

THE NEW HEROES

STUDENT VIDEO HANDOUT

Ciudad Saludable (“Healthy Cities”) in Peru featuring Albina Ruiz.

“I see many people living in miserable conditions. In order to solve the waste problem we create small businesses for collection, transportation, treatment, recycling and sale. What Peruvians need to say is, “We can do it.” And not think of ourselves as poor people waiting for someone to come and fix all our problems or give us something to eat for tomorrow. No. We have to say, “Damn it, we have the possibility for change. Really, you can’t separate your job from your life.”

--Albina Ruiz

SUMMARY:

Albina Ruiz helps Peruvians start small businesses to recycle and manage waste. She has started dozens of companies, recruiting people who live in and around dumps that have not been properly managed. Some 75 percent of waste is improperly treated. They recycle and dispose of it in an environmentally sound way (creating compost, for example). In the process, they generate a way to support themselves and add value to their communities.

1. Robert Redford says, “Enterprise. It’s the ability to see a need and fill it in a way that satisfies customers and generates profits. Imagine if these profits weren’t just money, but the improvement of peoples lives.” What kind of business is he talking about? What makes it different from any other business?
2. Why are these people living near the dump?
3. Describe what you know about the treatment of garbage and its relationship to water quality in your own community. How are the two related in Peru, shown in this video?
4. At one point Albina says, “We need to solve this problem, but we need to do it *right*.” What does she mean? What makes her approach successful?
5. Would you imagine that there is “money in garbage”...and by tapping it, major change might be possible? What other situations can you think of that might generate important improvements in people’s lives?
6. What is a micro enterprise?