

A PLACE TO LIVE





SOME ASPECTS

OF . . . .

NATIVE

HOUSING

IN . . . .

JOHANNESBURG



# Foreword

by the Right Reverend Ambrose Reeves, the Bishop of Johannesburg.

I EARNESTLY commend this publication of the Johannesburg Citizens' Housing Committee. Not that it needs any commendation, for the photographs and letterpress speak for themselves.

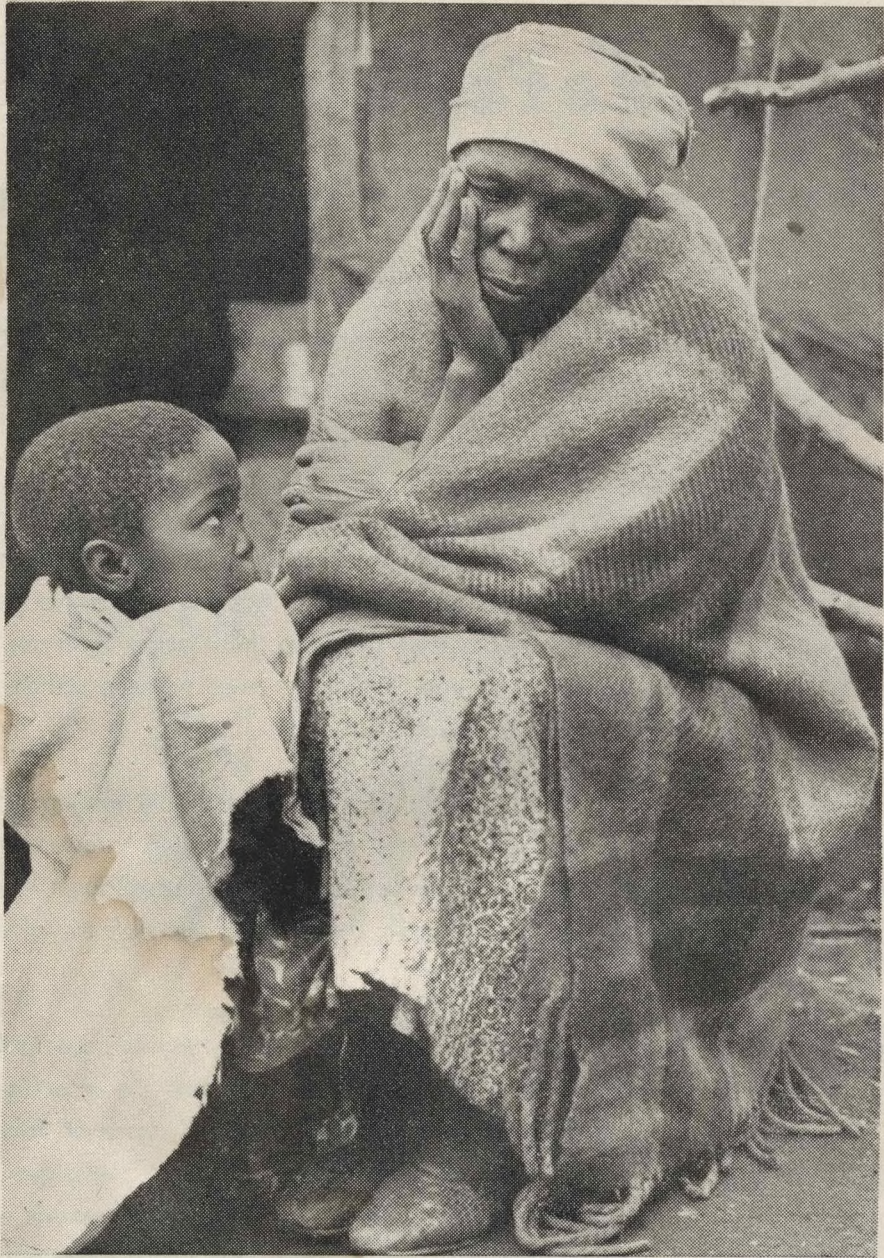
Admittedly this pamphlet does not give a complete picture of African housing, for quite deliberately it seeks to stress in pictorial form the dark and tragic aspects of a problem which clamours for a solution. In any case the present shortage of housing is so grave that it would be disastrous if any of us sought to evade the issue raised in these pages by trying to shelter behind what has been achieved some years ago. Rather we need to have sufficient courage to face frankly the facts that this pamphlet reveals.

As we do so let us realise not only that much of the present unrest among Africans can be traced to inadequate housing, but also that the present appalling circumstances under which many thousands are condemned to exist is causing a serious breakdown of home life, is leading to a complete collapse of moral standards, and is taking a terrible toll of beings who are human like ourselves.

It is difficult to believe that any of our fellow citizens who study this pamphlet can be unmoved by the desperate conditions here revealed. Such conditions are an accusation of us all, for they are a measure of our failure and a stain upon the good name of Johannesburg. But it is not sufficient that any of us should be moved by that which is disclosed here, for the need is that we should have the will and the energy that is essential if words are to lead to deeds in this matter. As you come to the last page, I hope you will be determined to take the precise and practical steps suggested to you, and refuse to rest until the present scandalous housing shortage among Africans is ended.

+ Ambrose Johannesburg





*Where are we sleeping tonight?*



# The Housing of the Native concerns You!

**M**OST Johannesburg citizens have never seen the areas where tens of thousands of our Native people live; or at best they may from time to time have caught a glimpse of them from their cars speeding along a road near the townships, or from the window of a train.

They are not aware of the heartbreaking hopelessness felt by the thousands of families unable to obtain adequate accommodation. They do not know that many thousands live in conditions so cramped, so squalid, and so sordid that they have to be seen to be believed.

To acquaint the Citizens of Johannesburg of those conditions, this pamphlet has been produced.

**For the people who live in these places work for us.**

**Their health of body and mind affects us.**

They are in close contact with our families, our children, directly or indirectly. The scourge of tuberculosis, of infectious diseases breeding in dirty, cramped conditions, is brought into our factories, offices, shops, homes. The nanny in her crisp white apron in the park; the office boy who makes your tea; the washer-woman with her bundles of newly-laundered linen, the delivery boys who bring your milk, bread, groceries or meat—these, and thousands more like these, go home at night to the Orlando shelters, or to Moroka; or they visit friends and relatives there during week-ends.

It is one city that we live in, and the standard of the highest cannot be detached from that of the lowest.

The following pictures give glimpses of some of the lowest.



# — Uncontrolled Squatting —

*With no shelter procurable from the Authorities the best use is made of whatever material is at hand.*



**The woman and child in this picture live in the corrugated iron cave behind them.**

**C**LEANLINESS is impossible. Hygiene is at a minimum. Insufficiently protected from the weather, her body becomes vulnerable to illness and disease.

Nevertheless, to-morrow, this woman may work in your kitchen or nurse your child.





Street scene in a Johannesburg squatters' camp.

**I**N these rickety shacks, built of sticks, sheets of rusty iron, sacking and sometimes even cardboard, thousands of Native families brave the elements. They know that if they make a fire in their flimsy shelters to keep warm there is danger of a conflagration that might sweep the whole camp, with disastrous results.

*With no houses available in the Native Townships, workers in the City, resort to building their own Squatters' Camps.*





Plot 99, Newclare.

## CONTRAST!

A Squatters' camp in the midst of an otherwise civilised and well-built area. With no homes to offer the people, the Authorities are hard put to prevent this sort of thing taking place.

**THE NON-EUROPEAN HOUSING PROBLEM** rumbles like a volcano under the foundations of Johannesburg's busy life. From time to time the volcano erupts.

The Squatters' movement of 1945 was one of these eruptions. The Orlando Shelters and the municipal Shantytown at Moroka are two of the terrible scars left on the face of the veld after the smoke has cleared.



# — Controlled Squatting —

**M**OROKA is a controlled Squatters' Camp established by joint action of Government and Municipality as a temporary emergency scheme nearly six years ago for a maximum period of five years—until the inhabitants could be properly housed. One wonders if it will be in existence as long as the tanks and the rooms in another Municipal township—Pimville; which were erected as a "temporary" emergency scheme in 1904. Condemned as long ago as 1913, they are still there to-day.

In Moroka, occupants rent a plot of land 20 feet square, on which they construct their own shacks and huts.



**This is a typical scene in this Municipal shantytown where more than 50,000 people live.**

Note the phases of construction. First walls of reeds, hessian or tin, which are later enclosed by walls of mud brick. These bricks are made in moulds with ash and any soil that can be obtained. The few made during the week are built into position at week-ends.





**A street in Moroka with its all-purpose drain, in which domestic soilwater and stormwater flow together.**

**E**VEN in the better non-European Townships there are few paved roads, and what was once rolling veld is now hard-trodden red earth, pitted and rutted, with stony outcrops. Most of the year the townships are filled with intolerable dust, the fine red dust of Johannesburg's earth, an irritating and penetrating dust.

Of course, there are no baths in the houses—not even in the “model” townships; nor even taps in any homes in Orlando, Jabavu, Pimville, Western Native Townships and the rest. In general, residents fill their jugs, pails and tubs at communal taps, though some townships have individual taps outside the houses.

When it rains, the dust becomes mud. The streets are great muddy dongas. The water runs down channels that erode deeply into the earth.



# Orlando "Temporary" Shelters

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A general view of the Orlando Breeze Block "temporary" shelters.

**I**N 1944, when over-crowding in Orlando Township had reached an unbearable peak, the people "overflowed." The sub-tenants of the tiny houses, with their families, moved out and built themselves shanties and shelters of cardboard, hessian, tin.

Confronted with this packed, sordid shantytown, the City Council hastily erected temporary shelters out of breeze-blocks (large porous bricks made out of ash from the Orlando Power Station, pressed into a block with a little cement), which were piled loosely on top of one another, without any binding material. Walls were left unplastered, roofs were loose sheets of corrugated asbestos held down by large stones. The "window" is merely an aperture.

*It was "an emergency."*

**That was more than seven years ago — and they are still occupied today !**





Improvised additions enlarge the "House" to two rooms!

**T**HE rooms in these "shelters" were built in rows, each 10 feet square, without doors, windows or floors. One of these rooms was let to each family, which on the average numbers five persons per family. The result has been that the people have extended their rooms—building on to them with mud-bricks, reeds, corrugated iron, cardboard, sacking or anything that could be found, as can be seen in these two pictures.



## A SLUM MAINTAINED BY OUR CITY

**T**HE street space has been narrowed to an alley, and behind these infinitely various building projects are the original rooms, by now almost destitute of direct light and proper ventilation.

In these conditions, people carry on the heart-breaking struggle to bring up families with honour and decency, or they abandon themselves completely to the degradation of their surroundings.



**The resultant alley.**



**T**HE people living in the "shelters" are town dwellers, but the sport and culture of towns is not known to them—parks, swimming pools, playing fields, state schools, libraries. Even the accepted amenities of town life—proper drains, waterborne sewerage, electric light, paved roads—are absent.

Let us look at the facilities that do exist.

## EDUCATION . . .



**This is a typical "private" school. In this 10 foot x 10 foot room are 48 children with one teacher.**





This school has no classroom; it is next to the local mid-street drain.

**E**DUCATION is an expensive luxury, even when it is available. There are no state schools in the Shelters—as of course these are “temporary,” and it is impossible to get into the state school in the adjoining Orlando Township. Most schools of any consequence are maintained by the various Missions, but even in these the number of teachers is hopelessly inadequate.



## HEALTH SERVICES . . .



**A corner of the clinic on the farm-house verandah.**

**F**OUR doctors, struggling in overcrowded conditions, three health visitors, and forty-three nurses, operate from this farmhouse converted into a clinic, which serves Jabavu and the surrounding areas. They deal with 150,000 cases a year.





On the verandah an average of 200 people sit for hours waiting their turn.

**T**HE dispensary was formerly the pantry of the farm-house. One doctor has to use a narrow passage—into which four doors open—as his consulting room. The best part of the building—two garages built for the ambulances—is used for offices. An old army tent is the store room. A tiny rondavel on one side serves as another consulting room.



**THE STERILIZATION SECTION OF A CLINIC** which deals with up to 800 cases in one day in this modern city of Johannesburg.



## SANITARY SERVICES . . . . .

**T**HESE are blocks of latrines that serve the people living in the Orlando Breeze Block shelters. That open pool catches the overflow of urine running down from the uneven floors.

A population estimated at 34,000 men, women and children share between them 561 of these foul and disgusting latrines. (That is, more than 60 persons to 1 pail. Public Health By-Laws lay down a ratio of 12 persons to 1 pail where there is a daily removal service.)







**I**N 1950, the Medical Officer of Health of Johannesburg described these latrines in a report to the Council. He said :

*"The floors are of rough, badly eroded concrete skimming, with numerous depressions in which urine collects . . . ineffectively graded to insanitary and offensive sumps which have to be emptied by hand, creating a certain amount of spillage which flows down the numerous erosions into open spaces. The risers (seats) are of gumpole type, which makes usage, particularly by females, elderly persons and children, almost an impossibility, with the result that the floors are indescribably fouled . . ."*

**Your Medical Officer of Health intimates that his Department would place this area as priority number one in Johannesburg in the question of slum clearance and your officials are agreed that the Shantytown area in Orlando is undoubtedly the worst from a housing point of view in the city . . .**

**Your Medical Officer of Health expresses grave concern with regard to the difficulties of effectively controlling an outbreak of serious and infectious disease in this area . . ."**

Since that report was made, two years ago, conditions have deteriorated still further. Some of the latrines are completely open to the street and the sky because the walls have disintegrated and the roofs rotted away.



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