

Reclaiming Print in West Philadelphia
By Christopher Malo

Situated inside a nondescript storefront at 4820 Baltimore Avenue is locally-owned Reclaim, a small business specializing in silk screening services. Walking through the door you find what you might expect. A table, piles of T-shirts, sweatshirts, a television, washer and dryer, computer and dozens of books surround you. Situated a few steps up toward the rear of the space sits the actual screen printing press. The unmistakable scent of chemicals is heavy in the air.

Using a power washer to clean one of the screens in the industrial sink is the company's printer and sales representative of four years, John Branch. Branch had been dropping his kids off at the daycare next door when he struck up a conversation with Reclaim's owner at the time, Quan Blanche. Blanche, impressed with Branch's experience doing transfers in his own basement and his desire to learn more about the craft, hired him.

Since that time the business had merged with another local print shop, Hott Off the Press, to form what Reclaim is today. Part of their guiding philosophy as a small business is to extend a discount to other local independent businesses. Other discounts are given to print jobs advocating social justice. In addition, Reclaim also runs community workshops to teach screen printing to artists looking to have their work transferred to shirts, buttons

or magnets, or to those who are just interested in learning the screen printing process.

Despite a difficult economic climate, Reclaim utilizes all of its assets and connections to be able to sustain itself. It is a business that might struggle if located outside of West Philadelphia.

“This area is artsy,” explains Branch. “It has culture. It has lots of artists, social justice, the universities and the students.”

With no foreseeable change to the customer base, coupled with a mutually beneficial relationship with those locally, there is no reason to expect Reclaim to go anywhere, but up, soon.