

DA 162

GROUP AREAS

23 - 25

(Nana Sita statement)

Group Areas

The next pages bear witness to the tragic consequences of the application of the Group Areas Act.

SOME EXTRACTS FROM THE STATEMENT MADE BY NANA SITA AT HIS TRIAL UNDER THE GROUP AREAS ACT IN THE MAGISTRATE'S COURT IN PRETORIA ON THE 17th AUGUST 1967.

Your Worship,

I stand before you charged with committing an offence under the Group Areas Act No. 77 of 1957, to which I plead not guilty. It is alleged that in terms of Section 23 (1) of this Act I wrongfully and unlawfully occupy premises which fall in a White Group Area proclaimed as such under Proclamation No. 150 of the 6th June, 1958.

In December, 1962 and in April, 1963, I was charged for the same offence to which I pleaded guilty on both occasions and served a sentence of 3 months and 6 months respectively in jail. I was prosecuted for the third time but because of cases pending in the Supreme Courts the case against me was withdrawn. I am now facing my fourth prosecution. The whole of Pretoria has been declared a group area for White people except a portion of the Asiatic Bazaar and the Township of Laudium which was declared a group area for Indians. I have lived with my family in Hercules for the past 44 years. First from the 1st April, 1923 at Erf 313 Rustenburg Road, and then from the 1st January, 1931, at Erf 321 Rustenburg Road, now known as Erf 321, No. 382 Van Der Hoff Road. A distance of about 100 yards separates these two properties. Hercules now forms part of Pretoria.

THE GROUP AREAS ACT has been declared by the Government as "corner stone" of its apartheid policy. The Minister of Interior while piloting the Group Areas Bill said, that it was a major measure towards the realisation of one of the main objects of the policy of Apartheid, and this object will be achieved without recourse to discrimination between the various races. The restriction imposed on one group is to be imposed on the other groups. It is true that the Act is the corner stone of the Apartheid policy, and a major measure to achieve that object, but in practice its application has been most discriminatory. In the three principle areas declared in The Transvaal as Indian Group Areas, namely, for East Rand, at Benoni, for Johannesburg, at Lenasia, and for Pretoria, at Laudium, no White man had to be removed from his place of residence or business. The removal order fell on Indians only. The Indians in these three places number 57,000 In 26 other towns and dorps that are

proclaimed, except at Standerton and Rustenburg, no Europeans had to move, but only Indians will be removed from both businesses and residences. The Indians in the Transvaal who number 75,000 will eventually be moved to their respective Group Areas against the handful of Europeans in Standerton and Rustenburg who were moved to much better places. Thus only Indians have to bear the burden of discrimination. So the assurance by the Minister of Interior Dr. Donges in Parliament, that there would be no discrimination against the victims of the Act, is not borne out in practice.

Those of us on whom the axe has fallen are undergoing untold hardships through having been uprooted from business and residences, causing misery, suffering, and unhappiness resulting in financial loss and insecurity for the future. Trade has been the main occupation of the Transvaal Indians and to make a success of their business, two and three generations have rendered service

to build up their establishments, which under the enforcement of the Act are now threatened with total extinction. Material losses and insecurity stares them in the face. This, then is the Act, which in the words of the Minister of Interior Dr. Donges was to be applied without discrimination and administered with justice.

The Group Areas Act is cruel, callous, grotesque, abominable, unjust, vicious, degrading, and humiliating to the utmost against whom it is applied. How an Act which is enforced against the Indians with callous disregard of human suffering, misery and unhappiness, can be described to be based on justice is beyond the comprehension of any human being.

The policy of Apartheid enforced through the Act is irrevocably opposed by all sections of the Non-European people of South Africa. And all lovers of democracy among Europeans have equally condemned it as unjust and unworkable. With the exception of Portugal all Nations gathered at the United Nations have condemned it and declared it to be contrary to human rights as embodied in the Charter.

Implementation of this policy through the Act brands us as inferior people in perpetuity, degrades our self respect as human beings, condemns us as uncivilised barbarians. It degrades and humiliates my race to which I am proud to belong, a race which has produced eminent men in all walks of life, Saints, Philosophers, Statesmen, Jurists, Scientists, Educationalists, Industrialists, Poets, Literary Geniuses, Economists, Sportsmen and Philanthropists among both men and women who are self governing and sovereign people. Mahatma Gandhi has been hailed throughout the world as the greatest man of the Twentieth century. Mrs. Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister of India, rules over 500 million people. Mrs. Pandit graced the Presidential chair of the United Nations as the first woman president of that august assembly but here in South Africa, the members of the same race are derided and treated as third class citizens and relegated to "Ghettos" being allotted the status of lepers, suffering with leprosy. They must be separated and kept in isolation. It has branded the 14 million Non-Europeans of South Africa, Africans, Indians and Coloureds as inferior and untouchables to be separated and isolated lest their proximity and shadow contaminate and pollute the members of the ruling race.

From the foregoing it is clear that the harsh and coercive measures adopted under the Act have as their object the hounding out of the Indians from this country of their own accord, and thus achieve the most "cherished hope" of get-

The Natal Mercury dated 19th July, 1948 reprinted this:— "At a recent meeting at Brits Mr. J. E. Potgieter the local Nationalist M.P. and other speakers said that the European and Native must be taught to boycott Indians until they are bled white. If the Indians were reduced to 'abject poverty' by this means, they would be glad to emigrate to India with the Government's assistance."

ting rid of the people the White Peoples' Government brought to South Africa, to serve the interest of the White people, to turn the barren land of Natal into a garden Colony, to make the Sugar Industry flourishing and prosperous and backbone of Natal's economy. Their labour is no longer essential. The juice having been sucked from the fruit, the kernel can be thrown away. The undertakings, assurances, promises, solemn agreements need not worry the conscience of the rulers. They must rule and therefore they say oppression and repression are justified.

In all the years of my adult life, I have passionately believed in the universal ideals of human brotherhood and social justice and am deeply sensitive to any inroads into these ideals. Apartheid refuses to recognise human dignity and brands its victims as sub-human. It denounces all known canons of ethics as propounded by the world's great religions and philosophies, it refuses to recognise human rights as propounded in the Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations.

Shorn of verbiage the Apartheid policy as enforced through the Group Areas Act is nothing but a bare faced expression of a desire to dominate, oppress and exploit the Non-Europeans and to subject them to perpetual servitude of the White Man who claim to be God's chosen people, the Master Race, the Herrenvolk, a concept which plunged the world into a holocaust which was defeated at the cost of millions of lives. Is the world going to be made to witness the same holocaust by perpetuating the concept of the Master Race theory?

I would say that the cruel treatment meted out to Indians by the enforcement of the said Act is a crime against humanity and a sin against God. One day the framers of the Group Areas Act will stand before a much higher Authority than the South African Parliament, for the misery, the unhappiness and the humiliation it caused to the

victims of the Act. May God Almighty forgive them for their trespass.

I stand before you for flouting the provisions of the Group Areas Act, which for the reasons stated above, my conscience does not allow me to comply with. Therefore in obedience to the higher authority of conscience I have decided not to meekly submit to the provisions of the Act. Being a follower of Mahatma Gandhi's doctrine of "Satyagraha" (Passive Resistance) based on truth, love and non-violence I consider it my sacred duty to resist injustice and oppression and in doing so am prepared to bear the full brunt of the law and am willing to face the consequence thereof.

If you find me guilty of the offence for which I am standing before you I shall willingly and joyfully suffer whatever sentence you may deem to pass on me as my suffering will be nothing compared to the suffering of my people under the Act. If my suffering in the cause of noble principles of truth, justice and humanity could arouse the conscience of White South Africa then I shall not have strived in vain. I am 69 years of age, suffering with chronic ailment of arthritis but I do not plead in mitigation. I ask for no leniency. I am ready for the sentence.

DA 167 (18)

Reservation of Separate Amenities Bill

This gives power to local authorities to reserve any public premises (presently defined as any building, shop, structure, hall, convenience, land, seashore and sea — but excluding any streets and roads — to which the public has access whether on payment of a fee or not) for the use of a particular race or class. The new Bill extends the definition of public premises to include also any river, vlei, dam or lake (e.g. Sandvlei or "Zoo Lake") and gives the Ministers concerned i.e. Minister of Community Development of Planning and the Bantu Affairs Department, power to instruct local authorities to reserve public premises for the use of one particular race (a) at all times; for all purposes or (b) for particular purposes for a specified or unspecified time.

If the local authority fails to obey such instruction the Minister concerned can so reserve the premises, and recover the costs from the local authorities.

The Death Knell of Old Simon's Town

By BARBARA WILLIS

(Mrs. Willis is a member of the Regional Council, Black Sash in Cape Town and a long-time resident of Simon's Town.)

ON THE 1st SEPTEMBER, 1967, Simon's Town was declared a White Group Area.

Following on similar proclamations for District 6 in Cape Town, most of the Peninsula suburbs, Sir Lowry's Pass village, Kalk Bay and others, Simon's Town is now forced to conform to the ruling. This latest proclamation is senseless, cruel, discriminatory and heartbreaking, and will create as much needless hardship and suffering for the non-white people as it has everywhere else in the country when people are uprooted without their consent.

A sentence of death has been passed on the Simon's Town we have always known, loved and shared. With this devastating proclamation, the Simon's Town which has successfully weathered the storms of more than 250 years, has been brought to its knees with one shattering and deadly blow. It just cannot exist as a purely European town and remain the gay, friendly and colourful village it has always been. Now the dreadful feelings of shock, foreboding, insecurity and despair have cast such a dense gloom, that walking down the main street is like walking through the valley of the shadow of death.

First the non-white people were forbidden to set foot on all but one of their beaches, and, as a result of this proclamation, even that one —

insanitary and polluted as it is — is now closed to them. This beach apartheid has resulted in the non-white people being turned off the beaches by the police, often accompanied by police dogs.

Now they are to have their very roots torn out of their native soil. Nothing can ever replace a lost home with all its memories and associations. When the dread time comes for them all to go, it will be a town of unhappy ghosts, haunted by those who have been so callously ejected from the homes and land of their forefathers.

In January 1959 Group Areas proposals were first advertised for Simon's Town. A public meeting of citizens was held in February at which a resolution was passed, nem. con., calling on the Town Council to recommend that no group areas

Collection Number: AK2117

DELMAS TREASON TRIAL 1985 - 1989

PUBLISHER:

Publisher: **Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand**

Location: **Johannesburg**

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