

Fair work for all is possible in Gauteng

MAKASHULE GANA

NEARLY a quarter of a century has passed since the first democratic election that brought President Nelson Mandela to office. Now it is time to come back to where we began, to remember where we promised to go – together, as a province and a nation.

When we defeated apartheid, we rejoiced and the world rejoiced with us. We became a beacon for the world, a light of justice and a model for the future, for everyone, everywhere.

We recall that there were great strides made in delivering job opportunities, basic services, housing, education, and social support for the many South Africans who were previously denied these rights.

All Star readers will agree that Gauteng is the proud and dynamic heartbeat of our nation. But, we must be honest, colleagues. The progress of the Mandela years stopped long ago.

It is time to return to the Mandela non-racial covenant to deliver the instalments of freedom promised in the Bill of Rights. These freedoms include housing, health care and access to good public services.

If we are to give non-racial transformation real substance, we need to deliver to the poorest of the poor, the true victims of apartheid, and convince them that the new South Africa is genuinely a better place today.

The harsh truth is that for millions of our fellow South Africans, “yesterday” is not “another country”.

South Africa must compare more favourably to apartheid in terms of living standards, and this means more jobs. Economic freedom is the most important condition for fixing our contract of non-racialism.

Above all, we must give true dignity to all our residents with real jobs.

The narrow definition of people actively seeking work puts the unemployment rate in Gauteng at 28%.

That is more than one in four people without work.

However, this figure disguises the true face of the crisis.

The old pathways to employment are shifting in Africa’s economic heartland

in the fierce heat of the digital revolution. A changing workplace requires new skills and thinking.

Access to the dignity of work requires a new brand of leadership if we are to ensure this critical freedom for all our residents.

We must position Gauteng as Africa’s top business centre and tourist hub, a visionary province that creates real work opportunities and delivers good services for all. We must also market our province as a lighthouse to the nation to attracts people who want to come and work here.

I urge Premier David Makhura to urgently rethink the purpose of fair

work for all. The provincial Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) has only created temporary work opportunities which don’t go anywhere without real skills transfers.

We need to look at a proper subsidised wages scheme for people who are in training, and day care centres for working mothers to leave their children.

And the time has come for the provincial government to work seamlessly with local government to give all title deeds to Gauteng residents, so that it becomes much easier for black people to create their own businesses.

This has already been started where the DA governs in Johannesburg, Tshwane – with the magnanimous support of the EFF and other parties in council votes and Midvaal, which we

govern on our own.

A better life for all might be promised by the ANC, but it is realised by the Democratic Alliance where we govern.

Gautengers know what doesn’t break us makes us stronger. We have a unique and powerful past from which to draw our inspiration and our courage.

Because as the end of apartheid inspired a generation, we must go back and recall that memory of exuberance. We owe it to our fellow South Africans. And this generation – us! – must rekindle our commitment to a non-racial and inclusive economy.

Our province, our nation, our future generations depend on it.

Makashule Gana, MPL is a DA Member of the Gauteng Legislature