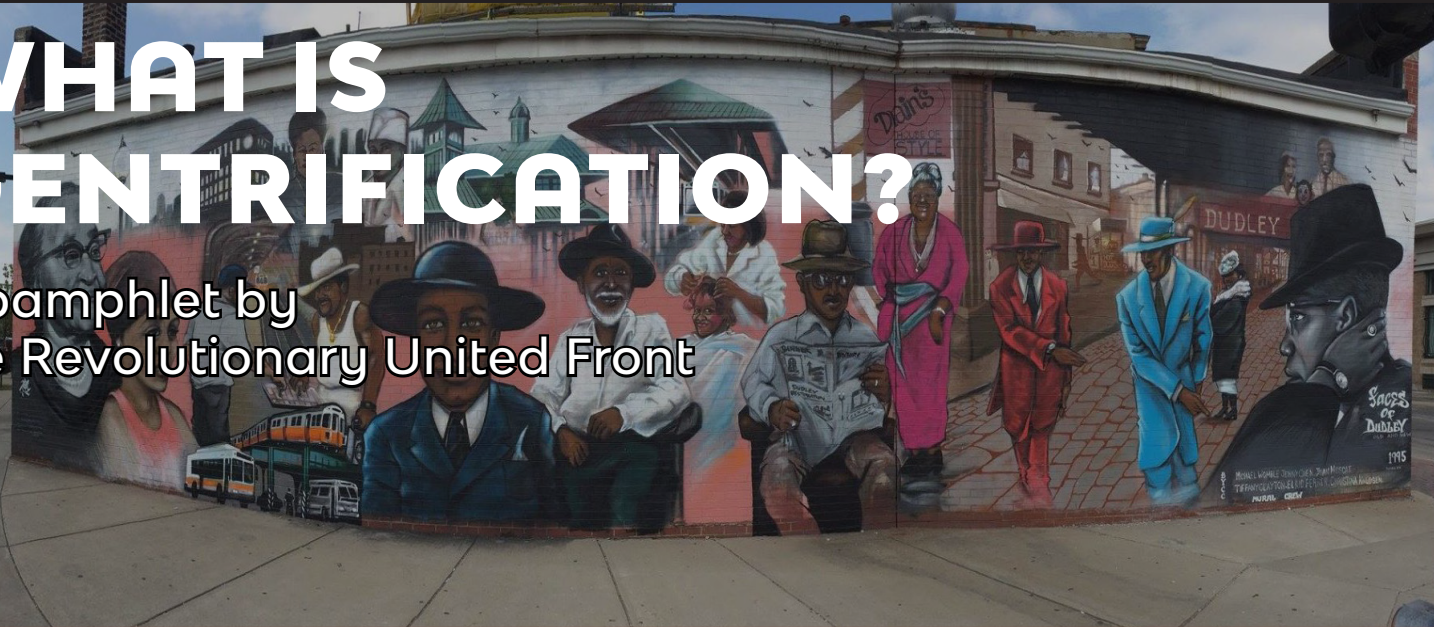
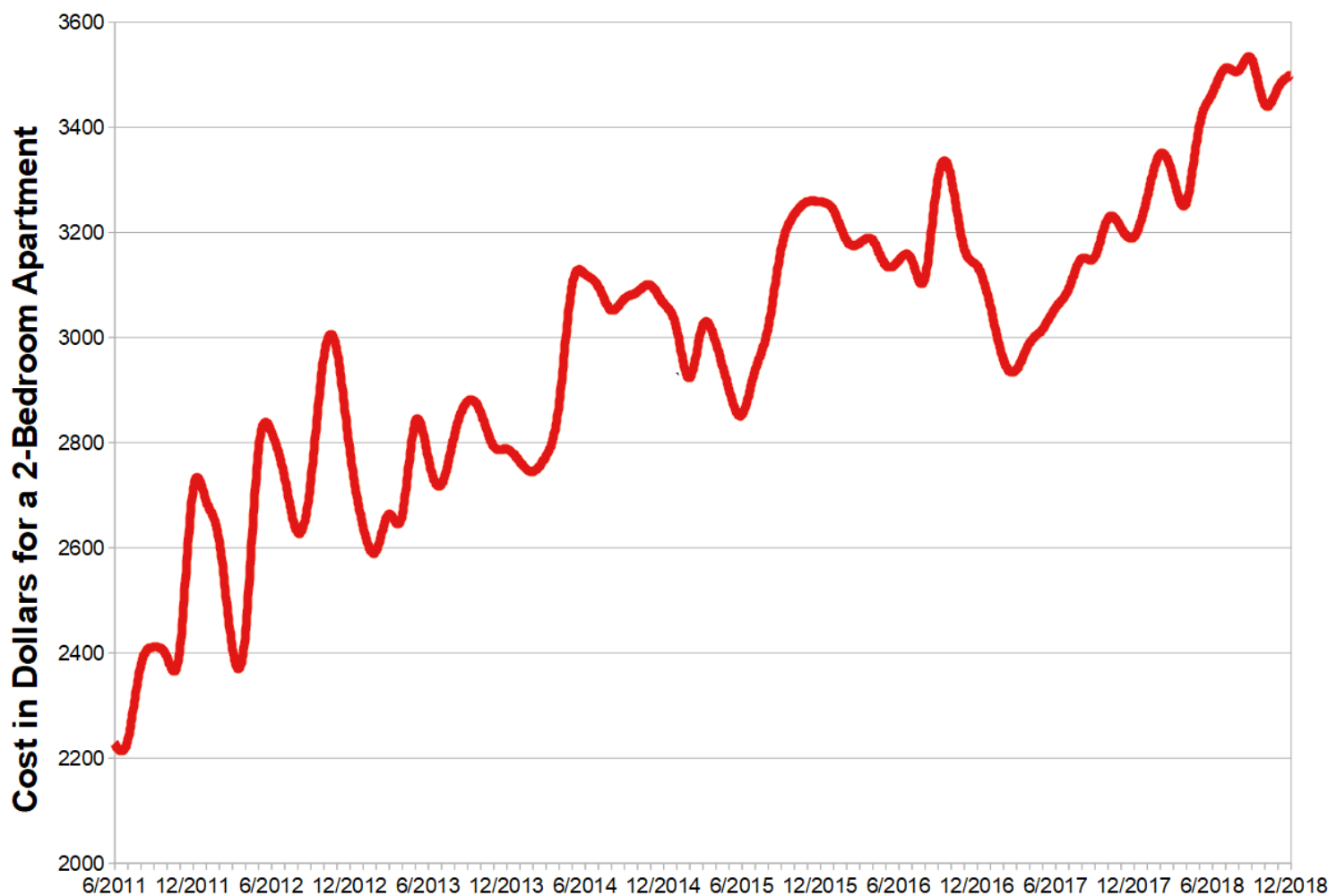


# WHAT IS GENTRIFICATION?

A pamphlet by  
the Revolutionary United Front



## Rising Rents in Boston



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# GENTRIFICATION

We have all heard about gentrification and seen its impact on the community. But what's really going on? And how can we stop the rising rents?

If you talk to most people in the Black community in Boston, they will say that one of the biggest issues is gentrification. Even with Coronavirus, and Trump, and all this police brutality, people have gentrification on their minds. **Rents in Boston are through the roof. It's now the third most expensive city in the country.** And with the economy tanking during this pandemic and this financial depression, a whole lot of people are about to be evicted. So many people have lost their jobs, and a lot of them can't pay rent for this month or anytime soon.

People know that rents keep on rising, that the rich keep getting richer and the poor keep getting poorer. Most have seen how Black folks are last hired and first fired, and other ways that racism plays out on the job and with housing too. People are used to slumlords and bad living conditions. **And in recent years people have seen the South End, Roxbury, and Dorchester gentrified.** Rich people, mostly white have moved in.

Northeastern has gobbled up housing on Tremont street and Columbus ave, turning it into dorms and luxury condos. **Dudley Square is gentrifying right before our eyes.** A bunch of new condos are being built at Forest Hills, and even Ashmont is changing quick, with fancy coffee shops and big luxury buildings being built.





But a lot of people are asking, what is causing all this gentrification? **Why is this happening? And what can we do?** If we want to stop gentrification we need to understand it. In order to change things, to make things change in the way we want them to, we need to understand what's going on.

### **So what's gentrification all about?**

Most people know the basics. Rents go up, people get evicted, new luxury condos and cafes move in, and Black people get priced out and forced out—to places like Brockton, Randolph, and Fall River. Pretty soon the neighborhood changes a lot, and you can hardly even recognize it anymore. **But like anything in life, there is more than meets the eye; a lot of stuff is going on behind the scenes.** The movers and shakers, the big banks, and other rich people have a bunch of schemes to make money off of our pain and suffering. When gentrification happens, the rich people make millions of dollars, but poor folks lose their homes, their communities, and sometimes even their future. **A whole lot of people end up on the streets too.**

They say there are two sides

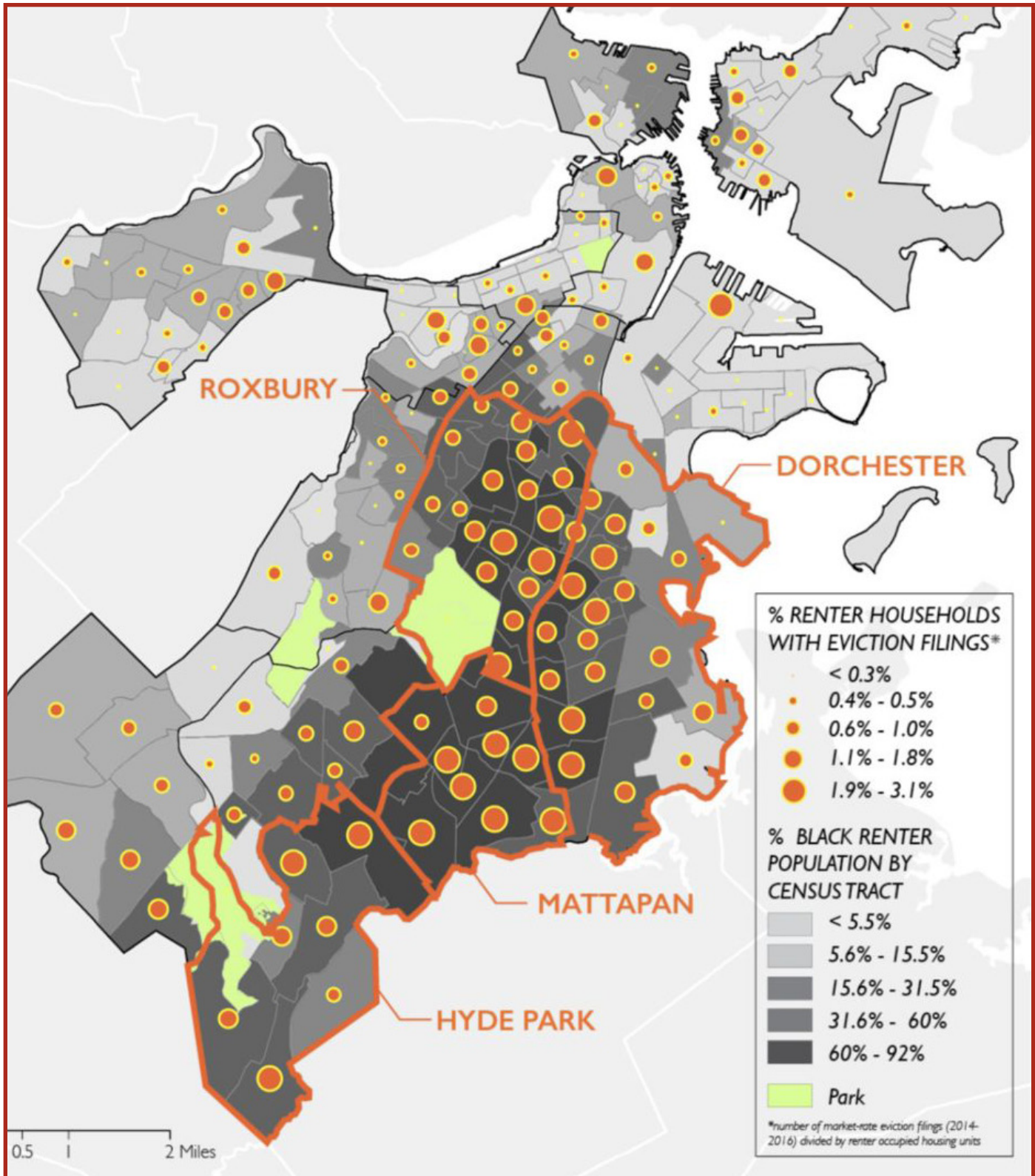
to every coin, and that's how it plays out with gentrification. On the one hand, the rich make a lot of money, and on the other hand the poor lose everything. But why?

It's not so complicated. **You don't need a PhD or some other fancy degree to understand it.** You just need to know how the rich people make their money, and you need to see that the whole system—including the police, housing court, and the politicians—works for the rich and not for the people.

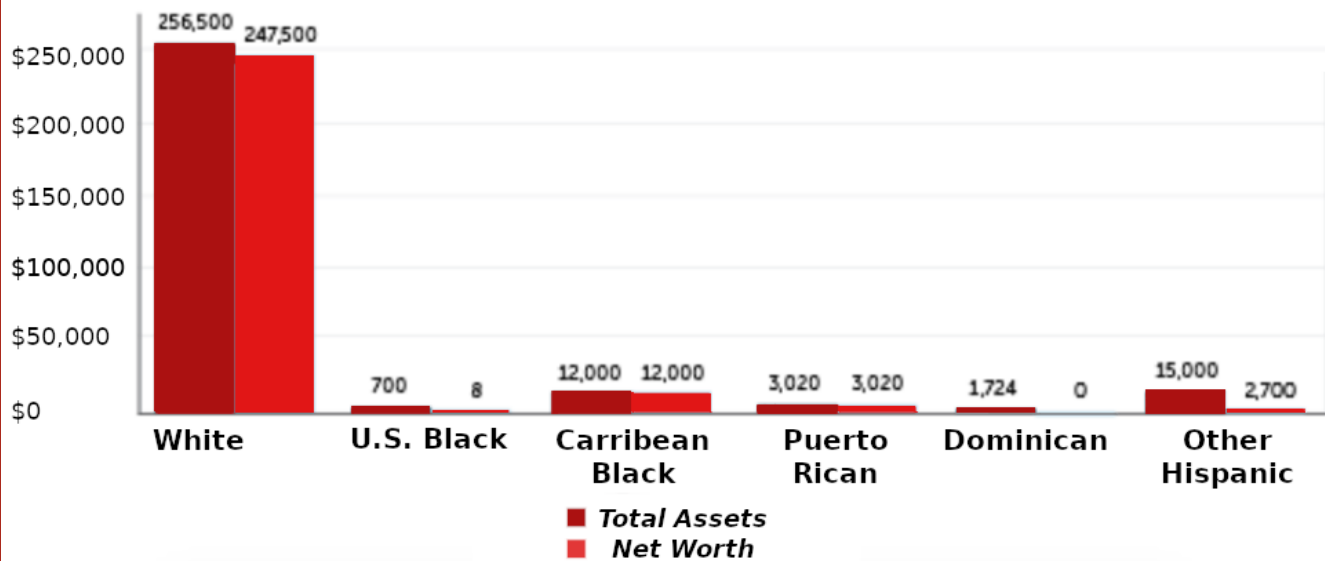
So when someone like Mayor Marty Walsh promises to “re-develop” or “renew” an area of the city, we should trust him just about as far as we can throw him. **Whenever these politicians talk, they aren't speaking for us. They are speaking for the wealthy and selling us on their schemes.** They are telling us lies and sweet talking us so that we think these plans are good for us. It's like the famous Black author James Baldwin said back in day, “Urban Renewal is just another name for negro removal.” Gentrification has some new parts and components to it these days, but the schemes are not so different than back in the 1960s when James Baldwin was criticizing the government.



# BOSTON EVICTION FILINGS DURING COVID



# The Color of Wealth in Boston



## So what's really going on?

The short story is that the rich make a whole lot of money off of housing. Just think back to the 2008 financial crisis when the stock market tanked and there was the Great Recession. That was triggered by housing prices falling. But it was about more than just housing prices going down. Banks and rich people make a lot of money off of housing. **Even though there are 17 million extra homes in this country that are vacant, they have a scheme set up to charge us most of our income just to have a place to live.** Think on that for a minute. There are more than enough homes to go around. Millions of extras. And yet, we have to pay nearly everything

we have just to have a place to live and stay off the street. Plus you have millions of people on the street with nowhere to live. **The system is rigged against us.**

And it's not just the landlords who make money off of housing and apartments. The big banks invest in these gentrification projects, and other rich people do to. Plus the construction companies make millions every time a new luxury condo building goes up. **And they all lobby (aka bribe) the politicians with all the money they are making, to make sure that our tax dollars go to funding these gentrification projects.** Politicians get kickbacks in other ways too. After they retire they get six-figure jobs "consulting" for the banks

and real-estate developers. It's a whole system of corruption and bribery. A whole bunch of players making a whole bunch of money off gentrification.

So how does this all work? The basics are simple, easy to understand. Rich people invest in construction and development. The city fast-tracks some "rezoning" and other bureaucratic stuff that clears away any legal hurdles to building luxury condos in a poor neighborhood. **Once a "redevelopment zone" is announced, landlords start raising rents like crazy, trying to drive people out of the neighborhood.**

The police start doing extra patrols and arresting people on



minor charges way more often. **Just look at what's happened around Northeastern these past few years, or how things went down when they gentrified Mission Hill.** When people can't pay their new ridiculous rents they either move out or get evicted, and pretty soon old buildings get demolished and new ones are being constructed. And a few years down the road, you can't even recognize the neighborhood anymore.

A bunch of rich white people have moved in, and all the old spots have been replaced by cafes and fancy restaurants.

But most of the time there are some weird things going on. Things that don't seem to make sense. Just look at those new luxury apartments by Forest Hills. **If you ever go by them at night, you'll see that most of the lights are off, even at 9pm.** This is because almost nobody lives there.









They built the big new fancy apartments, full of all the luxury features like granite counter-tops, but nobody moved in. For the rich this actually isn't a problem. **As long as rents keep rising they will make a boatload of money even if nobody ever moves into these apartments.**

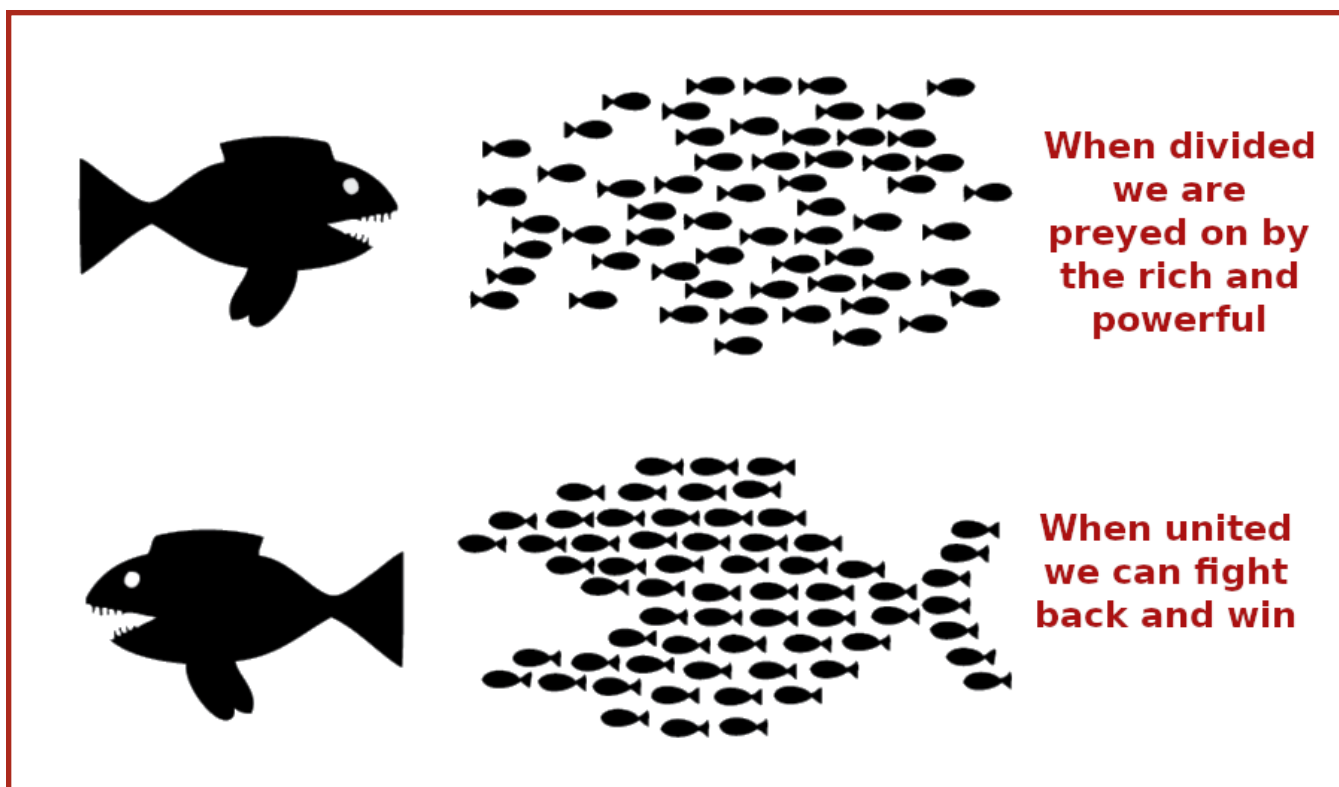
How? **It's simple, you just need to remember that these rich people make their money basically by gambling.** Except when they aren't playing with their paychecks; they're playing with our lives and our communities.

For the landlords, luxury apartments are a good investment. Better than the stock market most years. Say the stock market goes up by 3% but the cost of housing in Boston goes up by 6%. Well then owning a luxury apartment is twice as profitable as investing in the stock market, even if they don't rent the apartment to anybody. **Even if that**



**apartment sits vacant all year, they still make bank.**

**The truth is that 66% of luxury apartments in Boston are vacant. Nobody lives in them.** That's two out of three. Two out of every three luxury apartments in Boston are vacant. Back in 2015 Marty Walsh launched the "Boston 2030" plan, which was a scheme to build 53,000 new apartment units across the city. The mayor and his construction buddies claimed that this would lower rents and fix a lack of housing supply in the city. This was a lie, it was a scam. It was a trick to convince the people to support their "get rich quick" gentrification plans.



They have been building apartments like crazy since then, and they are raking in the cash, but the rents keep going up and up and up each and every year. We got played.

### **So what can we do?**

That's the big question. Things can seem hopeless sometimes. There's so much suffering in the world and things just seem to keep getting worse with Trump and now Coronavirus, on top of all the stuff that was already going on. But we don't have to just roll over and die. **We don't have to just accept all this terrible stuff that's going on. We can get organized and fight back.** Gentrification doesn't happen

overnight. It takes them time to make these moves. At every step of the way we can push back, slow things down, and even grind their plans to a halt.

We can stop gentrification in its tracks. **But we have to get organized. We need to come together and work together.** We gotta talk to our neighbors and figure out a plan. We can't just go quietly into the night. We can't just pack up and move to Brockton or Randolph or Fall River and let them destroy the community and turn the city into a playground for rich people.

It can feel shameful to not be able to pay rent, and it's easy to feel defeated when we get served an



eviction notice. But there ain't no shame in it. We need to remember that. **Because the system tries to make us feel guilty for things that aren't our fault. They try to make it seem like it's on us if we can't pay our rent.** But the truth is that this system is rigged, it's set up for us to fail. And the rich people make millions and billions of dollars off of evicting people and destroying communities.

So when we look at it like that, the only shameful thing is to not stand up for ourselves and each other. **The only shameful thing is to give up and not try to change things.** That's what they want. They want us to feel ashamed of some things that aren't are fault. They want us to feel down on ourselves because we can't "make it" in this racist rigged system.

But we shouldn't feel no shame. We should feel indignant and mad. **We should feel proud too,**



**proud of the fact that we are willing to stand up for ourselves and not let these rich gamblers and corrupt politicians ruin our lives.** Coming together and supporting each other is something to be proud of. It's something to feel good about. It's about time we showed them that we have some self-respect, that we know our rights, and that we aren't gonna be played by some fast-talking rich people who made their fortunes off ruining other peoples' lives.

**So let's get together and get organized to stop gentrification in its tracks.**



**RUF is serious about opposing gentrification here in Boston and around the country.**

**Contact us if you want to get involved in the struggle or if you know someone who is facing displacement or eviction.**



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