

The South African spirit can never be contained

By [Amy Pieterse](#), issued by [Ginkgo Agency](#)

24 Apr 2020

Freedom Day marks the momentous occasion all South Africans were given the right to vote, and the ability to choose a future for themselves. Today, the notion of freedom has taken on new meaning under lockdown. But while our movement may be limited for some time, our choices are not.



Lockdowns. Social distancing. Isolation. Quarantine. As the spread of Covid-19 accelerates across the globe, uncomfortable measures have to be implemented. Staying at home, often separated from our loved ones, means thousands of lives saved. It may seem like involuntary confinement, a deliberate attempt to limit the freedoms we've fought so hard to achieve. But it is of utmost importance that we adhere to these restrictions. Under these new conditions, we have to redefine freedom for ourselves.

It has been 26 years since the historic day South Africa voted for a democratic government. At this time, the echoes of apartheid cannot be ignored: the papers determining your ability to move, the deplorable abuses of power. This is a period of fear and uncertainty. Yet each of us still has a choice, from those holed up at home to the officials enforcing the rules. Will we stay safe, and protect one another? Will we show kindness amid the panic and confusion? Will we choose despair, or will we choose hope?

Because one thing is for certain: no one can ever take away our spirit. Our compassion, resilience, bravery, skills, talents, and abilities can never be contained. Even under restrictions, our individuality remains intact. And as such, so does our freedom – our freedom to be who we are. While we are stuck inside, it's easy to mourn the loss of the lives we lived only a few weeks ago. What the other side of this pandemic will look like is unclear. We don't know when this will end. But how we choose to spend this time may determine that very outcome.

Every day, we must make a choice of how to live. Whether it's buying food for our neighbours or appreciating the small things that bring us joy, the way we approach our freedom now is up to the individual. For those who have the means, we can make donations or support drives to assist some of the most vulnerable at this time, from people living on the streets to women and children facing abuse at home. If each individual chooses responsibly, we can collectively move forward. Perhaps, we can even create a world better than the one before this pandemic.



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South Africans are already coming together to bring about change. [Imtiaz Sooliman](#), founder of Gift of the Givers, is running an extremely successful [fundraising campaign](#) for healthcare workers on the frontlines of fighting Covid-19. With his NGO, he's rallying to gather the necessary supplies for the medical sector. Sooliman has even helped to set up [additional testing stations](#). "People think that if you go to a disaster area you will find people who are demoralised, without hope," he said when responding to the Knysna fires in 2017. "But the strange thing is, the people with the greatest hope are there."

The same is true now. Online, the [Cape Town Together](#) group is uniting people across the city to support each other during the pandemic. Through a series of community action networks, or CANs, neighbourhoods from Sea Point to Khayelitsha are actively working to help one another. Some CANs are creating hand washing stations, while others have organised to send supplies or data. By pairing wealthier CANs with more disadvantaged areas, the people of Cape Town are demonstrating what it means to overcome our differences and unite.

Individuals are also using their skills to inspire positivity. Artist [Alice Toich](#) is harnessing social media to keep people creative under lockdown. With her [#21DaysofArtSA](#) challenge, she encourages people to pursue an artistic prompt each day while at home. Likewise, chef [Fatima Sydow](#) continues sharing her heartwarming Cape Malay recipes [online](#), all the while reminding people to stay safe. Even the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra released a virtual concert, with each musician playing the South African [national anthem](#) from their home. Its message is clear: although we are physically apart, we can still come together. We can still create something beautiful.

The next few months will bring challenges that may seem insurmountable. It will test our resolve, our patience, our hearts, our minds, and our bodies. But it will also bring about lessons and opportunities that can lead us to a brighter future. The very best of our humanity shines in the darkest of times. And perhaps with this pandemic, we'll learn how to continue reaching out to assist in ways we never imagined before. Our ability to care, to help, to commit acts of selflessness knows no bounds. We have the freedom to choose. South Africans are making their choices. And for that, we have a reason to hope.

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