



NEWSLETTER

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"**African time**" is a part of everyday life in sub-Saharan Africa, and is often used as an acceptable excuse or understandable reason to keep someone waiting. Newcomers to our shores regularly struggle with the local sayings of *just now* (meaning "soon") and *now now* (meaning "very soon"), and how the word "now" could still involve a certain amount of waiting. **Waiting** - and the patience that is consequently required - is indicative of a way of life out here, and we have been experiencing a lot of it lately.

Monday 11 February was the day our **baby** "Crumb" was expected to leave his dark, watery world for a new one filled with sunshine and air. It was apparent however, that our boy was already on "African time" and by Thursday, Kate was still waiting for a sign that our boy intended to head for the "finishing line".

During his time in the womb Crumb had already "travelled" around much of South Africa & Swaziland, "listened" to numerous live bands and enjoyed many "strolls" along our local beach - with his parents all the while patiently waiting for him to develop and grow. However 40 weeks was long enough and we - especially his increasingly uncomfortable mother - were ready for the waiting to be over.

We are thankful to say that Henry Charles Humphrys (aka Crumb) did indeed decide to enter our world during the afternoon of Friday, 15 February after a very short but intense labour. We delivered him at home, and almost did it ourselves as our midwife only arrived with 10 minutes to spare - totally due to our (perhaps Crusty's, as Kate was a little bit pre-occupied with simply trying to breathe at this stage) ignorance of the situation and the Hollywood-influenced belief that all labours carried on for at least 10 hours. After the event, we joked that because Kate had been sitting on the kitchen-cum-birthing chair right up to the last throes, poor little Crumb has been left with a flat head from waiting to come out. After a strangely quiet and almost surreal moment after he had come out, Henry let out three little coughs due to his first contact with fresh air, and then proceeded to wee on his Dad! Kate was an absolute legend, taking the pain and discomfort in her stride without any painkillers, assisted by Crusty who was chief breathing coach and back masseuse.

After waiting so long for our little boy to meet us, the serenity we felt that evening will be irreplaceable, and we are especially excited about bringing him up as a "child of the world" with the sensitivity and broad-mindedness that comes from living in such an inspirational country as South Africa.



Proud parents Crusty & Kate with 6 day old Henry Humphrys.

Our fellow South Africans have also been doing a bit of waiting lately, as the country rides through some pretty serious **political and economical storms**. The next general election is due in 2009, with the incumbent party - the ANC - expected to again win comfortably, resulting in the party president also being installed as the country's president. South Africans, and many non-South Africans are however waiting to see whom that person will be. At the ANC national conference late last year, former deputy-president Jacob Zuma - relieved of his position when charged with corruption (eventually struck off the roll) and rape (acquitted in court) - was elected as the leader of the party, after a hard fought and often-nasty campaign against the current president, Thabo Mbeki.

South Africa's lauded constitution allows for only two terms of office for any single president and while acknowledging that his two terms are up in 2009, Mbeki still wished to remain leader of the ANC. Most ordinary folk agree that this was to either continue pulling the strings from the background or to simply keep Zuma out of the race. Mbeki was however resoundingly rebuked by his own party members and now South Africans are faced with the sticky situation of opposing factions within the ruling party for up to another year.

Of perhaps more concern is that on 28 December last year, Zuma was served an indictment to stand trial in the High Court on various counts of racketeering, money laundering, corruption and fraud. The trial is to proceed on 14 August 2008, and the charges are linked to a very shady arms procurement deal by the South African government in 1999. Zuma, who initially called for "his day in court", is now trying every avenue possible to halt the trial, claiming "political motives" are behind the charges. Maybe Zuma is concerned that his trusted financial advisor, Schabir Shaik is currently serving 15 years behind bars for corruption and fraud for his part in the same arms deal?

The past months have seen **running blackouts** across the country, and it appears South Africans are going to be waiting for a number of years before Eskom - the country's electricity provider - can fix the problem. Mismanagement and a lack of foresight by both Eskom and the government have been blamed for the electricity crisis, and President Mbeki has publicly apologised for the hardship now being faced by many in the country.

However, in true Compass Odyssey style, we would prefer to look at the **positives** that have arisen from the gloom, where South Africans have shown their fantastic capacity to take everything in their stride, and rise above the adversity with typical ingenuity and flair.

Allan Cawood, CEO South Africa of IT giant Dimension Data, sees the country's political situation not as doom and gloom, but rather a shining example of democracy in post-apartheid South Africa. He recently pointed out that Zuma has been democratically elected as his party's president and, if put forward as the party's candidate in the 2009 national elections, all South Africans then have the democratic choice to vote for him or not.

In addition, accusations against political figures, he says, are not unique to South Africa. Praising the country's constitution, he takes note that it *"decrees justice for all as a basic right, and the adherence to the principles of our constitution will ensure that anyone accused of wrong doing has a platform to defend themselves. This is how it is. Whether the allegations are true or false justice will prevail. This is the basis of our constitution."*

With regards to the energy crisis, the boss of mining giant Anglo American, Cynthia Carroll recently acknowledged the problem but insisted it was not a disaster, and advised that Anglo American had experienced similar problems in other fast-growing economies such as Chile and Brazil.

Taking a shot at all those who seem to jump on the doom-and-gloom bandwagon when South African, and indeed African, problems take centre stage, she was recently quoted as saying *"At this stage, with so many of us getting depressed by the power-supply situation in South Africa, I would like to dispel some of the notions that are bound up with so-called 'Afro-pessimism'. I find it strange that if there are problems in say, Zimbabwe or Kenya or Somalia, many people, quite uncritically and unthinkingly, put all of Africa in the same boat. Whereas, if there are problems in Bolivia or Pakistan, we do not write off the whole of South America and Asia."*

Perhaps the final word should go to Alan Knott-Craig, the MD of local internet provider iBurst. He sent out an email to his employees that was so full of optimism and enthusiasm that through the wonderful world of email-forwarding and tabloid magazines, his words reached most South Africans and have become a bit of a mantra for those who still keep the faith that South Africa is indeed one of the most exciting countries to live in.

Part of his email writes, *"2008 has certainly started with a bang! The future was rosy on 31 December 2007, but suddenly everyone is buying candles and researching property in Perth! A combination of recession in the USA, global equity market negativity, high interest rates, the National Credit Act, and power outages have combined to create the perfect storm. But don't panic! This is not the first time there's been doom and gloom. Every few years the same thing happens. We experience massive economic growth, everyone is optimistic and buying Nescafe Gold, and holiday homes, and Merc's. The positivity gets ahead of itself and the economy overheats, and then panic sets in because the economy seems to be collapsing when in actual fact it's simply making an adjustment back to a reasonable level. We're lucky enough to possess a huge chunk of the world's resources, ie. gold, platinum, coal, iron. The government has already embarked on massive infrastructure projects (some of them a tad late, ie. electricity), and this will pump money into the economy. I think 2008 will be a tough year, but I also see it as a great opportunity to seize the day whilst everyone else is whinging, and get a front-seat on the inevitable boom that we'll experience in 2009, 2010 and beyond."*

South Africa isn't perfect, and has its fair share of social problems such as crime, poverty, health and corruption. But what must be remembered is that it has only been 14 years since the country experienced true democracy for the first time. A new inexperienced government was voted in by the populace, and immediately set to the task of healing a country that had been woefully maltreated for the previous half century. Basic human rights such as freedom of movement, access to adequate healthcare and clean water, housing for all, and the right to vote are all new to many South Africans, and we are constantly inspired by the warmth, generosity, and humour that we encounter here daily by people who have not lived as privileged a life as we 'immigrants' have.

Take note of our fellow traveller's comments on our website and come see, feel and experience this for yourself - be it by joining us on one of our Compass Odyssey safaris or by any other means. You won't regret it.

SOUTH AFRICA & MOROCCO INFO EVENINGS:

Crusty will be visiting Perth from 10-14 March to promote our 2008 South Africa & Swaziland safaris, as well as our newly released 2009 Morocco safaris. Come listen to him talk about the respective countries at the Colonial Conference room, Melbourne Hotel, corner of Milligan & Hay Streets, Perth CBD on:

11 March 2008 - Morocco Safari

13 March 2008 - South Africa & Swaziland Safari

Some food platters will be served at 6.00pm with an informal presentation by Crusty to follow.

Please RSVP via email if you're planning to attend, or email Crusty to meet him at a different time between 11-14 March 2008.