

## Santa at Diepkloof Clinic Still Shut Down

By Amanda Nhlapo

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Santa, a tuberculosis (TB) clinic established in 1989 within the Diepkloof TB Clinic and operating in partnership with Baragwanath Hospital, was shut down between 2004 and 2005 due to severe infrastructure issues. The clinic, once a vital resource for TB patients, was closed following persistent drain blockages that led to sewage spilling into the maternity ward at Baragwanath Hospital.

Since its closure, the building has been informally occupied by residents who have turned the abandoned clinic into makeshift homes. The City of Johannesburg (COJ) claims uncertainty over the ownership of the property and maintains that the current occupants are living there illegally.

Mr Ndlovu, one of the residents, recalls the deteriorated state of the clinic when they arrived. "We were told to evacuate because it's government property," he said. "The blocked drains caused sewage to flow into the hospital, and the place was declared unfit."

Nobuhle Xulu, 21, has lived in the building since childhood. She describes the conditions as unsafe, especially for children. "There's sewage everywhere, and we rely on illegal electricity and water connections. We get water from a fire extinguisher pipe—it's not clean and not meant for drinking," she explained. "There's no park or safe space to relax. We go to the soccer ground, but even that is often covered in sewage. It's hard to play or host matches."

The lack of recreational and educational infrastructure in Diepkloof continues to affect young people. The township has no heritage sites and only one library, which is located far from many residents. Ntombifuthi Zulu, 16, expressed frustration over limited access to books. "We need books for school, not just the internet. The library closes early on weekends, and we don't have enough time to finish our work."

The absence of basic services, safe spaces, and educational resources in Diepkloof reflects a broader neglect of township development. Young people feel the impact most deeply, as opportunities for growth, learning, and leisure remain out of reach. "Our townships lack almost everything that can help the youth," Ntombifuthi added. "It's killing our future."

Santa's closure and the ongoing occupation of its premises highlight the urgent need for government intervention, not only to resolve ownership disputes but to restore dignity and infrastructure to communities long left behind.

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