

Hello again and welcome to As It Is from VOA Learning English! I'm June Simms in Washington.

Many cities around the world are experiencing population growth. And the list of megacities is expanding. Today we tell about the South African city of Johannesburg. For many young people, Johannesburg is an increasingly popular place to call home.

But first, we look at some changes taking place in New York -- the largest city in the United States. And we hear how those changes are affecting one of its neighborhoods.

## **New York's Chinatown is Changing**

Rising land values have changed the Chinatown area of New York City. Chinatown has long been an important base for Chinese immigrants and their families. It has one of the largest populations of ethnic Chinese outside of Asia. But many are leaving the neighborhood because of the rising cost of housing. Chinatown is now becoming home to many whites and students.

The Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund has its headquarters in New York. The group released a report earlier this year. It said there is a similar shortage of reasonably priced housing in Chinatowns in Boston and Philadelphia. The report found an increase in high cost housing and hotels. It also noted a decline in families and Asian businesses in these Chinatowns.

In New York, Mayor Bloomberg's policies are praised for a major decrease in crime. Many of his supporters say higher housing costs are evidence of a city's economic progress.

But in Manhattan's Chinatown those rent increases have already pushed many people out. Numbers from the 2010 Census suggest that about 17 percent of the Chinese people in the area have been displaced since 2000. That is about 6,000 people who have left the neighborhood.

Sun Meirong has been living in Manhattan's Chinatown since she first came to the United States from Fuzhou in 1990. She owns a restaurant near the center of Chinatown. She says she has seen a large decrease in customers, mostly Chinese immigrants.

"In the past, during the thanksgiving holiday for example, there were so many people on this street outside. You could not walk. But in the past three years nobody is on the street anymore. This is the change we see in Chinatown."

Sun says that many of her neighbors have been forced from their homes after building owners decided to repair and modernize the buildings.

“Houses have been renovated and after that they just get sold to developers without considering to give it to the people who were living there in the first place: immigrants. The U.S. is a country of immigrants, but many immigrants get here and do not have a place to live or cannot afford it.”

For Sun, what is happening in Chinatown opposes the very ideals that America stands for.

Several organizations in Chinatown are fighting what they see as the destruction of their neighborhood.

Li Hua is a secretary of the Chinese Staff & Workers' Association. She says her group collected thousands of signatures in an effort to stop plans for new high price developments.

“We have been protesting against it in all venues possible. At public hearings, with the administration's planning department, to the city council. We had people participating at every step, not just a few but hundreds. But Bloomberg charged on, they just do not care.”

New York recently elected a new mayor. Some are hoping for a change in housing policy. Mayor Bill de Blasio has promised to take action to increase reasonably priced housing in the city.

You are listening to As It Is. I'm June Simms in Washington. Thanks for joining us!

## **Africa's Big Cities Draw Young Up-and-Comers**

From New York to London, Paris to Lagos, the list of international megacities is growing. Recently, mayors from many of the world's big cities met in Johannesburg, South Africa. These officials gathered to discuss some of the issues facing large cities.

Africa is home to two cities with populations of more than 10 million people. Those cities are Cairo, the Egyptian capital, and Lagos in Nigeria.

More and more African cities are expanding quickly. Experts predict their populations will increase by millions within the next few years. Faith Lapidus has more in this report from VOA's Anita Powell in Johannesburg.

Former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg praised the urbanization of Africa to the mayors at the C40 gathering.

"In 2011, there were 52 African cities with a population higher than one million people. By 2016, in only two years, there will be around 65. And that's a good thing."

However, the executive mayor of Johannesburg, Mpho Parks Tau, says this kind of growth creates its own issues.

“As people are coming to the city there isn’t always adequate accommodation to have those people coming to the cities. A lot of them find themselves in inadequate accommodation in slum environments.”

Like many people who live in Johannesburg, 24-year-old student Simphiwe Kahla came from somewhere else. He left his town in the rural Eastern Cape province to live in Johannesburg. The city is an important trade and transport center for Africa.

“Here, you actually stay on your toes. It keeps you on your toes, it’s all about hustling, it’s all about business. I think I would really get bored if I would have to return to the Eastern Cape.”

Songezo Mcapukisi is also new to Johannesburg. Like many others there, she says she came to the city -- not for the culture, the mix of people or the restaurants -- but for the money.

“We’re faced with the reality that our skills, they are only needed in the megacities, in the metropolitan cities. So, you know, I studied accounting, and there are no jobs for accountants back home.”

Lawyer Chris Baird agrees.

“All of my friends are here. It’s a great place in terms of being a young professional. It’s where the great work is. It’s the economic hub of the country. And really, I’ll give you that it’s not nearly as pretty as Cape Town, but it’s where you need to be if you want to climb up the ranks.”

Hannah Edinger is a director with the research group Frontier Advisory. She says one of the things that make African megacities special is that there are just not enough of them.

“I think what is interesting about African cities, unlike European cities for example, is there is only a few cities, and these cities are expanding quite rapidly.”

Simpihiwe Kahla, Songezo Mcapukisi and Chris Baird are among millions of people who have moved to fast growing African cities in recent years. The cities include Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Cairo, Egypt; Lagos, Nigeria; Nairobi, Kenya and, of course, Johannesburg, South Africa. Together, more than 30 million people now live in these African cities. And the numbers are growing.

I’m Faith Lapidus.

And I’m June Simms. Have a question or comment about the program? We would love to hear from you. Email us at [learningenglish@voanews.com](mailto:learningenglish@voanews.com). Or visit our website, [LearningEnglish.VOANews.com](http://LearningEnglish.VOANews.com), and click on “Contact Us.”



Thanks for listening!