

President Nelson Mandela and Francois Pienaar, ex-captain of the Springboks who led South Africa to victory in the 1995 Rugby World Cup



A driving force

In July 2012 Francois Pienaar discussed the power of sport to inspire whole communities. He answered questions.

Journalist: Do you think one sport works better than the other in achieving change?

Francois Pienaar: It depends. There are the three or four biggest sports in the world and it depends on the country. Football is huge, athletics is huge, and in America you have the NFL¹, basketball and women's volleyball is massive. It doesn't really matter what sport it is, as long as it is a big sport in that country. And if you can use that as a powerful vehicle for change and make people think: "why don't we use it?", you have the opportunity to change people's views and perceptions, because they love sport, they love the brand, they love the athlete. And if that athlete says to them: "Think about somebody else, what are you doing in your community?", then again it plants a seed² and that little orchard³ can grow. (...)

Journalist: You have lived in Britain for several years [as player, coach and CEO⁴ of Saracens rugby club] and have travelled a lot with the teams. Do you see differences in the role sport plays in different places?

FP: Every country is different. When I lived here [in the UK], I was asked to speak in the House of Commons and the topic was the power of sport, so I did some research. I learned that in Camden [area of London] there was just one communal sports field, so what do the young people do? How do they express their energy? And when you dig

a little deeper, you realise that because there is no social prospect, and no sport, they will get involved in gangs and get involved in stuff that is going to affect their lives negatively. Every country is different, but every big city has those challenges, around the world. You can get depressed by it, or look at what people are doing in the communities to create change.

Danielle Batist, interview with rugby legend Francois Pienaar, *The Big Issue South Africa*, September 24, 2012

1. NFL [en of ol] = National Football League

2. seed (n.) [si:ɪd] = graine

3. orchard (n.) ['ɔ:tʃəd] = verger

4. CEO [si: i: ʒəʊ] = Chief Executive Officer: P-DG