



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact:

Hillary Wasserman, 212 784 5726, hwasserman@groupgordon.com

Alex Moore, 347-762-0778, alex@teamstersjc16.com

Kristina Naplatarski, 646-584-2676, KNaplatarski@council.nyc.gov

Chio Valerio, 646-352-1316, rocio@alignny.org

New Yorkers Applaud Sanitation Salvage's Closure

Community members gather at City Hall event to commemorate those who died in the company's crashes

After months of protests, City enforcement, and fleeing customers, the company surrendered its operating license Tuesday

NEW YORK, NY - Sanitation workers, African community members, and allies joined Sanitation Committee Chair Antonio Reynoso on the steps of City Hall to laud the news that Sanitation Salvage is going out of business as a measure of justice for the two New Yorkers killed by the company.

The news came amidst mounting pressure on the company. After an investigative reporter revealed in April that the death of Mouctar Diallo, a 21-year-old worker, had been covered up at the company, Sanitation Salvage was targeted with months of protests by the Transform Don't Trash NYC coalition, which includes labor, environmental, and community organizations. In August, the Business Integrity Commission suspended the company's license for a month, citing an imminent danger to the public.

This week, advocates turned their focus to City contracts with the controversial carter. On Monday, advocates sent a letter to NYCHA interim chairman Stanley Brezenoff, urging the agency to cut its million-dollar contract with Sanitation Salvage. On Tuesday, NYCHA announced that it was cutting the contract, and by the end of the day, Sanitation Salvage notified the BIC that it was going out of business.

“Over a year after the death of Mouctar Diallo, Sanitation Salvage, the company responsible for the fatality and its cover up, has announced that they are going out of business,” said Council Member Antonio Reynoso. “Today, we joined together in solemn celebration of this announcement. However, we know that the fight does not end here. The BIC must ensure that Sanitation Salvage is held fully accountable for their past wrongs, this includes the

payment of back wages to workers. Let this be a message to all private carting companies that choose to cut corners and endanger the public and their workers – we will no longer tolerate this behavior. I will be working diligently within the coming months to enact a commercial waste zoning system that will ensure that all private carting companies are held to stringent safety, labor, and environmental standards.”

"We hope that the families of Mouctar Diallo and Leon Clarke can find some sense of peace knowing that the owners of the company responsible for their deaths have finally surrendered their license," said Melissa Iachan, Senior Staff Attorney at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest. "We are heartened to see one of the worst companies in the private sanitation industry finally decide to stop terrorizing the streets of our city. The owners of Sanitation Salvage not only operated one of the most dangerous and environmentally unsustainable companies in the trade waste industry, but have also been among the staunchest opponents of reforms in the commercial waste industry. Indeed, their Bronx transfer station—which will continue to operate-- just joined a lawsuit seeking to block waste equity legislation passed by the City Council last summer. The coming commercial waste zone system will ensure that only responsible companies are allowed to operate on our streets in the future."

Mouctar Diallo was an immigrant from Guinea, who had been working off-the-books on a Sanitation Salvage truck for over a year. When he was run over by the truck he was working on in November 2017, police were originally told that Diallo was unknown to the company and he was reported to be a "crazed homeless person." The driver who ran over Diallo continued to work for the company and then, in April 2018, hit and killed 72-year-old NYCHA resident Leo Clarke, who was crossing the street with a cane.

"The African community celebrates that Sanitation Salvage, the killer company who took the life of our brother Mouctar Diallo and then defamed and lied about him, is finally off the streets," said Amaha Kassa, Executive Director of African Communities Together. "Our demand all along has been 'Justice for Mouctar'. Today, we are a step closer."

"Sanitation Salvage had a long and undeniable track record of exploiting workers and endangering New Yorkers," Sean Campbell, President of Teamsters Local 813. "We will partner with our union employers to make sure Sanitation Salvage's former workers have a good job where they will get the respect they deserve. In the coming months, we will be working in the City Council to pass the strongest possible commercial waste zone policy to ensure that no company like Sanitation Salvage operates in our city again and no worker is ever again treated like Mouctar Diallo was treated."

The BIC investigation found that, in the past three years, Sanitation Salvage has had 58 crashes, which resulted in two fatalities and 11 injuries. Half of the company's trucks have failed roadside inspections with maintenance violations so severe that the trucks were ordered off the road.

The BIC investigation also discovered Sanitation Salvage trucks being driven by workers who lacked proper licenses and that a majority of the company's drivers were driving in excess of the 14-hour daily legal limit and 70-hour weekly limit for commercial truck drivers.

"Justice has been served because of the power of sanitation workers and communities of color who are organizing together to hold private commercial waste companies accountable," Maritza Silva-Farrell, Executive Director of ALIGN. "We're putting the industry on notice: we won't stop until the City passes the strongest possible commercial waste zone policy and ensures that only responsible employers can operate in our streets."

At the City Hall event, elected officials and advocates urged BIC to closely monitor the company's closure to ensure that Sanitation Salvage meets all its obligations, including back wages owed to current and former workers.

Earlier this month, the Department of Sanitation released its much-anticipated commercial waste zone policy, which will give the city new tools to hold private carters accountable and put an end to reckless safety practices. Advocates are calling on the City Council to ensure that no company like Sanitation Salvage is ever able to operate in the city again by passing legislation to enact a commercial waste zone policy, and to strengthen the proposed plan by limiting one carter to each zone and mandating fair wages for workers.

"I am glad this company is finally off the road. Sanitation Salvage was a danger, not only to New Yorkers but also to its workers, demonstrated by its long history of crashes. I want to thank all of the advocates, unions and the press that highlighted its abysmal failings as a trash hauler company. Now that Sanitation Salvage has surrendered its license to operate, I urge the Business Integrity Commission to ensure that this private company pays any wages it owes to current and former employees before it shuts down permanently," said Council Speaker Corey Johnson.

"After tireless work by advocates fighting for a safer New York, Sanitation Salvage trucks are finally off our streets," said New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer. "This overdue milestone comes after two tragic yet preventable deaths, scores of serious safety violations, and a well-documented history of exploitative wage-theft. Yet there is much more work to be done and we'll keep fighting hand-in-hand with advocates to achieve safer working conditions for waste haulers, improve oversight, and end brutally long and inefficient routes."

"Sanitation Salvage too often operated in a way that threatened pedestrian safety, mistreated workers and added pollution to our neighborhoods," said Eric A. Goldstein, NYC Environment Director at the Natural Resources Defense Council. "So it's welcome news that management has thrown in the towel. But the problems exemplified by Sanitation Salvage's operations are not unique to this carter – the entire commercial waste industry needs comprehensive reform. And commercial waste zoning is the vehicle for getting there."

“Sanitation Salvage going out of business and closing up shop would not have happened if community activists and sanitation workers hadn't organized and mobilized,” said Council Member Ben Kallos. “This company should have ceased operating years ago as their safety record speaks for itself. Mouctar Diallo and Leo Clarke lost their lives as a result of Sanitation Salvage’s practices and now this company is gone thanks to the advocacy and hard work of a community united for justice.”

“I would like on behalf of the Guinean Community to thank all those who participated to making this happen,” said Sulleymane Diallo on behalf of the New York Guinean community. “I want to thank African Communities Together (ACT) and the Teamsters Union in particular for their leadership. I will not call this a victory because Mouctar Diallo will never come back. However I am really happy that Sanitation Salvage will not kill anyone else anymore. This will also send a strong message to all other unethical companies that are out there.”

“Fundamental reform of the private sanitation industry has been urgently needed for years. The tragic deaths of Mouctar Diallo and Leo Clarke were yet another powerful reason why communities have fought so long and hard for a commercial waste zone plan that prioritizes the safety of workers and residents, air quality and public health, the drastic reduction of solid waste, major efficiency improvements, and more. Thanks to the work of so many, we are closer than ever to seeing this become reality, and our city will finally have the sanitation industry we deserve,” said Council Member Helen Rosenthal (Manhattan, District 6).

“The ceasing of operations by Sanitation Salvage, while it is welcome news, due to the company's terrible safety record, comes a little too late for Mouctar Diallo and Mr. Leon Clark, who lost their lives as a direct result of this company's history of very lax safety measures,” said Mohammed Mardah, African Advisory Council Civic Engagement Committee Chair. “We hope that the city would enforce all safety rules, especially when it comes to these private garbage companies. We continue to send our condolences to the families of Mouctar and Mr. Clark.”

"This is an important win for sanitation workers and environmental justice communities, but as a city we should be preventing companies like Sanitation Salvage from ever hitting the street in the first place,” said Council Member Justin Brannan. “I look forward to working with colleagues in the City Council to pass a commercial waste zone policy that holds private carters accountable.”

“The suspension of Sanitation Salvage’s operations is a victory for the City,” said City Council Member Keith Powers. “But work is not done yet: we must commit to reform in the private sanitation industry that will provide the highest working standards and ensure that workers and the public are safe. I commend my colleague Council Member Reynoso for leading this effort, the Business Integrity Commission for evaluating sanitation companies that operate illegally, and the dogged efforts of ProPublica to expose these wrongdoings.”

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Notes to editors

About Transform Don't Trash NYC

Transform Don't Trash NYC is a campaign to transform the commercial waste industry in NYC to create good jobs and clean and safe communities for all New Yorkers. Right now, NYC businesses rely on hundreds of private waste companies with thousands of trucks to pick up their waste and recycling. This industry is a “Wild West” with low recycling rates, poor conditions for workers, unfair siting of waste transfer stations, and lack of oversight. Mayor de Blasio and City Council need to act now to bring this industry into the 21st century. By increasing recycling, creating better jobs, and more fairly dealing with waste in the five boroughs, New York City can become more environmentally and economically sustainable—and a much better place to work and live. The growing Transform Don't Trash NYC coalition is dedicated to transforming New York City's commercial trash industry to reduce waste and pollution, foster clean and healthy communities for all New Yorkers, and create good jobs. Steering committee organizations include [ALIGN](#), [International Brotherhood of Teamsters Joint Council 16](#), [New York City Environmental Justice Alliance](#), and [New York Lawyers for the Public Interest](#).

About New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI)

Founded 40 years ago by leaders of the bar, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest pursues equality and justice for New Yorkers. NYLPI works towards a New York where all people can thrive in their communities, with quality healthcare and housing, safe jobs, good schools, and healthy neighborhoods. In our vision, all New Yorkers live with dignity and independence, with the access and resources they need to succeed. NYLPI's community-driven approach powers its commitments to civil rights and to health, disability, immigrant, and environmental justice. NYLPI seeks lasting change through litigation, community organizing, policy advocacy, pro bono service, and education.

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