



Welfare, crime and society

Gated communities: squatter camp to safe community

VOICE OVER COMMENTARY

A new city initiative is the N2 Gateway Project. Part of the Langa township has been cleared to make way for social and low-cost housing for Langa residents. Joe Slovo Phase 1 was not designed to be gated but the residents themselves have organised local security and chosen to keep the fences and gates put up while the project was under construction.

CYNTHIA

I was living at the old flats on Washington Street. I was so excited when I moved from there to here. I was happy to have more space.

I've got two bedrooms now and I'm living with my children, my three kids and my grandchildren now, two of them. This one was born here.

NOMFUMDO

I used to live in Joe Slovo squatter area ... and then the flats were built and I came back to live in a flat here. I can say I own a flat here, yes.

This was a small street. There were shacks on this side of the road. And this shack ... my shack was right here, standing here in this corner. It was a two-room abangaloo, a metal one with a corrugated roof on top. It had the electricity box inside it, it had burglar bars on the windows and on the door. There was a lot of sand in front, you seen now it's covered with grass. It was just starting from that tree, facing on the east, it was blue coloured and I used to love it.

It's much safer here from the way that I used to live. In the squatter areas there are some fears like fires and some things like not getting protected from thieves and stuff like floods.

CYNTHIA

It's safe with the gates. You must always make sure that you always close your gates. And you must make sure, when somebody wants to come in like you did now, because the security they have to open for you to come in. You didn't just barge in, so the gates are useful for something like that.

BARBARA SOUTHWORTH

Joe Slovo was designed, the way in which the units were designed, the layout was designed to encourage integration. There's a couple of different spaces, public spaces; there are a couple of play, children's play parks; there's a square which was always intended to be a square, not just for the residents of the new development but also for adjacent communities. If you fence the precinct then those public spaces are private, and then it's inappropriate and in fact it's illegal for us to pay for private open spaces because that funding was for public open space.

The city's never given permission for a fence, so all that's happened is that they've never taken, taken the building contractors' fence down. So it is fenced but ... and I think it is, it is about trying to retain some control over who has access to the units. And that's certainly the pattern and the trend in the Jo'burg, the Johannesburg housing, social housing projects where the fencing is that so that they can have some form of access control so that if you're not paying your rent, you can't get in. It's essentially as crude as that.

VOICE OVER COMMENTARY

Clifford Sittonga is involved with the planning of similar housing projects to Joe Slovo in the nearby township of Khayelitsha.

CLIFFORD SITTONGA

We decided that we will not have a concept of gated communities in Khayelitsha at this stage, I think it is a sense of neighbourhood and social cohesion that is there. People who stay in Khayelitsha are the people who predominantly are coming from the rural areas. They are used to a particular way of life, of engaging with other, which is other and so on. Not being protected or behind a long wall, barbed wires and so on, they are not used to that.