

## **Inner-City Residents Debate Social Services, Crime**

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The Central Business District (CBD) of Johannesburg, fondly called the City of Gold, has a huge mass of people from different countries, flowing about within the inner-city. This congestion of people and the lack of service delivery by the city has led to intense pressure on services. It has thus been the root cause of the bad living conditions within the city.

Citizens who reside in the CBD and visitors to the city, have taken a stance, on whether the department of social services should be held accountable or not. They argue that it is due to the department's incompetence and lack of accountability that has led to poor infrastructure and a lack of basic services.

Nokwanda Nxumalo who sells fast-food next to the House Of Movement (HOM), Khanya College on Pritchard Street, said the untidy and unhygienic conditions affect her business. "It smells here and customers feel uncomfortable when they see flies landing on the food;" said Nxumalo who is in her mid-40s.

"They end up running away." Nxumalo reflected and said that her business is not growing. People like her depend on the small amounts they make to be able to live and see another day. "Traffic Police usually harass us, they take our tents and food." the street vendor continued, "We are forced to pay fines so we can repossess our assets."

Mphuthumi (23), a resident of Gandhi Square Precinct, said, "The living conditions are bad, it's dirty and we are scared to walk here." Mphuthumi thinks that people from neighbouring countries do not take care of the environment in Johannesburg. "Despite the fact that cleaners will clean, tomorrow people will litter again." The young man feels that it is due to the high amount of immigrants flooding the city that they find themselves in such situations.

"Government should be responsible for allowing, foreigners without documentation to enter the country," he said. He also mentioned that there were bodies found in an abandoned building next to Kwa Mai Mai. He suggested that the Department of Social Services should construct investigations on abandoned buildings suggesting some are hijacked, saying they serve as a hiding spot for criminals.

Kelebogile Mokakale, who came from Potchefstroom argues that people should also look at the positive side of the presence of migrants instead of being biased. "We come to the city because things are cheap here," She said. Mokakale thinks the department should still be held responsible. "It is every person's responsibility to ensure that our environment is clean and safe." She added, "being a criminal is a choice, we don't give birth to thieves," Mokakale retorted.

Mokakale believes that people's social behaviours stem from their upbringing at home. She believes that a solution to this crisis is the creation of jobs and nationalisation of abandoned infrastructure. "When the state creates jobs crime will reduce."

A shop owner, close to the HOM, expressed frustrations with xenophobia. "During strikes or xenophobic attacks it is unsafe for business; we are left vulnerable with no protection," said the spazaman. He also mentions that on a daily basis, criminals threaten buyers' safety costing his shop. "They target car mirrors, break windows and steal clothes or gadgets if found," he said. As result buyers feel unsafe and buy in safer areas.

Kamogelo (18), a Matric learner, from Centurion College, said the inner city is no longer a safe place. "It's not safe for me as a student." She said, "I always make sure that I walk with a group of people I know." Kamohelo says she started having fears after she learned of a story of a lady who was raped and killed. The victim was left in an abandoned building near New Model Private College. She says there should be cleaning and safety campaigns, to improve the living conditions in the CBD. It is also how people can bring change in how the city has been viewed lately.

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