to school. They have been told their stay at the new site is also temporary. Xoliswa's family has no idea where they stand on the list for Government housing.

This is her story: She paid a man R200 to help them move their corrugated iron, wooden beams and all their belongings to the new site. At the new site the city provided some but not all with sheets of corrugated iron, wooden poles and a sheet of plastic. At their new place they have no electricity. The first two nights they slept under the sky because their shack was not yet erected. They preferred it that way because it meant they were able to 'look after their belongings'.

Although local Councilor Felicity Purchase promised my spouse Christine that the toilets in the new site would be unlocked nothing happened. When I was there people were forced to cut the locks. The walk to the old toilets is a fifteen-minute walk away. I walked the distance myself. Without streetlights and over rough terrain getting to the toilets at night was dangerous.

With my bakkie I helped bring three loads of soil that is now the floor in the new shack Xoliswa calls her new home. The smell from the ground of the allocated site was unbearable. As best we could we covered stones and debris (including

condoms sticking out of the compressed land-fill material). They and their three children are now housed in an 8 x 8 square meter shack (the previous one was only 6 x 6). They share the toilet and tap with four other shacks. Whilst I was there the wind blew sand right through the holes in the old corrugated iron that makes their walls and roof.

It is for me jolting and painful that people we greet in our homes and on our streets have to live like this. Nobody should ever live like this. We have money, land and resources in this country but the best we can tell these people is, wait, one day your turn will come.

Xoliswa and her husband have lived in Masi since 1999. He had come from the Eastern Cape ten years earlier but when he got a job in Heron Park he moved to Masi.



The toilets of the old TRA site they had to walk to before they broke the locks at the new TRA site. Each four households have a key to one toilet. The stench in the area, due to waste is unbearable.



The new TRA site, a week after opening line is across the road because shacks stand so close to each other.



The new shack. Shovelling soil into it to cover rocks, garbage (including condoms) stuck in the compressed ground

If we do not change the system that treats people in this way, we should at least know that it is happening in our neighbourhood. We cannot get away with saying, we I did not know.

Your comments or responses are welcome.

Horst Kleinschmidt.

PS: Nearly 500 people have signed the petition of Prof Andy Dawes and Dr Lutz van Dijk: Overcoming Poverty. I urge you, if you have not yet signed that you do so immediately. There are three more days in which to do so. Go to:

[www.scenicsouth.co.za/appeal/overcomingpoverty](http://www.scenicsouth.co.za/appeal/overcomingpoverty)