

COMMUNITY READ 2023

TREVOR NOAH'S BORN A CRIME

DISTRICT 9 SCREENING

MARCH 2, 2023

ABOUT THE FILM:

DISTRICT 9 (2009)

Directed by [Neill Blomkamp](#) (*Elysium*, *Chappie*)

Produced by [Peter Jackson](#) (*Lord of the Rings*, *Get Back*)

- District 9 was Blomkamp's feature directorial debut. The feature was inspired by his short film, [Alive in Joburg](#) (2005, 6 min). Prior to that, he began his career working in visual effects.
- The film was shot on location in Soweto during a period of violence between native South Africans and Zimbabwean immigrants living in their communities. Some of the news interview footage used in the film were taken from responses to questions regarding the Zimbabweans in the community.
- Produced on a budget of \$30 million, it grossed over \$200 million in 2009 and proved to be a surprise hit with audiences and critics when it came out.
- The film was nominated for 2010 Best Picture Academy Award, Best Editing, Best Adapted Screenplay, and Best Visual Effects (along with 7 nominations from the BAFTAs).
- Blomkamp, a white director, grew up in Johannesburg during Apartheid, which inspired his vision for the film:

"It all had a huge impact on me: the white government and the paramilitary police -- the oppressive, iron-fisted military environment. Blacks, for the most part, were kept separate from whites. And where there was overlap, there were very clearly delineated hierarchies of where people were allowed to go. Those ideas wound up in every pixel in 'District 9.' "

<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2009-aug-02-ca-district2-story.html>



THE ALLEGORY:

Like most Sci-Fi films, *District 9* works by creating its own mythology within the context of real-life South Africa.

And like a lot of Science Fiction, it's not particularly subtle about the societal/political and moral structures it's allegorizing.

APARTHEID (1948-1991)

- In 1948, the official policy of racial segregation – apartheid – was instituted in South Africa.

Apartheid was codified through a [series of Acts](#):

- In 1949, the *Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act* was instituted.
 - Prohibited marriage between whites and non-whites.
- In 1950, the Population Registration Act and Group Areas Act were implemented.
 - The *Population Registration Act of 1950* required that each inhabitant of South Africa be classified and registered according to their racial characteristics.
 - The [Group Areas Act](#) assigned racial groups to different residential and business sections in urban areas like Johannesburg.
- The Population Registration Act – and the end of Apartheid – was not [repealed](#) until 1991.

DISTRICT 9 as DISTRICT 6

DISTRICT 6 was an area within Cape Town called the Sixth Municipal District. Before 1948 it was a cosmopolitan community known for its diversity of language, religion, economic class, and people.

The District Six Museum commemorates the history of this significant area:

“...[DISTRICT 6] became a living example of how diversity could a be a strengthening characteristic of a community and need not be feared.

“It was a vibrant community of freed slaves, merchants, artisans, labourers and immigrants, with close links to the city and the port.

“It represented the polar opposite of what the Apartheid government, inaugurated by the National Party coming into power in 1948, needed people to believe and internalise.

“District Six thus became one of the main urban targets for destruction in the city of Cape Town.

“On 11 February 1966 it was declared a white area under the Group Areas Act of 1950, and by 1982, the life of the community was over.

More than 60 000 people were forcibly removed to barren outlying areas aptly known as the Cape Flats, and their houses in District Six were flattened by bulldozers.

Source: <https://www.districtsix.co.za/about-district-six/>

Additional Resources:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2009/aug/20/district-9-south-africa-apartheid>
- <https://reelrundown.com/movies/The-Real-Story-Behind-District-9>
- <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/district-9-2009>
- <https://www.rogerebert.com/far-flung-correspondents/mike-rix-of-johannesburg-discusses-district-9-filmed-in-south-africa>
- <https://www.rogerebert.com/scanners/district-9-alive-in-joburg>
- <https://www.districtsix.co.za/remembering-the-declaration-of-district-six-as-whites-only/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E57yMTGPD1s>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qGsEjtBexf4>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1s5iz6ml-qA>
- <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/537515/born-a-crime-by-trevor-noah/>