

My name is Matthew Naimi, and I consider myself the garbage man or a cultural janitor in the City of Detroit. I like to do things that both help the environment and get people who take ownership of, not only their waste and their footprint but also their own lives and give them permission to be free. I do believe that man's greatest invention is the city. My father and his brothers had a company at one time in the late 80s and when they sold, the building became vacant. And at the time, nobody really wanted another auto factory in the City of Detroit. The city was littered with them. I went down and set out an agreement with the City of Detroit, that I'd pay the back taxes off over three years. And I set to try to figure out what to do with this place. And I just basically have created really interesting things in this building out of accidents and saying yes.

I was here working on the building, trying to figure out what I was going to do during the day. But Detroit was a dangerous place at night. By activating the property at night with the musicians coming and going. It kept the building basically safe. City of Detroit at the time was the largest in the United States with no recycling program. So we set up shop next to the bar that we had the meeting at with the college kids and people showed up and it became a community event and it got covered by the media and the city took notice and asked us how to create a recycling program for the City of Detroit, grassroots style. And in the last 12 years or 11 years at this time, we've recycled over 30 million pounds of material that visited by over 800,000 citizen visits. We were actually doing more for the city by giving people a place to gather and connect. Detroit at one point had 2.1 million people and now we're down to around 600,000. But we haven't shrunk the city, meaning we're a city devoid of density. And in order to learn to be or want to be neighbors again, you had to bring people together. There's something to be said for actually looking in other people's eyes, hugging them, hearing the voice with your ears, not through a screen. And I think we

give people that opportunity. And I never knew the value of that until I created something like this.

If you build a man a fire, he'll be warm for one night. But if you light that man on fire, he'll be warm for the rest of his life.