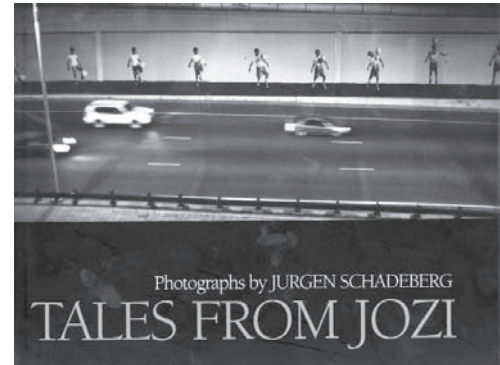


# Bad buildings, bad practices

## Real people are living here

On the next pages **Jurgen Schadeberg** shows the housing plight of some vulnerable Johannesburg inner city dwellers. Until the Centre for Applied Legal Studies took a court case against the city council to protect them, all these people were under threat of eviction. **Stuart Wilson** a researcher at CALS gives a context for these pictures.



Photographs by JURGEN SCHADEBERG

TALES FROM JOZI

Between 2002 and 2006, forced evictions from so-called “bad” buildings in Johannesburg became regular occurrences. Thousands of desperately poor people were evicted onto the streets from 122 buildings in what local government called a massive “clean up” campaign in aid of Inner City Regeneration Strategy (ICRS). The campaign was breathtaking – both in its characterisation of the condition of buildings it identified as “bad” and in its ignorance of the desperation of their inhabitants.

Jurgen Schadeberg’s *Tales from Jozi* is a sensitive and intelligent study of the humanity behind Johannesburg’s “bad” buildings.

“Bad” buildings were created after property owners abandoned their investments during a period of capital flight and inner city decline in the 1990s. They house the poorest and most vulnerable residents in the inner city who are often employed on the lowest rungs of the formal labour market or engaged in informal livelihood strategies. They pump petrol. They guard and clean buildings. They sell sweets, fruit and vegetables on city streets. They

recycle trash. Their income is on average R1 000 a month a household. This means they cannot afford to live in a peripheral location and pay the costs of commuting daily into the city. It also stops them from living in formal accommodation at market-related rentals. “Bad” buildings are their only option.

Until recently, municipal policy on “bad” buildings was to close them down in “blitz operations”. What this meant in practice was the eviction of large numbers of poor people with no prior consultation, little effective notice and without the provision of alternative accommodation.

The result was the gradual exclusion of the urban poor from some parts of the inner city. Yet people evicted from “bad” buildings seldom left the urban core. Instead, by and large, they moved into other “bad” buildings in the inner city and faced eviction again.

During this time, little-to-no effort was made to provide affordable accommodation options for poor people in the inner city. Beyond arms-length support for a few token transitional shelter schemes, all of which were overcrowded, the

municipality was blind to the needs of people living in “bad” buildings. It was cynical in its stereotyping of them as illegal immigrants, prostitutes, drug dealers and the like who did not deserve accommodation within the municipality’s urban development plans.

This attitude is now hopefully a thing of the past. At a recent hearing in the Constitutional Court, the municipality conceded that occupiers of “bad” buildings could no longer be evicted onto the streets. The municipality needs to engage with them and provide accommodation alternatives or assist in upgrading their homes while they live there.

This change is a result largely of legal and social activism which forced the municipality to address urban decay as a *human* problem. There is a slow, clear shift in focus from a concern for the state of “bad” buildings to an interest in the needs of the occupiers.

Schadeberg’s work, forces us to consider the raw humanity of Johannesburg’s most neglected minority – victims of a city, which, until recently had its priorities badly wrong.

Ginwell House, Nugget Street, Johannesburg



**Thoko Madondo (37) and son Siphosihle (3). Thoko is unemployed and receives no child support. She stays in Ginwell House, Nugget Street in the centre of Johannesburg city with her boyfriend who supports her by buying and selling scrap. They have lived here for three years.**

Milton Court, Johannesburg inner city



**Four year-old Sifiso Dlomo (far left) is one of many young children who live in unsafe blocks of flats in the inner city of Johannesburg. This dark, dank, staircase with its pungent stench of urine, is their playground. Their families have no money to send them to crèche or school.**

Milton Court, Johannesburg inner city



**Hunter Street: Pensioner Kholiswa Luningo, recovering from tuberculosis, in front of her room in a building in Johannesburg. “In July 2005, officers of the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department confiscated my informal stand on Sievwright Avenue, as well as all the goods I was selling. They told me I would have to pay a fine of R500 if I wanted my goods back. I could not afford this... I managed to find occasional daily work handing out leaflets to motorists... If I was evicted from the property, I would go back to living on the streets until I could find somewhere to stay. I have no family in South Africa and I am unaware of any accommodation in Johannesburg that is within my means.”**

Saratoga Avenue



**Thabilise Mynandu (23) has lived on Saratoga Avenue, Berea for ten years. She earns R1 500 per month working as a security guard.**

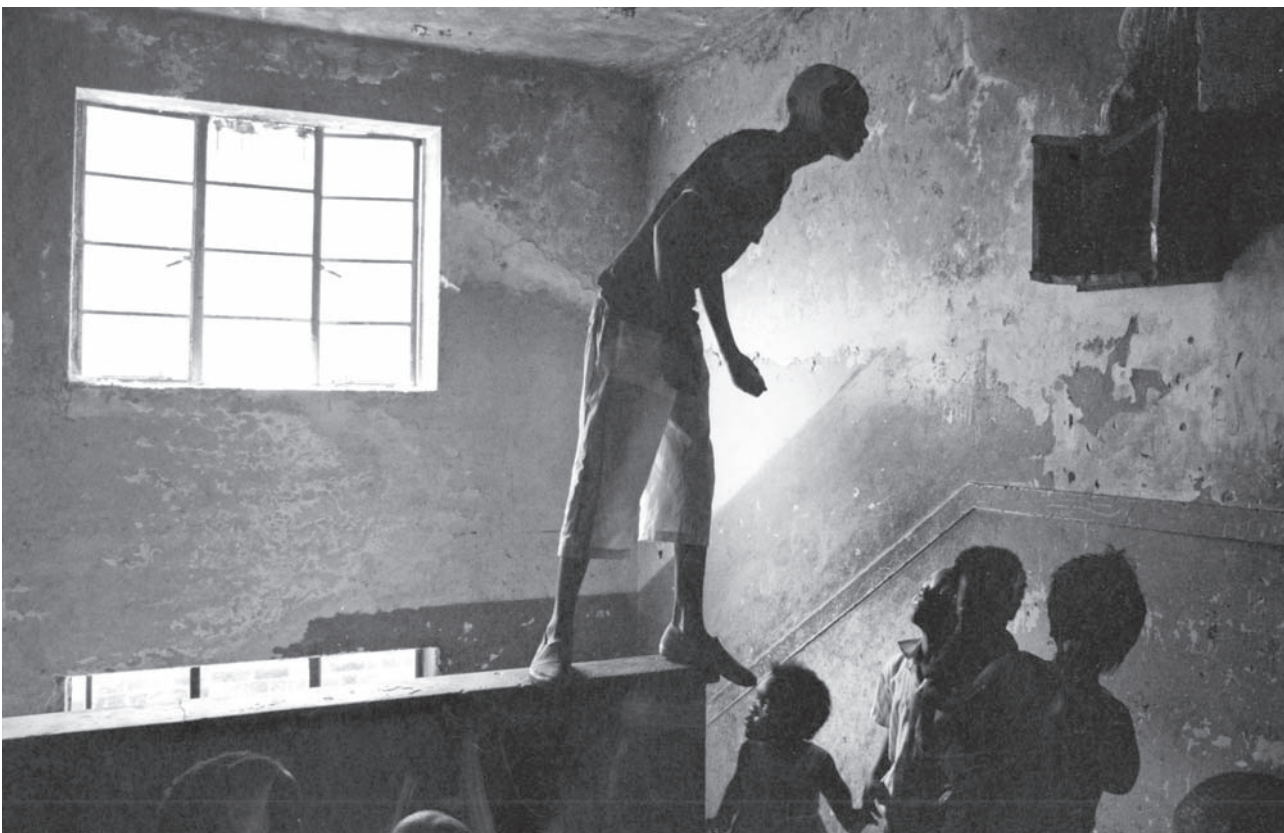


## San Jose, Berea



A view from San Jose, a block of flats in Berea. San Jose is currently at the centre of litigation which has brought the City of Johannesburg's programme of inner city evictions to an end – for now at least.

## Milton Court, Johannesburg inner city



A schoolboy perches perilously in Milton Court, the derelict apartment block in the inner city that is his home.