



JOBURG GUIDE

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artfully removed from his tightly sealed vehicle and given to him after the game.

Or Jo-Anne Richards, who recounts how her friend's "collection of beggars" triggers panic in her husband. When he hears a tapping at the intercom one night, he "hudd[les] in the bedroom with the kids, straining for cars, gunshots, screams ..." and calls security, only to discover that the "tapper" is a deaf beggar paying his wife a regular call.

Richard's piece also describes the raw, restless energy that seethes through Joburg, that leads to round-the-clock partying and those who live here to conclude that all other cities are boring in comparison: "There was a strange urgency to people's partying, as though a natural disaster were to occur in an hour's time, with a lifetime's worth of ardent mingling to fit in before then," she writes.

Many describe how Jo'burg shone with glamour and excitement during the days of apartheid for those trapped in the dusty discomfort of the townships. Others talk of the disappointment and struggles of those trying to eke out a living in a sprawling, unfriendly city. Andrew Molefe talks of "streets of Johannesburg" that for many "have been nothing but boulevards of broken dreams".

There is plenty of pathos - stories of poverty, Aids, unemployment and racism. Samson Mulugeta writes about his family's failure to find a home in a racially-divided Johannesburg, dashing his expectations of integration in the "rich cultural and racial mosaic that is the new South Africa".

Zakes Mda describes the new racism of today: xenophobia against Africans from the north flocking to the city - lawyers and teachers from the Congo forced to park cars for a living. There are sad and cruel images too - the rampant, selfish pursuit of BMWs regardless of the plight of the poor, bedraggled street children high on glue careening around the streets of Hillbrow in imaginary Hollywood car chases ...

From Jo'burg to Jozi is a mix of past and present, of hope and pessimism. It captures the contradictions of the city and reminds us that Jo'burg is, as always, unique, exciting and overflowing with possibility.

From Jo'burg to Jozi, published by Penguin, costs around R100, with all royalties going to Cotlands, a home for children affected by Aids - so this worthwhile read is also for a worthwhile cause.

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