

RELEASED: Wednesday July 6, 2016

Foreign Correspondent: Freedom Riders

Airs Tuesday July 12 at 9.30pm on ABC & iview

How do you free troubled kids from the violence and poverty of South Africa's broken townships? For starters, you teach them surfing. Sally Sara reports on the idea that's inspiring youngsters to unleash their best.

In addition to airing on Tuesday night on ABC & iview, this episode of *Foreign Correspondent: Freedom Riders* will be launched as a dynamic interactive documentary. The ABC is the first Australian media outlet to use Verse, a groundbreaking platform that allows audiences to navigate their own way through the story with extra footage and features. Meet new characters, explore locations, ask questions and discover more. Live the story.

The URL: <http://abc.net.au/freedomriders> will go LIVE from 6am (AEST) on Tuesday July 12.

A preview link for media to view the *Foreign Correspondent: Freedom Riders* interactive documentary using Verse, is available on request.

Sally Sara is available for interviews.

Interviews are also available to talk about the interactive storytelling video platform Verse.

If you're a child growing up in South Africa's Masiphumelele township, chances are you've seen the worst of violence – shootings, stabbings, assaults – or have been a victim yourself.

"It kills them, it doesn't give them any hope – and when you're traumatised you have a lot of anger issues, you can't control yourself." - Noncedo, 19

But every afternoon a van rolls into Masiphumelele, offering kids the chance to escape the traumas of township life, if just for a few hours. Bodies and boards and wetsuits cram inside as they head for the rolling surf of the Cape coast.

Surfing is changing the lives of township kids. Every wave is a challenge to mind and body, a teacher of discipline and persistence and a potential spark to self esteem.

"For me this is freedom. It gives me more hope than I ever had before." – Noncedo

It's all part of Waves for Change, brainchild of a travelling British surfer who first coaxed a few local kids into the water five years ago. Now it's running across three townships with 250 children and 20 coaches.

"Surfing has made me wise and made me stick to my values and to have principles for myself." – Apish Tshetsha, first youngster to join Waves for Change, now one of its coaches

Waves for Change works on dry land too. Coaches are mentors, connecting with children and their schools, keeping tabs on their emotional health.

In this exquisitely filmed story, reporter Sally Sara gets inside the lives of the Waves for Change kids and follows them as they excitedly prepare for their first surfing tournament.

They hit the water in sight of Robben Island, Nelson Mandela's old prison during the apartheid era, a time of segregated beaches and "white feet for white sand".

"I'm feeling I'm gonna win!" - Likho, 11

This will be the first time that Likho's proud mum has seen him surf. She thinks he'll win too, but she's worried about the sharks.

Win or wipe-out, kids like Likho and Noncedo are scoring their own triumphs by the simple act of paddling out and catching a wave.

***Freedom Riders - Foreign Correspondent* airs 9.30pm Tuesday July 12 and 10.30am Thursday July 14 on ABC & iview and 6.30pm Saturday July 16 on News 24 & iview.**

***** Explore more with the *Freedom Riders* interactive documentary.** The URL <http://abc.net.au/freedomriders> will go LIVE from 6am (AEST) on Tuesday July 12.

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