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## World Cup: Is South Africa's white town racist?

Nicolas Brulliard [2] June 21, 2010 05:59 Updated June 21, 2010 11:44

Small all white Afrikaner town is not interested in soccer, which is viewed as a black man's sport.

ORANIA, South Africa – Vuzuzelas, the long plastic horns that have invaded South Africa, are unlikely to break the silence in this small town.

The yellow jerseys of the national team, worn by every other South African, are nowhere to be seen, and the steady schedule of World Cup matches that consistently brings the country to a standstill has no impact on this community's daily life.

That the soccer fever that has engulfed South Africa has no hold on Orania should be no surprise to anyone. For the past two decades, Orania has done its best to move in a different direction than the rest of South Africa. As the fledgling democracy was striving to establish a nonracial society, this remote town in Northern Cape Province did the exact opposite and became a preserve for white Afrikaners.

While 80 percent of South Africa's 48 million people are black, 100 percent of Orania's 750 people are white Afrikaners.

And Afrikaners' sport of choice is not soccer.

"Soccer doesn't appeal to me, really," said Francois de Vos, who moved to Orania in 1998. "I like my rugby."

Across the country, locals have rallied behind Bafana Bafana, the rainbow nation's soccer team, and the team's green and gold colors are ubiquitous. The blaring sound of vuvuzelas can be heard not only in stadiums, but in supermarkets, posh suburbs and shopping malls.

The World Cup is the largest sporting competition ever to take place on the African continent, and South Africans of all races are rushing to stadiums, bars and fan zones set up with giant screens to be part of the historic event.

The Northern Cape, the province where Orania is located, is the only one of South Africa's nine provinces not to be home to one of the 10 World Cup stadiums, but about 15 public viewing areas have been set up throughout the province said Northern Cape Premier Hazel Jenkins earlier this year.

"The public viewing areas will emulate the atmosphere at the stadiums, and it will allow football lovers the chance to converge at a central point to watch all games live," Jenkins said.

Orania hasn't been graced by one of the viewing areas, and there doesn't seem to be a great need for it. The town has a pristine rugby field but no soccer pitch. Orania Mayor Carel Boshoff said he heard that one of the town's 320 families subscribed to satellite television to watch the soccer tournament.

"People looked at the opening scenes and the first game and so on at the restaurant down by the river," Boshoff said before adding jokingly that "it's not sort of forbidden" to watch the World Cup in Orania.

Thirteen families moved to Orania in the early 1990s as events — including the release of Nelson Mandela — paved the way for the end of apartheid and democratic elections. The town was an abandoned camp built decades earlier to house workers for a nearby dam on the Orange River.

Boshoff is the grandson of Hendrik Verwoerd, the former South African prime minister who is widely viewed as the politician who created apartheid. Boshoff said he sees a lot of positive in what has happened to the country over the past 20 years, including the extension of the right to vote to all South Africans, but he said the evolution has also been accompanied by an unfair marginalization and victimization of the Afrikaner community. Textbooks, for instance, are biased to showcase Afrikaners as a brutal people without highlighting their positive contributions to the country's history, he said.

Orania has two schools where the teaching is done in Afrikaans. Cultural activities are organized year-round, and a hill overlooking the town features busts of Afrikaner icons. The town also has its own credit union and its own currency, the Ora, which ensures most of the residents' money is spent locally.

Some Afrikaners come to Orania for work or the appeal of a virtually crime-free community, but most come for its ideals, Boshoff said. The town is currently home to more than 700 inhabitants and growing. It could eventually grow to host up to 30,000 residents, but for now Orania has as many people as it can accommodate, Boshoff said.

Prospective moves are reviewed by Orania authorities, and race is not a criterion for admission. But should a non-white family to apply for residency, "it would definitely create tensions," Boshoff said, adding that the case hasn't presented itself yet.

While Orania strives for separate and self-sustainable development, it does not mean it is cut off from the rest of the country entirely. Besides agriculture, tourism is a growing sector of the local economy with a hotel, campground, spa and guesthouses.

The town has also engaged repeatedly with South Africa's government. Mandela visited Orania soon after he became president, and last year the town welcomed a delegation of the youth league of the African National Congress, the party in power. President Jacob Zuma,

who has described Afrikaners as “the only white tribe” in Africa, has also praised Orania as a model for eradicating poverty in rural areas.

“We need that, the ‘getting-along,’ the mutual recognition,” Boshoff said.

Whether Orania’s engagement with the world will extend to it embracing the World Cup remains to be seen, but there is still a month of competition for interest to grow.

De Vos, himself a former rugby player at the provincial level, said he has already watched several World Cup games despite his moderate enthusiasm for the sport.

“Spain is my team,” he said. “They make an art of soccer.”

South Africa <sup>[1]</sup>

South Africa

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