

# 4 workplace

# # Outsourcing Must Fall Labour Broking Must Fall R10,000 NOW!!

**Izwi says...**  
Any and all groups of outsourced workers in any sector or any industry, members of existing unions or none, should contact us for help to organise a campaign.

Outsourcing of public services by state owned entities and government departments is a key plank of the ANC's Black Economic Empowerment strategy. The programmes aim to accelerate the self-enrichment of ruling elites by intensifying the exploitation of workers through slave wages and conditions, by not adhering to basic conditions of employment and by undermining the quality of service delivery.

**Lebogang Phanyeko**  
Johannesburg WASP

After the successes of the #OutsourcingMustFall campaign under the leadership of the Workers and Socialist Party (WASP) a series of discussions was initiated with workers to plan how to slay the beast of outsourcing in Johannesburg. Some workers had already learned through experience that the majority of trade unions were doing absolutely nothing to fight outsourcing and that some union bosses owned or were in partnership with outsourcing companies. These workers therefore welcomed the opportunity to use #OMF as a vehicle to struggle for permanent jobs and improved wages and conditions.

## Origins of #OMF Joburg

The Johannesburg #OMF started in August 2016 with almost weekly mass meetings in Thokoza Park, Soweto. Workers from various sectors gathered to discuss how to build the movement. A period of intense mobilisation followed with organising extending beyond the higher education institutions where #OMF Tshwane began and where it had scored significant victories for workers.

But mobilising outside of higher education institutions presented a unique set of challenges which, as the #OMF campaign is showing, are not insurmountable and offer valuable lessons for rebuilding working class organisations of struggle. University and college campuses are confined environments with comparatively smaller numbers of outsourced companies. The Joburg #OMF campaign could learn lessons from Tshwane #OMF but



On 22 February 2017 #OMF led hundreds of workers in a march to the Gauteng legislature

in many respects faced a completely different situation with many more entities, departments and employer bodies to organise. Leaflets were distributed at railway stations, community health clinics, colleges and state departments targeting all outsourced workers in security, cleaning, gardening, and other services.

At the second mass meeting in Soweto, an interim committee comprising representatives from the different companies as well as different geographic regions was established to mobilise support for the campaign. At all the meetings, workers were encouraged to share their stories which showed the common problems they were experiencing in the workplace related to poor working conditions, job insecurity, intimidation and above all, low wages. Therefore uniting workers across different sectors and employers would be vital in mounting an effective struggle against outsourcing.

There were many challenges to begin with, including rival small 'briefcase' unions whose reason for existence was only to provide salaries from workers' subscriptions. These unions were incapable of mounting a serious challenge to outsourcing and it was necessary for workers to organise outside of the formal structures and to unite with other workers who, for various reasons, remained unorganised.

Nevertheless, a key aspect of the campaign has been to encourage workers to join

unions especially as the campaign gained momentum and workers leading the organising of their workplaces began facing victimisation. Crucial in forming our attitude to different unions was the extent to which #OMF workers would be able to retain democratic control of their campaign and continue to lead it themselves. The General Industrial Workers Union (GIWUSA) has been used to represent workers at the CCMA and to challenge unfair labour practices. But the main strategy of the #OMF is to mobilise and unite workers across sectors and exert pressure on the employers through protests marches, pickets and demonstrations.

## Building a strong & militant #OMF

Workers are their own liberators and as the #OMF campaign has shown, it is possible to defeat outsourcing. However, to root it out means going against the fundamental logic of the capitalist system which is to make profit. Therefore, the only way in which to fight outsourcing is by building maximum unity and support including with other progressive forces.

For example, the EPWP and CWP programmes are based in communities and by uniting the struggle of workers with those of their communities for service delivery, the building blocks towards establishing a mass workers party can be put in place. The #OMF campaign is showing the way towards building a movement that could be the catalyst for the creation of such a mass workers party.