



At Home in Jeppestown?

Stories of life in Jeppestown's informal settlements

Call for Footage

Dahlak Exchange, supported by Bjala and Umuzi, is producing experimental short films about life in Jeppestown's hidden informal settlements. **We want to tell the stories of these residents, expose their housing conditions, and use the films to generate innovation and support for new low cost housing solutions in Johannesburg's inner city.**

But we are doing it differently. We believe that letting people tell their own stories can be far more powerful than having outsiders parachute in with cameras and questions. So we want people like you - who live work or study in Jeppestown - to tell the stories of your community.

This is a call for footage. It can be taken on a cell phone, or DSLR, or any other decent camera, by anyone, in any language.

Read on for details...

Context:

The City of Gold draws hopes and dreams from all over the continent. Rural South Africans looking for a new life are joined by a constant stream of migrants from other African countries, and as they all arrive in Johannesburg, they need a place to live.

Amidst a national housing crisis, with a backlog of over 2 million units, the city can't keep up. Downtown Joburg is home to what one photographer called "the worst urban poverty I've seen in all my travels around the world." But remarkably few South Africans are aware of these improvised settlements lining the streets of the city's industrial areas. Makeshift urban residences are hidden from view — they are built with the scale and materials of townships, but concealed within the impenetrable walls of old industrial buildings.

Such buildings line the streets of Jeppestown, housing up to 70% of the community's population. Families and groups sleep, cook, bathe and live in tiny windowless rooms, often without proper electricity or running water. In one building, 300+ people share a single toilet. Poor light and ventilation, extreme noise, and horrendous sanitation conditions are compounded by serious health and fire risks.



Residents are desperate. Unable to afford housing in the city but needing to be close to work opportunities, they end up here, subject to the whims and exploitation of slumlords who have hijacked the buildings and extort them for rent.

Yet these slumlords have hit on a real business opportunity. There is a big market for inner city housing, and central Johannesburg is littered with derelict industrial buildings which could be repurposed. Bjala is a pioneer, innovating in design and delivery of high quality formal housing that is affordable for this market. While still in the early stages, they are working to create a viable, scalable model that can help meet the demand for very low cost residences. But there are very few organisations doing this, leaving access to dignified housing beyond the reach of Joburg's urban poor.

Why not? One reason is that banks aren't convinced that it is a viable market, and won't provide project financing. Another is that these urban shantytowns are virtually invisible and largely undocumented. This project explores how film can change that.

Grab a camera and take to the streets. Submit your footage, and join us in exposing these hijacked settlements, which are both a violation of SA's Constitutional commitment to decent housing, and a window for economic opportunities.

Target Content:

There is a variety of relevant content that you could film, all centred around the core story of informal housing in Jeppestown. We emphasize the need for strong visual content to complement the stories.

Interview ideas (don't be limited by these questions, but do let the topics guide your interview):

Please have each interviewee start, on camera, with their name and where they live.

- **Stories!:** Who is living in these buildings? How did they find the residence? Why Jeppestown? Tell us their stories, even if they aren't directly about housing. Where are they from? Do they have family around? Is there a sense of community in their building or neighbourhood? What do they hope for? Give examples and anecdotes, short clips that help us to stand in their shoes for a few minutes.
- **Housing conditions:** What do the buildings look like? How is the housing arranged? What are conditions like? What is private/what is shared? What risks do they face? Do residents of the building organise or meet? Is there a sense of community?
- **The market:** Who owns the buildings? Who collects rent? How much do they pay? Do they provide you any services or maintenance? Who cleans the shared spaces? What happens if you miss rent? Do people generally pay their rent on time? Can you leave at any time? What do you think the solution is to provide a better alternative? What are the barriers to accessing better housing?
- **Jeppestown:** What and where is Jeppestown? What makes it special? Who lives here? What is the community like? Why is or isn't it a great place to live?
- **The Bjala model:** Interview Bjala residents. What do they like or dislike about Bjala housing? Where were they living previously and how was it different? What would their ideal housing be?



Visual Footage:

- **It should be aesthetically arresting.** We want people to watch it not only for the content, but also because the footage, scenes, & faces draw them in. Focus on faces.
- **Capture the good, too.** Don't tell a sad one-dimensional story. Also capture the beauty, the smiles, the light streaming in...
- **Show the housing conditions.** Both the scale and the small details.
- **Capture atmosphere.** Show the outside of the buildings, the streets they are on, and what is happening around them. Include markers (streets signs, etc.) to give people a sense of where it is.
- **Be creative!**

*Credit for all photos to Jonathan Torgovnik. Check out the article at <http://time.com/4155787/johannes-burg-jonathan-torgovnik/>

Language: It's up to you to identify buildings and interviewees. Interviews can be conducted in whatever language you and your interviewee prefer.

If you are submitting interviews in a language other than English, please include a paragraph or bullet point summary of the interview, including key questions or highlights. Don't stress over this. It can be very short & quick. We don't need the details, just give us a sense of the topics covered. Summaries for multiple interviews can be compiled and submitted as a word doc.

Ethics & Release forms: Make sure to chat to people first and explain what you are interested in, and why we are doing this project. Never force people into being on camera.

Every interviewee should be given a release form. Explain to them what it says. The top half is for the interviewee to keep, and the bottom half must be signed by them and kept by the cameraperson to be submitted with the footage.

If someone wants to participate but doesn't want their name or face used, you can either blur/crop their face or use audio recording only. Please adapt the release form accordingly. Talk to Odi or Amy if you need further help on.

Submission Details

Footage should be submitted to Oz at Umuzi. Please use the name of cameraperson as footage file name (numbered if there are multiple files). Make sure to submit release forms for each interview, and brief summary for non-English interviews. Deadline for submission is 21 October 2016.

Prizes

Two cash prizes of R1500 each will be given for the best footage submitted. All footage used in the final production will also be credited online and at screenings. Plus you get to be part of a cool experimental project and contribute to helping transform housing in South Africa.



Broadcast:

Submitted footage will be edited into a variety of short pieces. These will be shown at:

- Organised Screenings on Bjala rooftop (with people in govt / private sector housing industry; with Jeppestown community; others)
- Social media
- Dahlak Exchange "Voices of..." weekly Vlog
- Online or traditional media organisations if we can get them interested (eg. GroundUp media, SABC, etc.)

Contact: Amy Tekie | amy@dahlakfilms.com | 0792779006

**Credit for all photos to Jonathan Torgovnik. Check out the article at <http://time.com/4155787/johannesburg-jonathan-torgovnik/>*