

## **Opinion: I wanted to Understand the Phola Park Sanitation Problems**

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As I was walking down the street in this area, I stepped on a heap of cigarette stumps and snack wrappers mixed in with used baby napkins. I thought to myself how are people living in these conditions? ... I did what anyone would do, and that was to investigate.

After walking to a carwash right next to Khumalo Street, in Thokoza, at an Engine Garage, I found young men sitting taking a break from what looked like a long trip carrying groceries. They didn't mind the piles of trash scattered around them. The first guy, a 24-year-old, had controversial thoughts about the local councillor on why there was gargabe everywhere. His name is Themba Lushozi.

Lushozi was with a friend, Sifiso Jedwane (26). The moment I brought up the sanitation issues in this area, they didn't hesitate to say their local municipality failed the people of Phola Park, Thokoza. Sifiso spoke about how as young people, there is often little to nothing that they could do to improve the situation because everything related to service delivery was decided through tenders in the neighbourhood.

"You work together to try to bring change, then the money there's money, your leadership runs with the money," Said Lushozi, highlighting how often those in leadership positions often abandoned the people they struggled and achieved milestones with, only to turn around and trouble them.

These were his thoughts, especially about the fact that Mziyanda Mketsu, their local councillor, doesn't even live in the area. "Why should he make this trash problem a priority?" As I looked around me as far as my eyes could see, there were no trash bins anywhere in sight.

Lushozi added saying that he was a part-time recycler working on material he collects such as plastics to get extra cash and it also doubled up as a way of cleaning up the 'hood' since their municipality is failing them in that regard.

These were very intelligent young men I spoke to; you could tell that this situation saddens them and frustrates them that there's little that they can do to fix this on a larger scale. But they kept hope that the community will unite and put itself in a position to manage the waste since the municipality won't.

I wanted to hear the municipality's side of this story as to what they are doing to deal with the issue. The people are willing to help solve this, it is their community. Then again this is an assumption on my end since I only spoke to two people

I know others who do recycling as a way to combat unemployment, not waiting around for the municipality to solve this, seems to be the solution for the trash problem.

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