

Commemorating Emancipation Day

The dawn of 1 December 1834 was greeted with bonfires and festive rejoicing by the enslaved people of the Cape, as the day marked their legal emancipation from bondage. It brought to a close one of the most shameful and inhumane periods of our history, which had at its core the capture, sale and ownership of humans by other humans.

For the past three years, Capetonians from all walks of life have gathered in the city on the night before Emancipation Day, processing through the streets with music and song to mirror the celebrations of 1834. This year's programme will be a more stationary one, and will take place at the Prestwich Memorial on the corner of Somerset and Buitengracht Streets. A number of participants have been working for a few months exploring the contemporary significance of such commemoration, reflecting on its meaning in their own lives as well as on its broader social significance. The exploration has included examining modern forms of slavery, captured in the title *Slavery then and now*. Dance, drama, music and poetry will form part of the programme, and the public are invited to participate.

Organisations who have been part of steering this initiative are the District Six Museum, PeaceJam, the Prestwich Place Project Committee, the Institute for the Healing of Memories and the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation. A number of individual artists have also been involved, many of whom have been part of the Cape Cultural Collective.

The Prestwich Memorial and Visitors' Centre was completed during 2008, and is the final resting place for the human remains that were uncovered during the course of developing a building project in Prestwich Street in Greenpoint. The programme starts at 22h00 on the night of 30 November and will continue until 01h00 on the morning of 1 December.

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