

# ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE

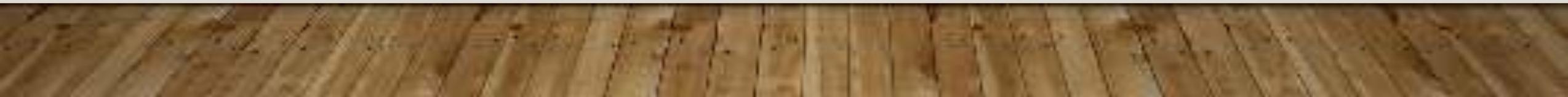
FROM MARGINS TO  
BATTLE FOR  
RECOGNITION

# DEFINING THE ISSUE - RECLAIMERS

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- Approximately 100 000 people in South Africa survive by salvaging recyclables from trash.
- These 'reclaimers' collect 80 to 90% of post consumer packaging in South Africa.
- They collect, sort, transport and sell materials of value – not 'waste'
- Thus they ensure that South Africa has recycling rates comparable to top 5 EU countries
- They are founders of a Billion industry
- However, they do not receive recognition or payment for the service they provide.
- Instead, Cities such as Johannesburg (CoJ) contracts private companies to collect, sort and transport recyclables
- Thus, dispossessing reclaimers of their livelihoods in the industry they created.
- A story as old as Capitalism itself; black people provide cheap labour that subsidises industry and municipalities and consumers.





# MARGINALIZATION OF RECLAIMERS

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- Reclaimers faced with marginalization through S@S to private companies
- PikitUp process designed to exclude the informal sector
- A panel of service providers selected
- They collect in High income areas
- Our survey of 100 Reclaimers in April 2018 – showed reductions in Income of up to 60%
- Prevented from working by Security companies
- Assaults and thefts of materials by Contractors
- Illegal evictions from sorting spaces

# WHAT S@S LOOKS LIKE TO RECLAIMERS



# WHAT EVICTIONS LOOK LIKE: RANDBURG

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# EVICTIIONS – BATTLE FOR SPACE

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# HOW WE ORGANISE

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- ARO includes South African and non South African reclaimers. Solidarity and acceptance of all Reclaimers is key to everything we do
- We also trained a core team of 5 Organisers, who are almost full time in the project. They are an early response team, they are trained in negotiation skills, engaging with the media and have experience in conflict resolution
- All decisions on strategy are discussed with the Executive and various options are debated before decisions are carried out
- Having an experienced project manager, has accelerated the pace of development
- We had to deal with issues of illegal migration
- We had to encourage solidarity and unity
- We had to preach patience and fortitude
- We had to develop a team of activists who are now almost full time.
- However, they need to keep constant contact with constituency





**MISSING**



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Reclaimers' ing the Future

THE RECLAIMERS ORGANISATION

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REWARD - A LIFE OR DEATH

REWARD - A LIFE OR DEATH





# EXPERIENCES OF ENGAGEMENT

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- Organizing was different from my Union experience; in landfills it is similar. But in streets – very different. Move to sorting spaces and living spaces
- Organise the total human being – it's not enough to intervene at level of officials. Have to deal with evictions, violence from police, private security, criminals, turf wars, xenophobia
- We deal with violence from police
- Evictions and homelessness
- Theft of materials and crime against Reclaimers
- Burning of materials
- Car accidents
- Political instability in neighboring countries



# OUR RESPONSE: ORGANISE WITH RESIDENTS

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- Our strategy is to secure access by working with residents
- Argentinian Reclaimer: Access to materials is important as water is to Fish
- Access is everything:-
- Started with Plastic bag diplomacy
- We started by sending messages to residents Associations – no response
- Positive response through MTE in Brazil – She organised the first meeting in Brixton
- Addressing Residents, Schools, etc.



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BSRA Chat

Alan, Ashleigh, Claire, Galina, JP, Leigh...

There may not be a recycler there when you drop off, but you can leave bags at the corner. There is usually a roll of bags under the tree and you can pull one off as a replacement bag, or alternatively collect from Riverside Park Security or the guard hut security at the top of Main Road - Shell Boom. You can also buy clear plastic bags from most grocery stores.

- There are still occasionally bags that are missed or bags not being replaced. We are dealing with these on a case by case basis. Please DM Angela or send an email to [recycling@bsra.co.za](mailto:recycling@bsra.co.za) if your full recycling bag was missed or if you didn't receive a bag on a Tuesday.

- Please use Angela - [0833085190](tel:0833085190) - as the contact for any queries going forward to free up committee members who also play other roles for the BSRA.

Thank you all for your ongoing support!

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+27 76 331 8818

-Ellenor

Working very well thanks for persisting

ca:30

WINNING OPPONENTS OVER TO OURSIDE

# OUR SYSTEM: SEPARATION OUTSIDE SOURCE

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- Build one to one relationships with residents
- We make it easy for residents to recycle
- We do the separation of materials
- We provide bags (in short term)
- We provide a cleaning service once Reclaimers have collected
- We participate in Clean up initiatives
- We resolve local problems involving reclaimers and residents



**MIDRAND RECLAIMERS MOVING  
LOCATION AND CLEANING UP**



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**TAKING OVER OPEN SPACES -  
MEADOWLANDS**



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**ILLEGAL DUMP IN MEADOWLANDS**



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**WALKING TO TAKE OVER OPEN SPACE**



**FORMING ALLIANCES WITH  
COMMUNITY**



FORMING ALLIANCES WITH SCHOOL CHILDREN AND TEACHERS



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**FIRST MEETING WITH RESIDENTS**



PROVIDING WASTE MANAGEMENT  
SERVICES TO STREETOPIA IN MELVILLE



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**MAYFAIR WEST CLEAN UP**

# PLASTIC BAG DIPLOMACY

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- We use branded recyclable bags to reach out to Residents
- These are handed out at community events, when Reclaimers do door to door collection.
- Also for pilots of Separation @ Source projects we are starting with Residents



# USING EVERY OPPORTUNITY

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- We use any and all opportunities to engage with business, government,.We do clean up campaigns, approach the press, go on radio stations and try never to leave any official comment on our work unchallenged
- Our slogan is;‘if someone opens a door, slightly – we will push it open and the windows too’
- We use use any platform, including hostile spaces to spread the message



place







# JUSTINA KHOELE: IN HER OWN WORDS



I am Justina Khoele from Roodepoort landfill, called Marie Louise. People do not think we are human, we were called scavengers and other hurtful words. But with this work, I have put my son through Boston College, and my last-born child is in Damelin College.

The Municipality is now coming in, with private companies to take away our work.

I've worked in recycling for 28 years. Municipality is forgetting us. We don't have proper facilities where we're working, like clinics.

I am 60 years and still running behind a truck to collect materials in the landfill. The municipality hasn't yet registered us. Private companies are making millions, based on our work. They found us there but are now throwing us away. We are the founders of the recycling industry. Outside the landfill, you will not be able to tell that I work with waste. I am a human being, who is working hard for my family.

We are not looking for food in your bin. When I'm in the landfill, I look dirty and you might think I want food, but I don't. I want recyclables. I don't want to be hired by anyone or to work for anyone, we just need the support of public to do the work we do.