

## This country's greatest goal.

**Boris Johnson, Sunday Times, Page 1, 4 July 2010**

Each villa was the size of a country club, and through every set of gates you could see the carob-shaded tennis court or the ultramarine ping of the sunlight on the pool. Every property overtly proclaimed the determination of the haves to resist the depredations of the have-nots. Great brown Rhodesian ridgebacks snuffled behind the electric fences. Chubb security vans cruised quietly up and down. Fixed to the wall beside virtually every nine-foot impregnable gate was a sign announcing that any intruder would be met with an "Armed Response". I wish you could have been there, to soak up the splendour of the lives of the affluent Johannesburg professionals. Then I wish you could have come with me to another neighbourhood, in the Cape Flats, not far from Cape Town. Then you would have understood the vast economic disparity of South Africa - the wealth gap that helps to prompt the security fences of Westcliff. Here the streets weren't tarred. No one had cleared up the piles of rubbish. No one had painted the battered, grey breeze blocks of the flats or mended the panes in the washing-hung windows. Of the hordes of unwashed kids who came out to compete for our presents - badges and trinkets - hardly any seemed fluent in English.

A nice, one-eyed woman called Mary took us in to see her flat, and though she was immensely proud of her two chipped-eared china dogs, and though her lino floor shone with mopping, she had almost none of the amenities that are taken for granted by the poorest families in modern Britain. She had no hot water. She had no cooker except for a couple of electric rings. She had no system of heating or air conditioning, and though Mary and her family were avidly following the World Cup, they were listening to the commentary on a crackling old radio. They had no television, nor did any of the neighbours. Above all, she had no job, and neither did her husband. It was years since he had last worked as an upholsterer for motor cars, and the same applied to all the hundreds of other men and women who swarmed out of their flats to welcome the delegation from London. They had no job, and no hope of a job - and yet these people were lucky by the standards of many. Mary lives in breeze-block luxury compared with the inhabitants of the "informal settlements" - shantytowns to you and me - of which there are 230 in the vicinity of Cape Town alone, providing homes to about 500000 people in a population of 3.5 million.

It is when you have such inequality, and such grinding poverty, you cannot be surprised that some pessimists have asked whether it was sensible for South Africa to take on the difficulty and expense of hosting the World Cup. That is why I have spent the past few days posing the legacy question to just about everyone I have met. What happens on July 12, after the captain of the winning team has waved the Jules Rimet trophy in his sweaty palm? What will people say when the last fan has traipsed home and the last journalist has composed his last philippic against his defeated national team and when the last vuvuzela has parped its last melancholy parp? What will this World Cup leave for South Africa? I have asked barmen and journalists and politicians such as the remarkable Helen Zille, premier of Western Cape. I have ended up feeling like those Monty Python characters who were so foolish as to question the benefits of the Roman Empire. The World Cup not only gave jobs and skills and hope to thousands of local people. It gave an absolute deadline to South Africa for the introduction and improvement of all kinds of infrastructure - not just sports grounds, but roads and bridges and airports and bus lanes that would otherwise not have been built and which will benefit the country for decades to come.

Above all, the World Cup has given this country something intangible but priceless: a deep sense of pride that it has taken on something difficult and done it well. When they look at themselves in the approving mirror of world opinion, South Africans of every race agree that the first African World Cup is a joyous success, and that success breeds confidence. The rand is rising. South Africans who left for Australia or Canada are starting to return to a country whose banking system largely escaped the recent crisis.

The sheer number of visitors - about half a million - will help to open the eyes of the world to South Africa and its potential for trade and investment; and get this: crime, the crime that has been supposed to be one

of the drawbacks of living here, is down 90% in central Cape Town, and there has not been a single serious incident of crime or violence in any of the fan parks. Of course there will be disappointments, and no one could pretend that the World Cup will solve the country's economic or political problems. But it offers a sense of unity and confidence to a place with a tragic past. It gives potential wealth creators at least some of the infrastructure they need.

Fifa took an inspired decision to give the World Cup to South Africa, and South Africa has responded brilliantly.

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