

URBAN CORE

The Heart of the City | January 2021

01

**GRANT MANOR
RESIDENTS FIGHT
BACK**

02

**REMEMBERING
THE LEGACY OF
BRENT HENRY**

04

**PRIVATIZATION
OF THE LENOX
STREET PROJECTS**

10

**EVICCTIONS
DURING THE
PANDEMIC**

15

BAMBOOZLED

GRANT MANOR RESIDENTS FIGHT BACK

After receiving notice of a rent increase and facing retaliation, residents at Grant Manor are getting organized.

by Jada Holmes

Residents at Grant Manor have decided to stand up against the rent increase of over 100% that they received notice of in September during the pandemic. They got together and organized a rally in Derby/Ramsay Park that took place on Sept 22, 2020. Around 30 people from Grant Manor came out, as well as residents from other buildings in the area, organizers fighting against gentrification, and elected officials. This showed that Grant Manor residents are not alone.



Residents of Grant Manor and members of the United Front Against Displacement protest against retaliation and rent hikes

Continued on page 1 >>

REMEMBERING THE LEGACY OF BRENT HENRY AND THE LENOX STREET PROJECTS

By Haywood Fennell Sr.

The Boston Housing Authority since its inception has seemingly been a place for racial unrest including violence between the races in some of their developments that drew national attention. Living in Public Housing was, despite the unfathomed hate, desirable for some Black families trying to raise children in particular because the housing was better than living in other places and the rents were cheaper and the

children might be safer.

Lenox Street Projects is a low-income housing project in the Lower Roxbury section of Boston, Massachusetts. The racial strife in the Boston Housing Authority properties began to lessen and the so-called old timers moved out and new comers moved in creating a mixture of immigrants and Black people.

Continued on page 2 >>

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GRANT MANOR RESIDENTS FIGHT BACK

(Continued From Cover)

Residents at Grant Manor stood up and organized this meeting in the park. Then others got involved to support too. People in the neighborhood care about what's going on at Grant Manor. Organizers from the United Front Against Displacement have also got involved.

The issues at Grant Manor go above and beyond just this rent increase. The Grant Manor Homeowners Association is the official resident organization for the buildings. However, in recent years it has been taken over by a nepotistic group of people who run things for their benefit but not for the residents. The current President signed off on the rent increase, and he has held office for years, in direct violation of the Associations' bylaws. Elections have not been held, and many other rules and regulations have been broken by this Board as they have betrayed the residents' best interests.

To deal with this residents have created a petition, which has over 100 signatures already, and calls for replacing the existing board with a new one, composed of many of the residents who have been organizing against this rent increase. These are real leaders who the residents trust and respect. They are people who have devoted their time and energy to bettering the community for all the people, instead of just looking out for their own narrow selfish interest.

Since the struggle began, residents have begun to face retaliation, including being denied access to the community room (which residents pay rent for). Residents have also been hit with unexpected balances of supposed back-rent and even notices to quit. They are being targeted for exercising their freedom of speech and their rights to organize. Now they are also facing harassment and racial profiling from the security guards as well as intimidation to the elderly and families. It seems clear that the Board and Wingate Management LLC want residents to feel like hostages in their own apartments. But because people are supporting each other, people have not been afraid.

Residents are striving for a better and healthier community, where children can be able to enjoy their place of living, where the elderly can finally feel safe, and families from all cultural backgrounds can be accepted. The struggle is difficult, but with solidarity and consistency Grant Manor residents will win the day. ■■■



GRANT MANOR: A CASH COW?

Developments like Grant Manor are supposed to be a place where people and families can live without fear of being priced out. But the proposed rent increase at Grant Manor threatens the long-term affordability of the development. This rent increase will not benefit the residents, who will see their rents increased significantly. Instead, the new money from the increased rents will go to the banks, developers, management company, and others. They want to turn Grant Manor into a cash cow to line their pockets.

REMEMBERING THE LEGACY OF BRENT HENRY AND THE LENOX STREET PROJECTS

(Continued from Cover)

The 376-unit three-story brick buildings were built in 1939 and was the first housing project in Boston that African American families were able to move into. The projects offered little if any social services or youth development programs. There were facilities as far away as Lena Park which would provide bus services for those living in



Lenox street Housing Projects to served with a formalized after school program. While Northeastern University was nearby, it provided little consistency in helping the residents. In

LENOX STREET: A BLIGHT ON THE COMMUNITY OR A BEACON OF HOPE?

While some have described the Lenox Street Projects as a blight and made it seem like a stain that needs to be removed (in the process of gentrification), the legacy of Brent Henry shows otherwise. Through tireless work Brent was able to better the community and make changes that benefited the youth in particular. The best way to honor his memory is to have hope and get organized to make more change like he did. This isn't so hard, we just need to follow in his footsteps.

recent years, Lenox has become infamous for violence.

During the time that Brent Henry was growing up the people at Lenox Street had households where head of the families had jobs, youth were encouraged to attend school and to work when possible. There were no organized gangs and violence was at a minimum. One of the challenges for families living in Lenox Street Housing was the large amount of youth having asthma and diabetes. Brent was one that suffered from diabetes, but he played sports and grew up learning how to work with other youth. There were not really any tenant's organizations other than a few stand out and speak out individuals that had no problem going to the front office to register complaints.

It was a quiet neighborhood occupied mostly by Blacks with many having jobs and their children attended school with some later going to college. The employees of the BHA were in charge of the maintenance of the housing units as well as the



grounds. Some families were able to save their money and buy a house and those that were once in the military could use the GI Bill to buy their first home. There was a friendly atmosphere with activities during the summer months for the youth.

The quietness and the safety in Lenox Street Housing was slowly eclipsed by the invasion of organized drug gangs and the abuse where strangers would come to sell and others to buy, hiding in the projects. Addiction and the fallout overwhelmed not just Lenox St. Project, but gangs from other neighborhoods came to the park across the street and occupied it selling drugs more openly, that brought on the violence, that became a part of the scenario. The violence spread outward as far as Washington St. with murders even becoming common. Despite tearing of social patterns and the lack of safety, Brent Henry continued fighting for the rights of the youth until his demise from diabetes on April 17, 2019. Let's make it a fight to honor the work of Brent Henry. Let's save our homes.

Throughout the changes, Brent fought for a place, working with youth and families trying to provide suitable and healthier choices for the youth as he worked from a basement in the development. He was able to attract some support from Northeastern and he worked with the Black Ministerial Alliance of Boston in getting funding. During this particular time period the City of Boston was looking to rid itself on Lenox Street Housing Project and it became easier because there was little tenant opposition.

Lenox Street Housing Projects had gotten caught in the crosshairs of outside developers with political connections looking to expand their holdings. Tenants need to become educated on this and build coalitions to learn how to protect their rights

The Lenox Street public housing is a 285-unit federal development in Lower Roxbury. Adjacent to Lenox is the Camden housing development, a 72-unit state-funded development that was built for the tenants. In summer of 2015, BHA issued a Request for Proposal to rehab Lenox Street and Camden housing developments with the supposed goals of upgrading the properties while avoiding displacement of current residents and preserving affordability for extremely low-income households.

However, with this renovation there is more than meets the eye. For example, despite promising to avoid displacing residents, Beacon Communities LLC has also stated that they hope that many residents will leave due to "natural attrition" before and during the renovations. In addition, while on paper, residents are guaranteed the right to return to the property after the renovations, there are loopholes. For example, if a resident is not "in good standing" (meaning if they are behind on rent or have some violations) they will lose their right to return. Also residents are not going to be returning to their original units. Given all of this, and the fact that the property is now being privatized, many residents are worried about the future of Lenox Street and the neighborhood.

Nobody wanted Lenox and the surrounding properties before, too much crime stemming from drugs and the lack of prevention programs and jobs and violence. That can be understood but not without asking the questions, like why sustained services were not in place to avoid having to sell the tenants out? We encourage Lenox households to review the plan and to resubmit written comments about the Relocation Plan to the BHA and/or the Bureau of Relocation at the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) in honor of the work done by Brent Henry. ■■■

PRIVATIZATION OF THE LENOX STREET PROJECTS

By MAYA MORRIS



Among the larger community of project buildings and complexes in Roxbury are the Lenox Street Apartments. In 2017, Boston Housing Authority (BHA) announced plans for renovations at Lenox and their neighbors, Camden Street, under a program called RAD. This announcement was followed by sluggish attempts to “notify residents”, but most tenants were completely left in the dark on the future of their homes up until months ago. This sloppy process for informing residents has left the majority of residents with the pretty large and unanswered question: What

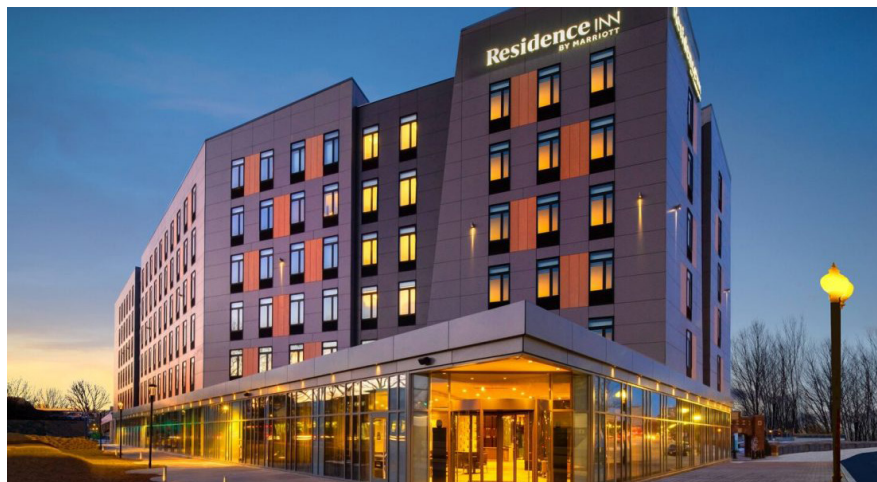
is RAD and why is it happening here?

During the Obama administration, a policy called the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) was created; this policy converts public housing into privately owned properties. In the case of Lenox, this meant an exchange of ownership from BHA to the private management company, Beacon Communities LLC. RAD supporters and federal agencies window-dress this policy claiming that it is a way for public housing authorities to use a “powerful tool to preserve and improve public housing properties.” However, we cannot be fooled—this is the privatization of public housing.

Many other projects prior to Lenox have fallen victim to RAD conversions. Minneapolis is home to a project complex called the Glendale Townhomes. It’s in an area of Minneapolis that, like Roxbury, has seen a massive amount of gentrification in a short span of time. One of the city’s wealthiest neighborhoods lies on the border of the Glendale Townhomes community. In 2015, the Minneapolis Housing Authority (MHA) submitted an application for a RAD conversion at Glendale. Residents immediately took to action against the RAD proposal, calling it a “glorified

PRIVATIZATION: A FOR-PROFIT SCHEME FOR THE RICH

Privatization threatens the long-term affordability of the projects. It will allow wealthy developers to take over the projects from the city and the federal government. In the longer-term it can even lead to the sale of projects like Lenox Street to Northeastern or others who want to build dorms or luxury apartments.



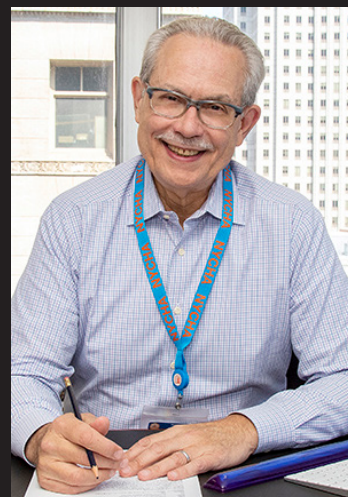
The South End/Lower Roxbury area is being overrun by new luxury buildings and gentrification construction like this fancy hotel on Melnea Cass

privatization scheme which would lead to gentrification and displacement of the current residents and the elimination of Glendale as public housing.” Even with the MHA’s promise that residents could “return after redevelopment” and that Section 8 vouchers would allow them comparable “housing choices” residents saw right through the agency’s scheme.

Tenants rightly called the MHA on their bluff, saying that relocation would also mean disruption of their livelihood and that a project-based Section 8 voucher, which tenants under RAD must obtain, was unstable, vulnerable to budget cuts, and limited in the options of housing offered. Glendale formed a coalition of residents in response to the RAD proposal, calling themselves the “Defend Glendale & Public Housing Coalition.” Residents getting organized sent Greg Russ, the MHA’s new director at the time, into a massive tantrum.

The track record of Greg Russ began in 1995 where he was chief of staff at the Chicago Housing Authority and oversaw the “redevelopment” of their public housing. This “oversight” resulted in a loss of nearly 5,000 homes, displacing upwards of 17,000 people. From there he went on to destroy much of Detroit’s housing stock. This in turn scored him a job as the executive director of Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA) here in Massachusetts (a pretty large leap away from Detroit). In 2014, Russ oversaw his first round of RAD conversions while at CHA. Russ managed to privatize every project building in Cambridge under RAD, eliminating public housing in the city.

Another huge hop, skip, and a leap took Russ over to Minneapolis. As the new Housing Director of Minneapolis’s Housing Authori-



GREGORY RUSS: MAKING BANK BY HELPING THE BANKS

Some people spend their whole lives working hard to help others and fighting to make the world a better place. Then there are others, like Greg Russ, who just look out for themselves. This “look out for number one” attitude is sadly common in our society. People like Greg Russ work closely with the billionaires and Big Banks. They spend their time doing things like privatizing public housing or evicting poor families from their homes. This is a big part of how they keep people down year after year. With a stroke of a pen they sign over whole projects to the developers.



Residents at Elliot Twins in Minneapolis protest against privatization of their building through RAD

ty, Russ fiercely pushed for all of public housing in Minneapolis to undergo RAD conversions. After receiving push back from residents, Russ pursued aggressive attempts to silence them. One DG&PHC organizer publicly recounted an encounter with Russ where he let the cat out of the bag and told her “we will end public housing.” Russ’ track record of privatization hasn’t been solely for the greater good of private finance and management groups, but also for his own personal profit. **One of the largest tax credit benefactors from RAD conversions just so happens to be the father-in-law to Greg Russ.** With incentives like these, it’s no wonder why he has pushed such an aggressive agenda towards privatization. In DG&PHC, Russ has now caught the notorious nickname: the “czar of privatization.”

DG&PHC residents were able to stop the RAD conversion from happening at Glendale, but this was only possible because of the widespread organizing of residents. Other project buildings could not stop the forces of Russ and private interests, resulting in RAD conversions at neighboring buildings such as the Elliot Twin Towers. The Royal Bank of Canada was handed the lease to these Minneapolis project buildings, where problems with renovations during COVID have

already threatened the lives of many residents. The future of Elliot Twins is unclear, but the reality of a bank now in full ownership of these projects could not be a more obvious representation of what RAD is about—purely profit and power for private interests, not the safeguarding of public housing or its residents. In 2019, Russ moved on from Minneapolis to NYC, where he was “hand-selected” to be the director of NYC’s Housing Authority. There is no coincidence in the transplanting of Russ into leadership of these various Housing Authorities and the downfall of their city’s public housing. As he has said himself, the mission is to “end public housing”, and RAD is the means to do so.

Although Russ is a prime example of a wrecking ball in the demolition of public housing, he is not the only enemy. There are plenty of people like Russ that come in the form of housing authority directors, private management companies, or investment corporations—they all act with the aim of eliminating public housing. Some of these Russ-types may not, and often do not, act in the same blatantly aggressive ways. Most stakeholders will aim to create the illusion that RAD renovations are for the betterment of the community through empty statements and gestures. Residents cannot fall for these tactics! Even if the message is not as explicit as the one quoted from Greg Russ, the intentions are the same! The privatization of public housing is the ultimate goal.

Let us be clear—in following the example of DG&PHC and many other oppositional resident groups, resident organization and power is the only force that can combat these greedy plans for public housing. Let that be heard from Grant Manor to Mandela; from Mandela to Roxse Homes; from Roxse Homes to Lenox and Camden Apartments. This is could be the fate of you and your neighbors, what’s most important is getting together and fighting back. ■■■

THE FOUNDING OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY

By Ryan Costello

Today, sometimes people feel hopeless and nihilistic. They say, “there’s no more Panthers left” and people feel that a lot happened in the 1960s, but that not so much has changed. It’s true that things aren’t easy now. Black people face a lot of oppression and discrimination to this day. But if we really want to learn from the Panthers we need to have hope. They got started with just two people, so we can get things going too. But in order to do so, we need to get organized, stop being afraid, put aside that selfishness, and help each other in this struggle. It’s not so hard to do this, but if we don’t get started soon, things are just going to keep getting worse.

54 years ago two young Black men in Oakland, California decided that they needed to do something to change this country. One of them had been in the army and seen the horrors of the wars abroad, the other had spent time in jail and knew the ins and outs of the prison system. Both were all too familiar with police brutality against Black people, and the systematic racism and discrimination that they and the community faced. A year prior, Malcolm X had been assassinated by the Nation of Islam and the U.S. government in New York City.

These two men in Oakland had studied Malcolm’s writing closely and knew that someone had to take up the mantle, to put into practice the program that Malcolm had preached. They had also seen a wave of mass protests against police brutality rock the



*Bobby Seale (left) and Huey P. Newton (right)
the founders of the Black Panthers*

country. In particular, the rebellion in Watts (a poor Black neighborhood in LA) inspired them. People from Watts used to be ashamed of their neighborhood, but after the rebellion, they spoke of Watts with pride. But the protests also showed them some painful lessons. While people had risen up against oppression, police brutality, and injustice, the uprising had been crushed with brutal force by the police and national guard. At least dozens were killed by the police and thousands were arrested.

These two young men knew that someone



MALCOLM'S LEGACY: TAKEN UP BY THE BLACK PANTHERS

Malcolm understood the importance of Black people getting organized to fight for real change, and he knew that self-defense was part of this. Time and time again when Black people have come together, the white supremacist capitalist power structure has attacked us with violence and terror. He noted: "I don't even call it violence when it's in self defense; I call it intelligence."

The Panthers read Malcolm's writings closely, they studied his thought and his actions. They knew that Malcolm's work had helped to show the way, and after he was killed by the government, others had to take up his life's work and walk that difficult road. The way forward for Black Liberation was not through the ballot box or through capitalism, but through the people getting organized and taking up the struggle for change. The Panthers are gone now, and it's up to others to take up that same struggle today.

needed to find a way forward for Black people. Spontaneous protests only went so far. Black people needed to get organized for real change, and they knew they couldn't rely on the politicians or the power structure. It had to be a grass roots effort. These two Black men were Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton. They sat together in the Oakland public library and read. They read every speech Malcolm ever gave, they read about the Algerian Revolution and the work of the Black revolutionary Franz Fanon. They read Robert Williams book on Black self-defense titled Negros with Guns. And they read socialists and communists like Che Guevara from Cuba, Ho Chi Minh from Vietnam, and Mao Zedong from China. And from all of these works they were inspired.

They saw how poor and oppressed people had risen up and overthrown their oppressors,

making new societies for the betterment of the people. **They felt something powerful, something life-changing: they felt hope that a better world was possible. And they felt that they had the knowledge to bring this about.** Not by themselves, but with the people. So, the two of them founded the Black Panther Party and drafted its Ten Point Program.

Today many people associate the Black Panther Party with guns and perhaps get confused about what they were about. But Huey and Bobby were very clear. The originally named the organization the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. They chose the panther as their image because it is not an aggressive animal, but if attacked it will not hesitate to defend itself. Following in the footsteps of Malcolm X, they argued that Black people needed to take a



similar approach. To stand up for themselves, hand-in-hand and to be willing to defend themselves if attacked by racists.

The Black Panther Party only carried guns when it was legal to do so, and their focus was not on the weapons, but on organizing the Black community for self-determination. They felt that the white supremacist capitalist power structure in this country would never grant Black people freedom or equality. As they put it in their Tent Point Program: “We want an end to the robbery by the capitalists of our black and oppressed communities.” They knew that Black people had to get organized and take up the struggle for freedom.

From just two people, the Panthers grew quickly and in a few years had dozens of members with chapters in dozens of cities across the country. They grew so quickly in part because they understood the needs and wants of the people so well, and because they were dedicated to serving the people. The Panthers didn’t want to become rich, they didn’t desire individual gain or wealth. They were about advancing things for Black people as a whole.

They were so selfless that many would get up at 4:00am every day to cook breakfast for hungry kids. This wasn’t the only thing they did. The Panthers ran a whole bunch of community programs, including study sessions to teach people the truth about the history of this country, as well as free medical clinics, programs to help seniors, self-defense classes, and so much more. These programs and the efforts of the Panthers are a lesson an inspiration for us today. It only takes a few people working together well to get things started, but then it has that snowball effect, once it gets rolling it keeps picking up movement and more and more people get involved. ■■■



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EVICIONS DURING THE PANDEMIC

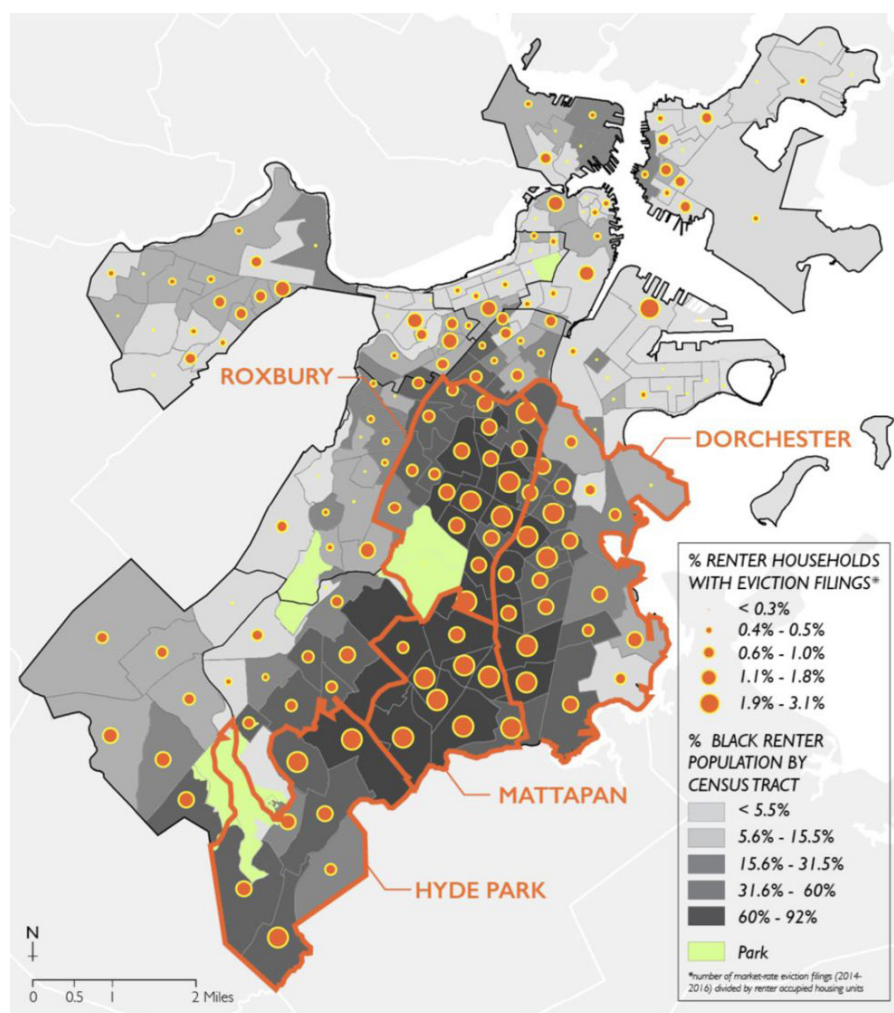
BY ALONSO ESPINOSA-DOMÍNGUEZ

Even before Covid-19, the housing situation was not good in this country. Millions of people were homeless, even though there are more than enough housing units to go around. Many more were on the verge of becoming homeless due to gentrification and rising rents displacing whole neighborhoods. The pandemic has intensified this crisis: millions have lost their jobs and source of income and received little if any relief from the government, all the while the pandemic has swept through and killed hundreds of thousands, disproportionately impacting the poor people of the country as well as Black people and other minorities.

The government, both local and federal, passed some protections against evictions for tenants as well as some rental assistance programs, but they have refused to cancel rents or mortgage payments. Overall, government policies around housing and real-estate have only done the bare minimum to help out common people, and often not even that. Meanwhile, rich investors in the real estate market have made a killing off of the pandemic with the help of government policies that have boosted the stock market and lowered interest rates for big banks and developers.

Overview of Eviction Moratoriums

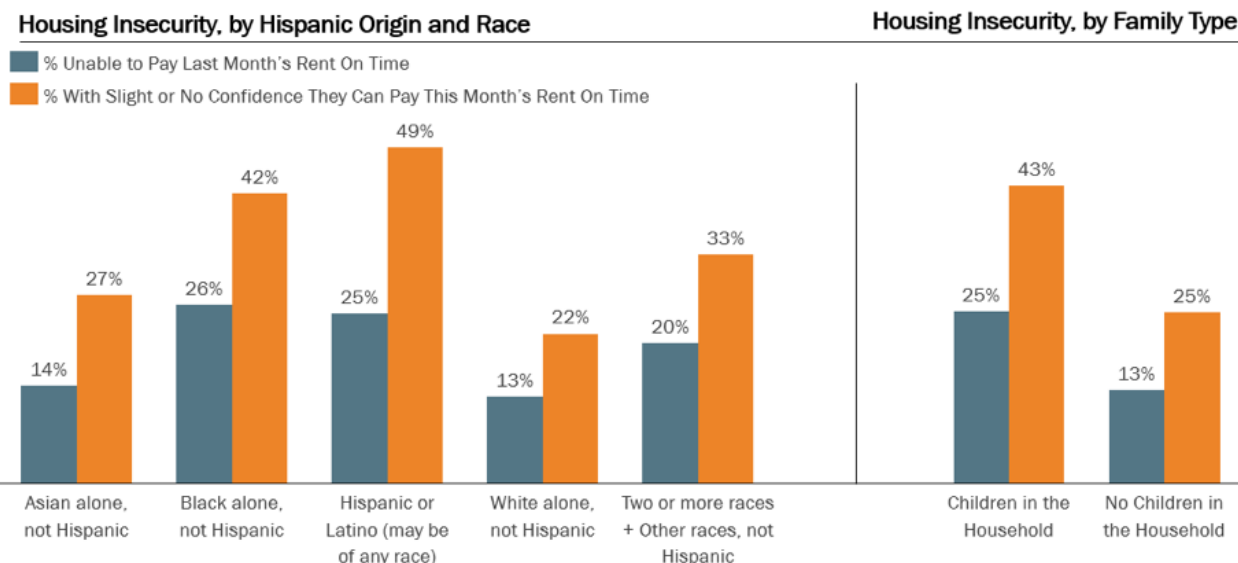
Locally, the Boston Housing Authority (BHA) implemented a moratorium (which was extended



EVICIONS: A RACIST SCHEME FOR THE RICH TO GET RICHER

Even during this pandemic the rich landlords and banks are evicting people left and right. The map above shows evictions in Boston between 2014-2016. Take a good look at how they are specifically targeting Black people with these evictions. This whole gentrification-eviction process is a racist scam run by the rich and the government.

EVICTON RISK DISPROPORTIONATELY IMPACTS BLACK AND LATINX RENTERS, AND RENTERS WITH CHILDREN



through end of 2020) on all “nonessential” evictions of BHA residents. This ban includes evictions for nonpayment of rent, and any other evictions unless they are for “criminal activity”

or “necessary to protect health and safety of BHA residents” and staff. Then, in April, the Massachusetts state government blocked all “nonessential” evictions and foreclosures, including for nonpayment of rents/mortgages. This also banned landlords from imposing late fees on missed rent payments during this period.

At the national level, the federal government passed a moratorium in the CARES Act in March which covers a limited range of residents, including those in public housing or with Section 8. This expired on July 24th. In September, another national-level moratorium was put in place by the CDC which covers tenants against evictions for nonpayment through January 31, 2021—but this moratorium is particularly weak (more info below).

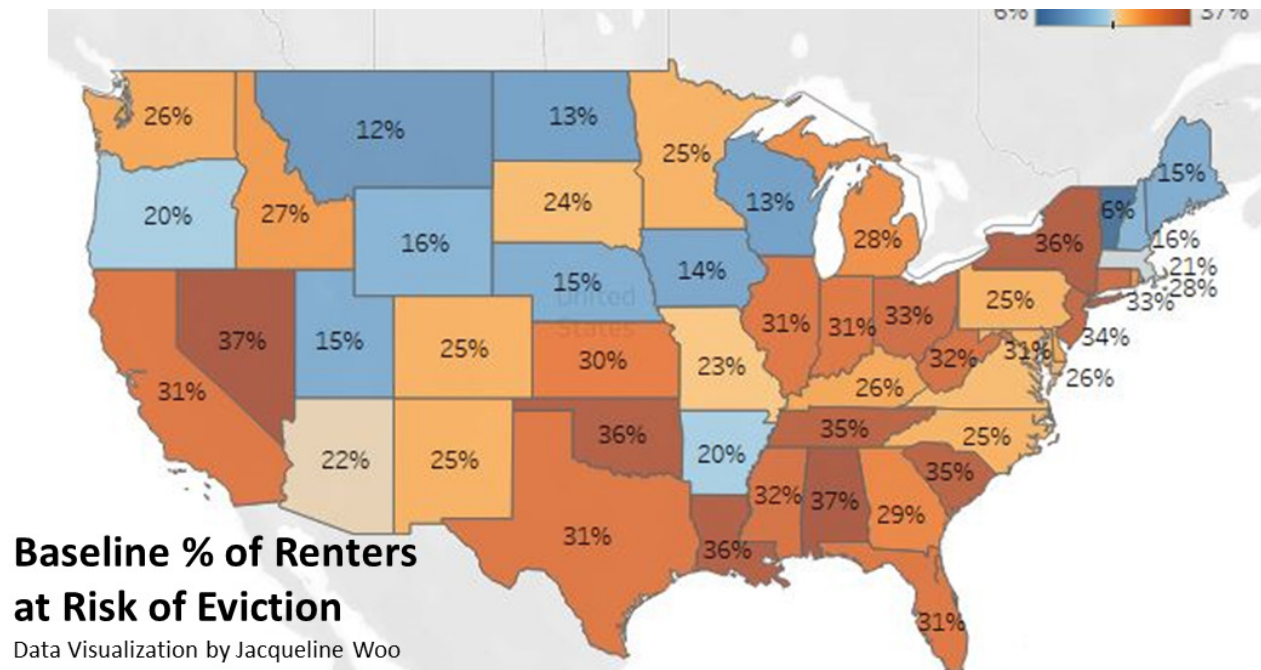
The Many Limits of the Moratoriums

These moratoriums have offered some protection, but nevertheless many tenants have continued facing harassment from landlords for rent and some have even been served with illegal evictions. For instance, there are several cases in Boston of landlords demanding

RACISM: IT'S ABOUT MORE THAN JUST BIGOTRY

When you ask most people about racism, the first thing that comes to mind is generally racists. From the Klansmen to more subtle liberal racists, there are plenty of these to go around. But racism is about more than this. It's not just individual people's biases and bigotry. It's about how the whole system—from the bottom all the way to the top—discriminates against people and disenfranchises them.

Just look at the eviction risk numbers in the graph above. This isn't the result of one person being a bigot. It's the result of a system that is racist to its core: From income levels to education, medical care, and housing, it's racist all the way through.



Huge number of renters are now at risk of eviction because of the Covid Pandemic, but also due to years of poverty and oppression brought on by this racist capitalist system

“sexual favors” from tenants facing difficulties paying rent. Many tenants received countless threats, including threats of being reported to immigration authorities, to the point where they felt they had no option but to “voluntarily” leave: an eviction in everything but name. And often because of the power these big landlords/slumlords hold, they have faced basically no consequences for their illegal actions. According to Princeton’s “Eviction Lab,” over 215,000 evictions have been filed nationally despite the federal and local moratoriums, and that only includes data from 27 cities. The actual number is likely much higher.

Now that several of these moratoriums have expired—despite the fact that the pandemic is intensifying once again—thousands in Boston and millions of people across the country are poised to face mass evictions.

The eviction bans still in place for Boston residents are the BHA one and the CDC one, both of which only last through the end of

EVICTIION MORATORIUMS: A BAND-AID FOR A STAB WOUND

These moratoriums stop evictions for the moment, but in the not so distant future a whole lot of people are going to be on the streets. And you have to ask, why is it that so many people have no savings or wealth? Before the Pandemic, 78% of Americans were living paycheck-to-paycheck. 66% of all Americans could not afford and unexpected \$500 expense.

Long before this crisis, most people in this country were just barely above water financially. This is not an accident, and it’s not a result of people being lazy or anything like that. People are so bad off financially because we live in a rigged system that benefits the rich and not the poor. The rich get richer while the poor get poorer.

AN ESTIMATED 30-40 MILLION RENTERS COULD BE AT RISK OF EVICTION



January. Both are limited—BHA’s ban only covers Boston residents in public housing and the CDC’s only covers those tenants who give their landlord a signed declaration. The declaration includes intimidating legalistic language requiring tenants to affirm, under penalty of perjury, that they meet a series of criteria regarding lack of other housing options, income for year 2020, and the loss of income or high out of pocket medical costs. It also requires tenants to affirm they have attempted to use existing government assistance for rent/housing, and that they are trying to make partial payments.

This CDC moratorium is full of other loopholes. Landlords are not required to inform tenants about their rights under the moratorium, and the vagueness of the declaration tenants have to sign gives judges plenty of room to

interpret whether or not a tenant truly meets the criteria in the moratorium. Plus, it only requires that the actual eviction not take place before January 31st: landlords can still issue notices to quit and bring tenants to court, as well as charge late fees. Then on February 1st, 2021, they can have tenants out on the street in the middle of the winter, even though the pandemic is reaching new heights right now.

Evictions Locally and Nationally as Moratoriums Expire

Unsurprisingly, the existence of this CDC moratorium has not done much to prevent landlords from serving tenants with eviction notices. In Massachusetts, an estimated 80,000 households face imminent eviction or foreclosure, and nationally, as many as 40,000,000 people are at risk of being

THE BIGGER PICTURE WITH EVICTIONS

Take a step back and think on evictions for a minute. What does it say about our society that tens of millions are about to lose their homes because they can’t pay rent in the middle of a pandemic? Why is it that, even in normal times, if you lose your job you can often end up on the streets? Do things have to be this way, or could there be an alternative?

A lot of times it’s easy to just “keep your head down” and not look at this bigger picture, but when you do reflect on it, a lot of questions come up. Things haven’t always been as bad as they are right now, and they don’t have to be this way forever.

evicted in the coming months. Since the MA moratorium was lifted there has been an big increase in “notices to quit” throughout the state which means an increase in the number eviction filings is sure to come.

Here in the neighborhood of Lower Roxbury/ South End, people are also getting notices to quit now that the MA moratorium was allowed to expire. In particular, residents organizing at the Grant Manor residences have received

notices to quit as a clear effort by management to retaliate against them for organizing against a major rent increase.

What can we do?

As we have seen, local and federal governments provide some limited assistance and protections against evictions. It is important to use those as much as we can. But we also need much more. We need each other: we need to come together in and across our buildings to defend each other. People united in strong resident and neighborhood associations can fight to make sure existing legal protections are actually enforced. Getting organized will also help us fight evictions that are technically legally allowed but still unjust. There are many examples across the country of people coming together to stop evictions. Here in Lower Roxbury, over at Grant Manor, residents are already coming together to fight a rent increase which will force some to consider “voluntarily” leaving (basically a way of evicting people without courts calling it an eviction). Grant Manor residents are also fighting against the retaliatory notices to quit given to residents who are organizing. Alone, it can seem impossible to deal with evictions and with other tactics used by landlords to gentrify a neighborhood. But when people come together, there is a lot we can do! ■

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BAMBOOZLED

By Jackie W.

I spent a majority of my life growing up in 1850. Yes, the building located on Washington street once upon a time known for its infamous activity. But believe it or not years later Grant Manor became a safe and loving community for many of its residents including myself. I remember walking out my back door always wanting to sit outside for some fresh air or to watch my son play. An undoubtedly warm friendly feeling in the atmosphere. A sense of serenity. Within the past few years the energy, the people, and the fate of Grant Manor have changed. For example, the Property Manager, the President, and the Vice President of the tenant association began to show more of their narcissistic personalities and bullying tactics as tenants began to speak up. This trio has clearly shown they are incapable of resolving minor issues such as mold in apartments, which residents have complained about for years. The staff has had many failed attempts in hiding or ignoring the growing fungus instead of doing what is right, eliminating it all together. They also have not stayed on top of security about their inconsistency and the importance of keeping an eye on the numerous working surveillance cameras to help prevent people digging through the trash and spreading it around the dumpsters and back entrance areas. The same areas are often occupied by drug addicts who possess needles and harmful substances. Instead security has been told to focus more on harassing residents than keeping



us safe. These so-called leaders at Grant Manor have also retaliated against residents for speaking up. They have threatened or made attempts to physically harm the people who live here on more than one occasion.

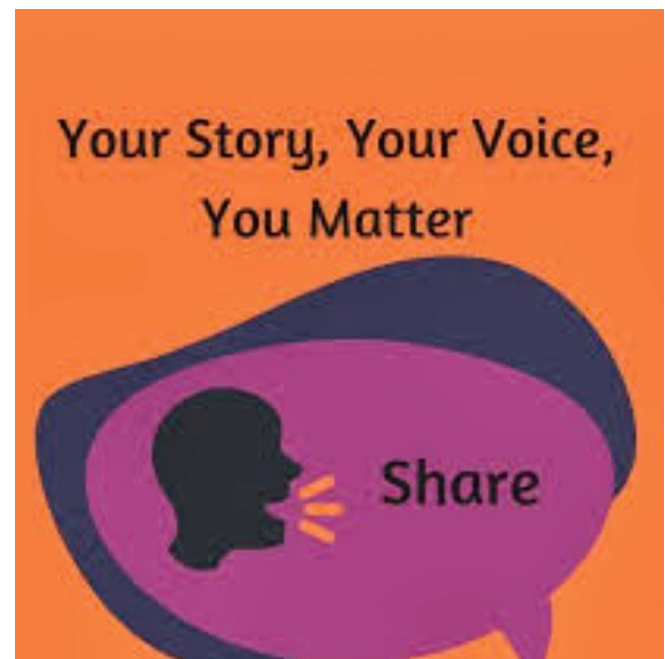
So check your history. Take back your peace and fix your crowns. We are worthy to live right and succeed as well as anyone else. However, the bizarre twist is when your own people partake in foolish behavior simply because they

are selfish power-driven individuals who also faced the same troubles you have. Let's clear it up. Just as actor Laurence Fishburne did in the 1991 film *Boyz n the Hood* as he defined gentrification. Which transpires in many ways such as big developers coming into urban or low cost neighborhoods where they can buy your land at a lower price, raise the value and sell it for a much higher profit. And boom, who do you expect to move in? Don't be blind, this has slowly been in the process around here for a while. You've seen more Caucasians moving into the area. The sidewalks that sat crumbled for years (or areas with no sidewalk at all) are suddenly perfectly fixed within the last year or two. Furthermore when your own people help speed up the process by signing papers on a deal that began five years ago, a deal to increase our rents at Grant Manor, a deal that we heard nothing about until September 2, 2020... well, that's some sick ****.

Just because you are living from paycheck-to-paycheck doesn't mean you aren't a hard worker or you don't have goals. Most rents are still high, you have other expenses, maybe some of you just lost your way. We have been facing oppression for years. We've had successful communities. They were bombed. Tulsa (Black Wall Street) 1921, Alabama 1963, Philly 1985 & New Orleans 1866. This is just to name a few. We're harassed by many non-blacks, the teachers we trust every day, the Karens who constantly call the cops on us for nothing at all, the George Zimmermans and the police who actually go as far as killing us. They also introduced crack to communities. Welfare has been set up not so much to help us but to keep us poor. On top that some of the homes that were destroyed in these bombings became the projects or buildings that resembled them standing on fragile foundations & poor construction. **This system brainwashes you with mainstream media and education. They manipulate us into thinking we should remain stuck.** Or perhaps was it what you were taught

from your parents or other relatives? Taught these lies by those who unknowingly have fallen victim to the system too. But let's not forget the great strides and achievements people of color have accomplished. There are actually people of color coming together to purchase large pieces of land. There were three women who put their money together to buy a brownstone in the South End recently. Harriet Tubman and her underground railroad led the resistance against slavery, helping many get their freedom. Langston Hughes and others authors in the Harlem Renaissance were read all over the world. And back in the day residents at Grant Manor fought to get ownership of the building.

Now, they are trying to take away our ownership and force us to pay for this multi-million dollar loan and while we continue to be mistreated. We are not fooled by the recent bribes. The \$20 gift cards and random letters of endearment that they have sent us will not work. So here we are, a passionate group that decided to bring forth change. Fight against adversity, and show good values...It is possible. Laurence Fishburne said it well, "we can't afford to be afraid of our own people." Or the ones with more power who often remain hidden. ■■■





URBAN CORE: A NEWSLETTER FOR THE PEOPLE

Urban Core was created by residents of Lower Roxbury and the South End, along with organizers from the United Front Against Displacement. This newsletter was specifically created to keep residents informed about developments in the neighborhood and to connect ongoing struggles against gentrification. The purpose of this newsletter is to serve the people. In order for it to be a success we need your feedback, contributions, and even criticisms.

If you know about an existing struggle against evictions and gentrification, let us know. If you want to write an article for the next issue, send us an email. If you disagree with what we wrote, don't hesitate to reach out. This newsletter is only as good as we make it.



**HAVE YOU RECEIVED AN
EVICTED NOTICE?**

**ARE YOU FACING A RENT
INCREASE?**

**IS YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD BEING
GENTRIFIED?**

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