

The Heart of the City | November, 2021

UPDATE ON THE STRUGGLE IN NYC

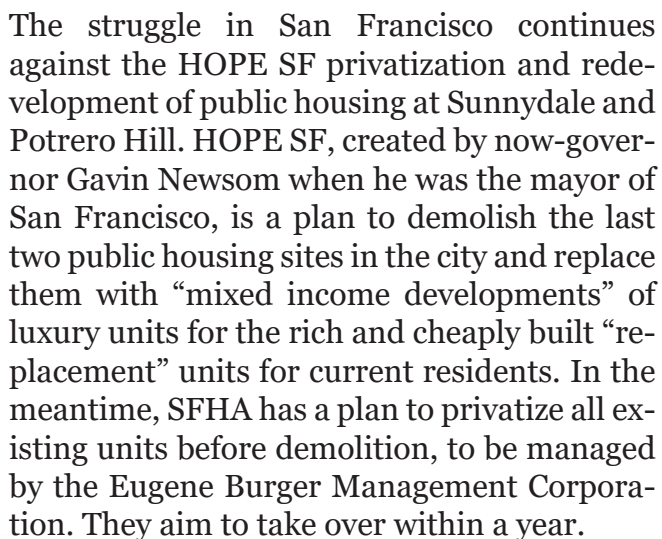
RECENT PROTEST AT BOSTON PROJECT

THE SCAM OF PRIVATIZATION

BOSTON TENANTS CONFRONT HOUSING GOONS

IMMIGRANT FAMILIES AND PRIVATIZATION

By UFAD Bay Area Branch



In recent weeks, tenants from both developments organized a letter campaign demanding SFHA repair their units and buildings and halt the privatization. Tenants also held protests on October 15th at Sunnydale and on October 18th at San Francisco City Hall.

On October 15th, San Francisco Mayor London Breed, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Marcia Fudge held a press conference at the latest Mercy Housing HOPE SF development – built on the site of demolished Sunnysdale units – as a part of Fudge’s “Build Back Better” national tour. This event

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SF Mayor London Breed (left), Nancy Pelosi (center), and HUD Secretary Marcia Fudge (right) toured the new privately owned building at Sunnydale on October 15th.

was organized by the politicians and San Francisco Housing Authority in secret, without informing residents.

But word spread fast the day before, and tenants organized a protest early the next morning. When tenants tried to enter the site where the politicians were touring the Mercy Housing building, San Francisco police barred them from entering, saying it was “a construction site” and private property. So tenants held a protest at the entrance, making speeches in English, Spanish, and Cantonese, with the focus on how the redevelopment is for rich people and the developers, not for the residents of Sunnydale.

At the same time, Pelosi was making her speech to the politicians and developers in which she said, “Just viewing this project at Sunnydale, it’s about respect. Respect for the tenants – they are the VIPs. I say this because it is a model for the country to see how San Francisco deals with this [...] to see that they are treated with respect by housing that meets their needs in a way that they had some say in putting together [sic] and everything that goes with it.”

The contradiction between what the politicians say and what was actually going on that day couldn’t be clearer. While Pelosi touts HOPE SF as a model for the country, the residents she called VIPs were being barred from entering by the police just down the block.

In Sunnydale public housing, tenants have front and back doors, gardens, washers and dryers in each unit, and are not charged for utilities. Mercy Housing developed the “Casala” building at Sunnydale and Hahn which opened in 2019 as the first phase of the redevelopment. Tenants say the Casala building was cheaply constructed (one resident’s ceiling started leaking when her upstairs neighbor took a shower) and that maintenance is neglected. Mercy imposes restrictive rules about who can visit and utilities can run over \$100 per month. The new Mercy Housing building that Pelosi, Fudge, and Breed toured is slated to open this month, and many residents have resisted as SFHA and Mercy Housing employees have pressured them to sign leases to move there. Residents know that if they sign these leases they are effectively signing up to live in even worse conditions than the already neglected project at Sunnydale.



Sunnydale residents protesting against the publicity stunt event put on by Nancy Pelosi, Secretary of HUD Marcia Fudge, and the mayor of San Francisco, London Breed. Residents weren't even allowed into the event!

Sunnydale resident Andres said as police stopped tenants from entering: “There’s real crime in the city going on. Not this. We’re all residents, we live here. Who’s asking the questions inside? They don’t want to hear from the real people. The millionaires in there are just conspiring to evict us, trying to eliminate Section 9 [public housing].”

Raymunda said (translated from Spanish): “We are speaking out and we cannot run because we have children. We cannot walk the streets in fear and we will not sleep on the streets. Another thing, these people in the office won’t pick up the trash but want our rent. They treat us bad because we have less but we are good people, dignified people and we deserve to be treated well by these managers. We will not leave, we will fight. We will not be thrown onto the street with our children we will defend our rights as people. We will not leave. We will not surrender.”

The total disregard for residents was also exemplified by employees of the San Francisco

Housing Authority and Mercy Housing. SFHA Executive Director Tonia Lediju, SFHA Director of Public Housing Kendra Crawford, and Mercy Housing employee Elizabeth Chilton all ignored residents protesting when they walked out of the press conference. They wouldn’t even look at people, and when questioned, went so far as to say that none of the people at the protest even lived at Sunnydale.

On October 18th, tenants continued the fight with a protest at San Francisco City Hall. This protest was the result of weeks of outreach and coordination between tenants at Sunnydale and Potrero Hill and was the largest protest so far of tenants from both developments coming together. Tenants made speeches about opposing the redevelopment and privatization, long-term neglect by SFHA, and the discrimination of mixed immigration status families in public housing and Section 8 housing. People held signs with messages in Spanish, Chinese, and English about the need to fight for residents’ interests that they had made at the previous weeks’ meetings at Sunnydale and



The current buildings at Sunnydale are old and have problems, but residents have their own entrance and many have gardens. The developers want to demolish the existing buildings and force everyone into small apartments.

Potrero Hill.

Faaiu from Sunnydale said in her speech at the protest: “We will fight very hard to stay. I ask all residents of Sunnydale, please come out and support. Sunnydale, have your voice to fight! Don’t be scared! You know all these politicians, the politician is a liar! He’s an asshole! I’m telling you, these people, they care about themselves, they don’t even give a shit about us! So we’ll fight, we’re gonna stay. Just update what we have. We need lights at the parking lots, we need more space in the parking lot on Sunnydale. We need more people to support us, may God bless us and help us to stay focused on Sunnydale! We’re not gonna go anywhere.”

Rita, who has lived at Sunnydale for 50 years, said: “The [new] building has too many disadvantages. It’s not safe for us to live in; they put that building up like a paper castle and they’re forcing us in. We still need our front and back doors. We still need our flowerbeds and our

gardens. If they put us in their buildings we won’t have any of that. We still need to have our washers and dryers; we don’t wanna spend money putting in their washers and dryers. What are they gonna do with all the money that we’re putting into these machines?

“We’re being controlled. When we get in there you can’t go visit neighbors, you have to stay in the floor that you’re on. We’re gonna be trapped in these buildings, and the buildings are not safe. It’s not okay! On top of that, they’re privatizing it! And they’re lying, saying it’s gonna be 30% rent still, but it’s not; it’s gonna be 33%-40% rent, and 50% for mixed [status] families! [Editor’s note: rent for mixed status families will often be even higher than 50% of their income] That’s not okay, it’s not fair.

“They’re going back to modern day slavery and it’s universal now: not just Black, not just white, not just Asian...It’s low income! So we have to stick together to make sure that we don’t be forced into these buildings. If we don’t



Rosa, a resident of Sunnydale who has lived there for over 50 years, speaks at the rally at SF City Hall on October 18th.

come out and say nothing, they're gonna make us go in these buildings. So we have to come out and keep protesting and keep fighting!"

At the protest at City Hall, the SF Bay Area branch of UFAD presented key demands to the city and the public at large:

1. We demand SFHA repair people's apartments after neglecting them for years to justify the privatization
2. We oppose the HOPE SF redevelopment and demolition of public housing
3. We oppose the privatization of existing public housing buildings with new leases that will be sent to tenants at Potrero Hill and Sunnydale with the Eugene Burger Management Corporation
4. We demand the city of San Francisco pay for mixed status families' rents to be subsidized

the same amount as all families in public housing and Section 8, at a maximum of 30% of their income.

Both the October 15th and 18th protests received significant coverage in local media, including a prominent local Chinese-language publication. They represented a real step forward in building the movement against privatization in San Francisco, and in uniting people across different racial lines. Now as the rich and powerful push forward with an "accelerated disposition" (just a fancy phrase for privatizing even faster), UFAD is in a stronger place to oppose this scam. However, it is still an uphill battle as there are many obstacles to overcome to build the movement. So it will take continued dedication and resilience against the hardships ahead to continue to win victories and ultimately stop the privatizations.

UPDATE ON THE STRUGGLE IN NY

By the NYC UFAD Branch



The October 1st protest at Harlem River Houses brought together tenants from across NYC. Members of the Boston Branch of UFAD also visited and spoke in support of the struggle.

Over the last few months, residents in public housing organizing with UFAD have made several gains in the struggle, bringing more tenants into organizing efforts, securing media coverage on national TV networks for the struggle and securing basic repairs and responses from the New York Housing Authority (NYCHA). However, the struggle remains in a difficult stage, with many residents in a building slated for RAD (Harlem River) moving out in the face of harassment by new management (an outcome the new management hopes to achieve).

In particular residents had success in petitioning and letter-writing for repairs. An official at HUD launched an investigation into C&C Management's practices at Harlem River after residents wrote two petitions to the organization over residents being harassed to sign

a new lease with a company that has not yet even been authorized by HUD to take over. The chief compliance officer from NYCHA also made an in-person visit to an entryway at Harlem River that has had a basement flooded with foul-smelling water for much of the year (and in which a decaying dead rat lay for over a month). When he arrived, for 35 minutes NYCHA staff acted busy, sweeping the grounds as if they were extras on a movie set. The compliance officer ordered several repairs to the mold and flooding be completed. At the same time, he made it clear that problems such as persistent mold and lead were common throughout the system, and he did not seem so hopeful that too much could be done. He also made it clear that he was unable to talk about the city's plans to privatize public housing. And yet, several weeks later, he appeared on a zoom call hosted by the C&C management to "engage"

(read bamboozle) residents. So much for being neutral.

Promises that the officer would return to follow up with a visit in subsequent weeks did not come to pass.

In the meantime, residents got busy organizing their neighbors in the days that followed his visit. A protest was held in Harlem, with tenants attending who traveled from Brooklyn and Boston. It was also attended by former members of the Tenant Association (TA) leadership who had been ousted and marginalized in various developments for opposing privatization. One of them shared a copy of TA bylaws, which NYCHA and the TA president has refused to release. These bylaws show that the current TA presidents have strict term limits and requirements for public regular elections, requirements that in most developments are outright ignored. UFAD members went to several protests against public housing in Brooklyn, at a site that has already been taken over by a private developer, but where residents have been roused to take action by abuse at the hands of the new management company which has taken over for NYCHA.

In this same time period, the Urban Core was distributed in several areas across NYC, including at a newsstand. Residents took up the call to approach businesses for support for printing costs, and to gain support for the struggle. The words of an organizer in the struggle against privatization in Minneapolis resonated with us: “people are going to join the struggle, and some will give up, but others and even more will come forward” This will



Urban Core's first appearance in a NYC newsstand.

come to pass, given consistent organization based among the people.

This has been the experience in UFAD's efforts in New York.

Several UFAD members in NYC have made calls into protests in Boston and San Francisco to share the experiences and perspectives on the struggle in New York. A theatrical skit is planned for an upcoming event which depicts the character of the struggle in NYC and the vile nature of Gregg Russ, the privatization czar who was imported from Minneapolis by NYCHA and their corporate sponsors to be the agent of big capital in NYC. As the struggle has grown, the children of tenants and activists have been able to meet up and play together at several events. A skit by children on the struggle has been proposed for a future date.

A mayoral election was just held in New York City. After the election the victorious candidate, Eric Adams made a bee-line for a

party with real estate developers, following in the footsteps of his predecessor, DeBlasio. Throughout his campaign, Adams has signaled he favors privatization plans, while also emphasizing he is “a tough guy” who carries a firearm, and hence is supposedly tough on crime.

His election signals strong head-winds in the coming months for residents of public housing.

Given all this, we must study the relationship of the local situation in New York to the larger efforts of the business elites to reap huge profits through scooping up public property, especially at a moment when the economic system remains largely paralyzed by decades of speculation, mismanagement, and corruption, now exacerbated by the effects of COVID.

As one UFAD member put it, “look what these people did to the American Indians, and then to the slaves. We are in the same boat as these people today.”

Given the situation, we must learn from the practices of the most advanced people’s movements the world has seen, stay strong, and avoid the system’s efforts to split our movement with its divide and conquer strategy. We must not resort to hatred of our fellow man, but, in the words of late Fred Hampton, former chair of the Chicago Black Panthers, we must have a spirit of “love for the people,” and that means even those who do not unite with us at this moment.

Quotation from The UFAD Points of Unity on the question of racism and gentrification:

Through the construction of new luxury units, keeping vacant apartments off the market to restrict housing supply, and destroying low-income housing, these forces work together to price poor and working-class people out



ERIC ADAMS: PRO-PRIVATIZATION, ANTI- PUBLIC HOUSING

Eric Adams was just elected Mayor of New York City. While some have hailed this as a victory for Black people in general, the truth is something different entirely. Although there is now another “Black face in a high place,” this does not mean that things will get better for Black people in NYC.

Given Adams’ track record, as well as his statements in support of privatization, it’s clear that he is going to help the rich and the powerful, not the common people. And given how many Black people live in NYCHA, we can see that his pro-privatization stands will literally push people out of their homes. Adams is just another politician. We can’t trust him one bit. Instead, we have to organize and build the power of the people.

of the city. In the process they make billions of dollars transforming cities into playgrounds for the rich, while the poor are kicked to the curb, out of neighborhoods, and eventually out of the city all together. Gentrification disproportionately affects Black people, Latinos, and other oppressed minorities.



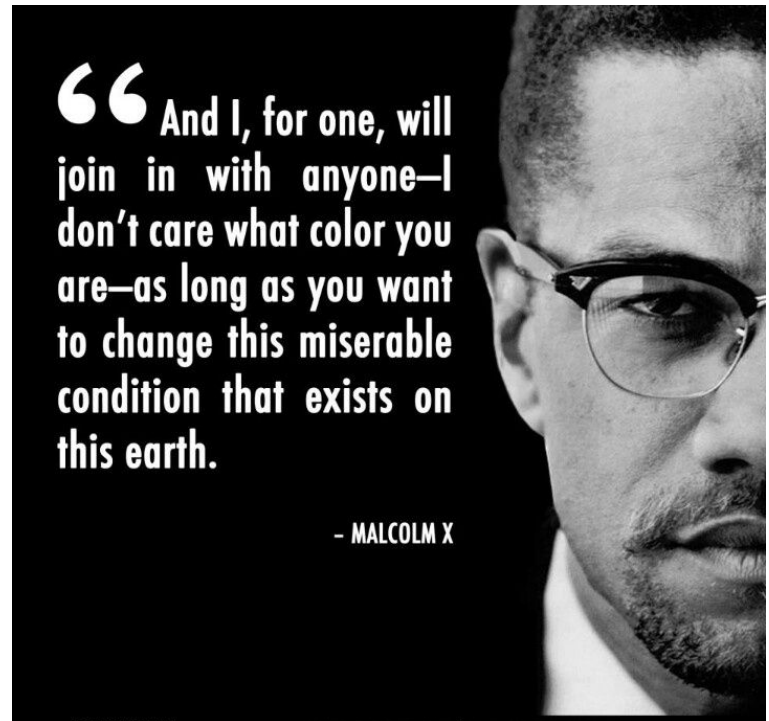
A protest at Harlem River on October 7th, after a collective sign-making effort to capture the key slogans and ideas of the struggle.

At present most people in this country are not generally united in any common cause or political struggle. While there are big spontaneous protests and some pockets of organized resistance, there is also a lot of division and conflict among the people. The rich and powerful elite of this country run things by a “divide and rule” strategy. They work to divide people by age, nationality, skin color, gender, language, and more, pitting them against each other. To build the power of the people we need to overcome these divisions. It takes patient and methodical work day-by-day, week-by-week, and year-by-year to bring people together.

While some of these contradictions and conflicts play out along national lines, it’s also important not to oversimplify things. Wealthy white people moving into a neighborhood is often a telltale sign of gentrification; however in some cities such as Palo Alto and Seattle, influxes of wealthy South and East Asian populations have been a significant part of

gentrification. There are often also many low-income white people in public housing. [...]

While there are conflicts among the people, in many cases there is a basis for people to overcome these issues and work together. But this does not happen automatically. It takes serious time and work to understand what is needed to bring people together in the common struggle against displacement. Even when a whole neighborhood faces gentrification, the obstacles to bringing people together often vary building to building and need to be understood in detail. This difficult work has to be done in order to win meaningful victories in the struggle. Working through contradictions among the people and struggling against gentrification are two closely linked tasks. We need to bring people together in the process of fighting back.



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THE RECENT PROTEST AT THE MARY ELLEN MCCORMACK PROJECT

By Ryan Costello



On Tuesday October 12, the United Front Against Displacement gathered outside the Boston Housing Authority management office at the Mary Ellen McCormack project in South Boston. This protest came after months of organizing in the project, and a number of recent victories, including getting one tenant a transfer to a properly sized unit and getting the window fixed in another tenant's apartment. Tenants are fighting against the privatization of the development, and are part of a larger movement across the country to stop the politicians from giving away the projects to developers and the big banks.

Mary Ellen McCormack has 1,016 units and is being taken over by WinnCompanies, a notorious slumlord. Winn plans to knock down the existing buildings and build ~3,000 total units in the new development, the majority of which will be market rate. Winn has promised

tenants that everyone who wants to return after the demolition and privatization will be allowed to. However, they have also said they will require everyone to “reapply” to come back and that all residents will be subject to a credit check, background check, and CORI to review their police record. In other privatizations in Boston and around the country, these things have been used to stop residents from ever returning after they agree to leave. For example, under the HOPE VI privatization program only 11.5% of tenants were ever allowed to come back after privatization.

At the protest, tenants spoke out against the privatization, and against management's neglect. The protest started at 2pm, a time that people knew management would be in the office. Many tenants spoke out about the callous neglect of housing, and how they have been repeatedly disrespected by management.

Mimi, who has three young children, spoke about how son has lead poisoning from her apartment and how housing has done nothing to help, despite letters from her doctors. Ismaan, who had recently visited New York City to attend a protest at the Harlem River Houses, spoke out about how the sale was not for the tenants and how the United Front Against Displacement is working to build up a national movement against the privatization of public housing. Fernando who lives at the Bromley Heath project in Jamaica Plain, brought a sign that read “Solidarity from Bromley Heath.” Chants of “No rats, no mold, fix our homes!” echoed across the project.

This protest was another step forward for the movement at McCormack. It was modest in

size, but powerful in its message. While some tenants were nervous to come out, fearing retaliation from management, the truth is that no one who attended the protest has faced any harassment or retaliation for protesting. In fact, they have only felt more empowered to raise their voices against all the nonsense from management, and to speak up for what’s right. The movement to stop the privatization and get the apartments fixed up is growing, and management’s lies are being exposed, despite their best efforts to slander the United Front Against Displacement. Now tenants in McCormack are planning a joint rally at city hall with tenants from the Bromley Heath and Grant Manor developments to pressure the mayor and city council to stop supporting privatization and gentrification.



THE SCAM OF PRIVATIZATION AND MIXED INCOME DEVELOPMENTS

An interview with Alisha from Double Rock in San Francisco



To trick tenants into supporting privatization, developers often show off strange computer generated images of what things will supposedly look like after redevelopment. These stand in sharp contrast to the actual new buildings which are poorly made and dangerous.

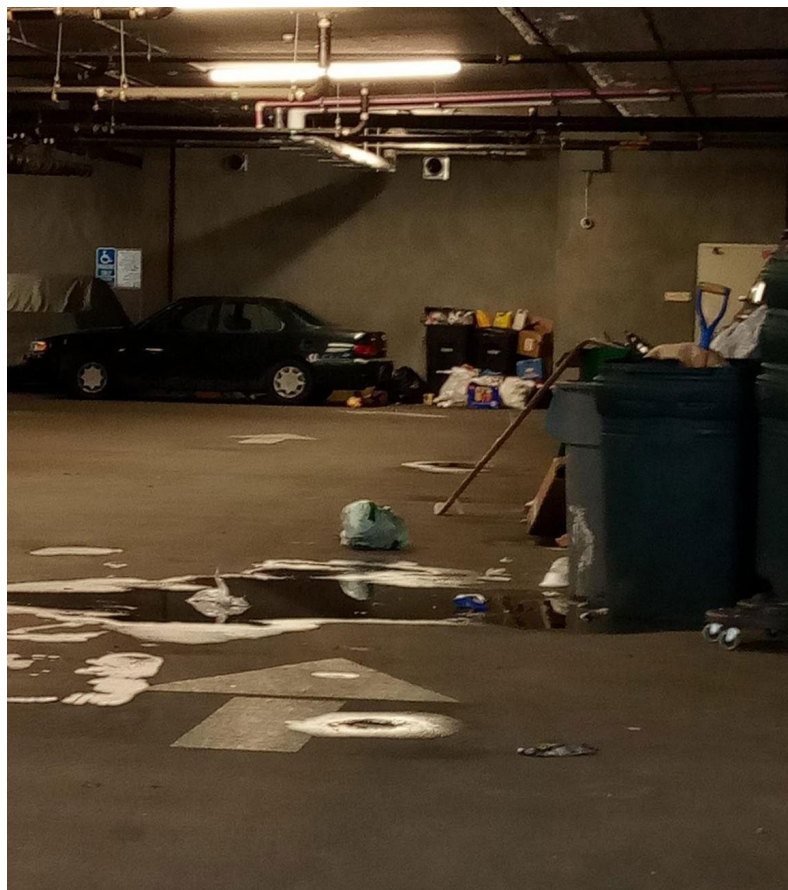
Double Rock, also known as Alice Griffith, is a housing development in Bayview Hunters Point in San Francisco. It was one of the four developments targeted by the city's HOPE SF scheme to demolish the remaining San Francisco Housing Authority buildings so that real estate developers can build "mixed-income" developments that include thousands of market rate units. HUD and Congress want to use HOPE SF as a national model of how to destroy public housing and line the pockets of developers.

In 2018, Alisha moved from public housing into an apartment in a newly developed building managed by the John Stewart Company at Double Rock. She spoke with the United

Front Against Displacement about neglect by private management and why she's fighting back.

UFAD: We think it's really important for tenants in developments that are being privatized in San Francisco under HOPE SF to hear from you, because you live at Double Rock and can talk about what it's been like for residents there with the privatization and redevelopment.

Alisha: Whatever you need from me to help out, because it's not all it's cracked up to be. The places are really beautiful and they're brand new, and most of us haven't lived in a brand new place. A lot of us put everything to the side for that. At the time, I was so excited



The reality at Double Rock after privatization: A parking garage overflowing with trash that has become a breeding ground for rats, roaches, and other pests.

that I had a dishwasher, and a microwave, it was new, and it looked pretty and everything was bright and airy and my wheelchair could fit in everything.

They distract you really well from asking too many questions about other stuff. But the maintenance is horrible. And the electricity. When I first moved in, I could plug in an iron or vacuum into outlets into my room. Now, if I plug either in, it blows out the fuse in my bedroom every time. I have to plug it in the bathroom and run it into my room, which isn't safe.

UFAD: Did you ask the management company to fix these things?

Alisha: I did, but because it's the pandemic it had to wait. Like I requested that they fix my dishwasher and my garbage disposal, and they came in and did the garbage disposal but not the dishwasher because it wasn't essential, and they're not sending people into the apartments unless it's essential.

UFAD: Did they say why it wasn't essential?

Alisha: Because I can wash dishes by hand. I've never had one, and I'm teaching my children to be gentle with it, but a wheel broke and they won't fix it. They actually never sent maintenance to fix the garbage disposal, I happened to catch the maintenance man coming out of my neighbors apartment, and he slipped into my house to fix it. He had to do it like that because he didn't have a work order, even though I submitted one; it just wasn't in his hand.

UFAD: How long did it take for them to come fix it?

Alisha: About a month. They have 72 hours to come fix it officially. For plumbing, they come fix it right away so it doesn't flood the building. That's for their benefit, not for the residents.

Once our electricity went out for 16 hours. Not just the lights, but the emergency generator too. Nobody could use their breathing machines. The other thing is, there's no emergency exit for disabled people. I would have to drag myself down four flights of stairs to get out, or wait by the garbage room for someone to come and rescue me. I sat in my apartment for 16 hours. I shouldn't be on the fourth floor. I took the first one they offered me, because I was leaving from up on Kiska [in Hunters Point] when they were moving everyone around to

fix those places up [to privatize them] and that was the opportunity I had and the one they showed me, so I took it.

UFAD: These new rules by private management are putting you in fear of losing your place. These rules are to suppress us and keep us down.

Alisha: When you break one [of the private management company's rules], they can put you out. The only way that the situation changes is if we do something about it. Everybody's breaking all the rules and they're not saying a word. I don't think its because of the pandemic, it was going on before that. I feel like it's a setup. You're letting everyone break all of these rules so you can just shut the building down because it's their fault. That might be extreme, but we're talking about rich people who don't care about anyone else.

The only thing holding me back is the fear of retaliation but I'm going to work through that. I'm willing to do it. There's not enough people in the world willing to do something. There's pockets of them here or there. I would definitely like to be a part of that, trying to help make something better for my people in the little corner of the world they threw us in.

UFAD: Tenants across the country are starting to create tenant organizations that are independent from the Housing Authority.

Alisha: That sounds better than the one connected to Housing. If we're creating our own, we can talk about what we want to, we don't have to stick to whatever agenda they put out for us.

UFAD: What do you want to say to tenants at Sunnydale and Potrero Hill?

Alisha: If every complex had their own two or three person committee, then they can all get together, and we can really light a fire

under them and they'll be terrified of us, because we'll be able to get done what we need. We're not asking for mansions or townhouses or anything, we're asking you to fix our damn heat, not to leave us in the cold. Treat us like humans, not like a bunch of cattle they threw in the barn.

What else do I really want people to know? That we need to come together. We have to pull together, or else we're all going to sink, basically. Somebody has to take a stand, somebody has to start. I know people are fearful, because I am as well, of being displaced because we decided to speak up. But if we don't speak up, our children are going to have it worse than we do.

So now is the time we need to speak up and light a fire under these people before they completely take over the few places they do have for low income, single parents, elderly people, and build a big wall and toss us behind it, which is kind of what they are trying to do.

Even if it's just one person speaking up, it takes one person to start, and I'm willing to start for mine. So I'm inviting other people to come and start for theirs. It's just so important that we come together as a village to take care of our children and each other, because they are going to swallow us whole, just step on us completely if we don't stand up and fight back. So we have to, we really really have to.

I know people are scared. I'm scared too. We're going to have to get past that. Because I don't want nobody stepping on me, I don't want to have to worry about, you know, I broke a rule so I can't go home. That's ridiculous, I don't want to live like that. I pay my rent every month, I'm entitled to do what I like in my house.

If we organize across the country, we can take them all on!

MILDRED HAILEY RESIDENTS CONFRONT AND EXPOSE PUBLIC HOUSING OFFICIALS AT COMMUNITY MEETING

By Mildred Hailey Subcommittee of the Boston UFAD Branch



Using creepy computer generated images and strange language games and wordplay, the banks, politicians, and developers behind privatization are trying to make it seem like a good thing for tenants at Mildred Hailey. This couldn't be further from the truth.

On Thursday, October 21, 2021, members of the Mildred Hailey Subcommittee of UFAD went to a meeting hosted by the Boston Housing Authority (BHA) and the developers who are trying to take over and privatize the project (starting with one part, which lays the grounds for the rest to be sold off too). Their plan for “Phase One” is to tear down several buildings, convert 253 public housing units into project-based Section 8, and add more than 400 new apartments which are much more expensive. The meeting was supposed to help residents “GET the FACTS about Redevelopment.” But as we quickly saw, the meeting was just a way to spread pro-privatization propaganda.

Only one low-level employee from one of the developers was sent, and she couldn't answer basic questions about the privatization. Nobody from Mildred Hailey management showed up, and only person from BHA came. He was late and was very rude to tenants. His name is Joe Bamberg, and he earns \$120,000 a year working as the “Director of Real Estate Development” for BHA. When our committee members started asking real questions about the privatization, he got evasive. He talked to us like we were children and constantly interrupted anybody who tried to speak. After we tried a few times to get a word in edgewise, he started saying that we were “spreading lies” and accused us of being “antagonistic” and “unfair” just for using the word privatization.

JPNDC and Centre Street Partners

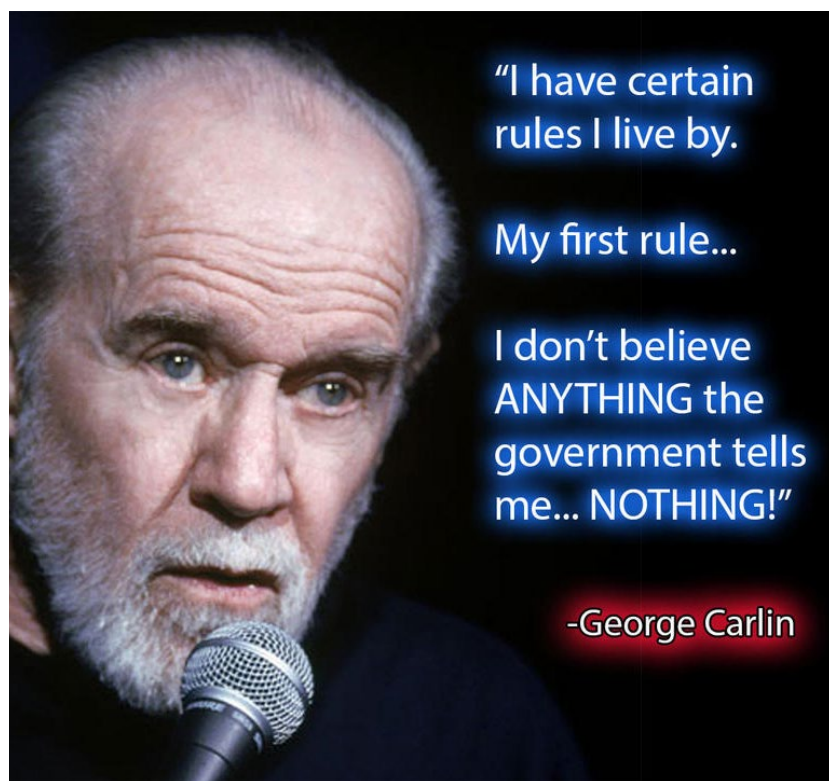
- JPNDC partnered with the TMC over two decades in projects including the Stop & Shop/Martha Eliot Health Center complex, Walden Community Garden, and the [Julia Martin House](#).
- In 2013 JPNDC began intensive community organizing to create a new tenant organization at Bromley-Heath and support the development of a diverse and representative group of resident leaders. See our [2014 video](#), “How we became tenant leaders”
- Centre Street Partners was formed in 2017 by JPNDC, The Community Builders and Urban Edge (the same three groups leading the [Jackson Square Redevelopment Initiative](#)) to apply for BHA designation to redevelop the Mildred C. Hailey Apartments. Our designation was approved in August 2017.
- MCHA is one of only two Boston public housing developments in the **privatization** process that are led by mission-driven organizations with deep community roots and commitments to maximizing benefits for low-income residents.

Above: JPNDC’s website on the day we confronted Joe Bamberg.

Below: JPNDC’s website two days later, note how the word “privatization” disappeared!

JPNDC and Centre Street Partners

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The late comedian George Carlin was a sharp critic of the inequalities and absurdities of our society. In his comedy he often encouraged people to question the government and media narratives.

Clearly Mr. Bamberg thinks that people who live in public housing are stupid, but we saw right through him and repeatedly exposed the contradictions and lies in his claims.

One of this housing goon's major points was that calling it a privatization is "false information," because the sale of Mildred Hailey is a "public-private partnership." It's not just Joe Bamberg playing word games like this. In a recent Boston Bulletin article, BHA director Kate Bennett also made a similar claim. But we know all too well that "public-private partnership" is just a nicer way to say privatization. As Lavette Smith, a longtime Mildred Hailey resident, pointed out, "the word private is still there! If something's private, that means everybody's not included."

In this case there isn't any real difference

between privatization and a "public-private partnership." These are two terms for the same exact thing. These "redevelopments," as housing calls them, involve the transfer of ownership and management of public housing buildings to private companies, which is the textbook definition of privatization. Just because BHA is still "in the picture" to some minor extent doesn't change the fact that when the private companies take over, they are the new landlord. BHA is just playing word games to dupe people.

On top of that, the people doing the privatization have repeatedly called it privatization! Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation (JPND), one of the main developers who is planning to take over, had the phrase "privatization process" on their website to describe their plans at Mildred Hailey Apartments. When

we pointed this out to the officials at the meeting, they said we were lying. When we showed them the website, they said the website was wrong, and yelled at us that they can't control what JPND puts on their website. Two days after this meeting, JPND changed their website to say "public-private partnership".

As George Carlin pointed out way back in 1990, American elites love to use "words that hide the truth," "words that conceal reality." For example, as Carlin put it, the elite have change the wording: "poor people used to live in slums, now the economically disadvantaged occupy substandard housing in the inner city." This is part of the effort of the wealthy and powerful to trick us into not seeing what is really going on. They believe that by playing word games they can fool us into believing that privatization (and a whole bunch of other



Mildred Hailey in 1999. Mildred led the tenant struggles at the project for years and her activism helped to keep the buildings well maintained and prevented predatory developers from swooping in and privatizing the project.

nonsense) is nothing to worry about and might even be good for us. But the truth is that when they stand to make millions of dollars off kicking us out of our homes, it's clear that we have different interests than the developers, banks, and politicians who are pushing privatization, no matter what they call it.

The next argument our "good friend" Joe Bamberg made was that the privatization of Mildred Hailey Apartments is legitimate and supported by the community because there is oversight from the tenant board. But we pointed out that tenants didn't vote for the current board and haven't even been told who is actually on the board!

From the early 70's to the late 2000's, Mildred Hailey had tenant management, which meant that much of the maintenance and management was handled by a group of residents. Back then, the people running the board (including Mildred Hailey, the woman whom the

project was later named after) made an effort to be known by residents and serve their interests. Mildred Hailey would walk the whole project each morning, talk to residents, and point out problems that needed to be fixed. When people were running for the board they would go out into the community and knock on doors, have conversations, and ask people for permission to represent them.

But in 2012, tenant management ended, and BHA swooped back in and took the reigns. That's when everything went downhill: escalating violence, a disintegrating sense of community, apathetic and negligent managers, and worsening conditions in the apartments. And that period is when the current board was created. The developer JPNDC recruited tenants to be on the new board; they hand picked people who would support privatization and pushed out those who didn't. Everyone who stood up for the rights of tenants was eventually pushed off the board. It says it right on

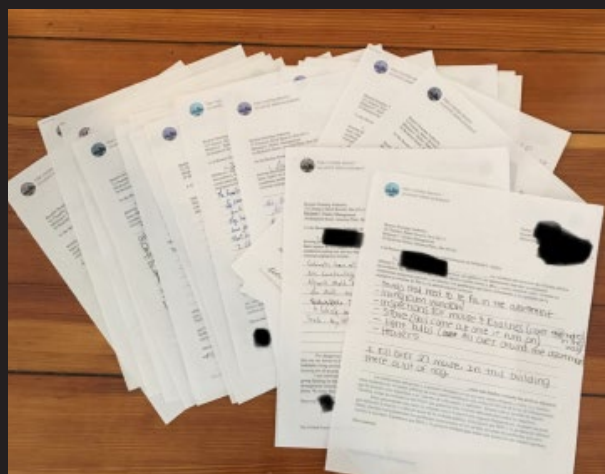
their website, in the same creepy language that the BHA goon uses: “In 2013 JPNDC began intensive community organizing to create a new tenant organization at Bromley-Heath.”

Since this point basically no one has been told who is on the board, and it’s not even clear what the board does anymore other than rubber-stamping the privatization for these rich developers. There are supposed to be board elections every two years, but that hasn’t happened for almost 6 years.

Things weren’t perfect under tenant management, but it represented a real form of tenant power that was capable of standing up to developers and the wealthy. For example, nearby Northeastern University tried for years to get control of the projects and take over via privatization, but the board and tenant management fought them off. Now, the new board seems to exist just to give a veneer of legitimacy and “democracy” to privatization. Many people have noted that Mildred Hailey would be rolling over in her grave over what’s being done in her name today.

Mr. Bamberg of BHA also shared some more nonsense with us on that day when we confronted him. He repeated the same old tired claim that BHA just doesn’t have enough money to take care of public housing. “Do you recognize,” he asked, “that your apartments need some tender loving care? Well, part of the reason is that the housing authority hasn’t had the resources to maintain these buildings the way we would like to see.” He was immediately rebuked by Jacque Cummings-Furtado, a former resident at Mildred Hailey: “I don’t believe you. I don’t think that’s true.”

People are not fools. We know that funding is not the real issue. There were funding issues during tenant management, but people



REPAIR LETTER CAMPAIGN AT MILDRED HAILEY

BHA has often lied and said that there is no money to make basic repairs, and this is why tenants are forced to live in terrible conditions, including apartments full of black mold and pests. However, this is not true.

At Mildred Hailey UFAD created repair letters and collected a few dozen detailing issues. These were sent together to the media and BHA along with photos of the terrible conditions in the units. The very next day BHA workers were swarming all over the project fixing things up that they hadn’t touched in years. There is still a long way to go with repairs, but this shows the power of people coming together and organizing for change together. Without this collective effort BHA just ignores most work orders.

did the jobs they were supposed to do. Most of the management and maintenance workers were residents of the project who cared about their neighbors, and problems were addressed much more quickly than they are today. Broken windows were fixed, hallways were kept clean, and most apartments were rehabbed every 15 years or so.



The mold in one tenant's apartment at the Mildred Hailey projects. She has been living there for 9 years and maintenance has only come twice to "fix" this issue and just scrubbed the walls a bit before leaving.

Today, residents are forced to live for years with toxic mold that poisons their families and gives their kids asthma. Many buildings have open sewage leaks. People don't have heat in the winter. Tenants with broken ovens are told they don't need repairs because their stove-top still works. One family has had their carbon monoxide detector replaced 7 times because it keeps going off; the maintenance workers are

just trying to find a broken one so they can ignore the obvious gas leak in the apartment. These are just a small number of the extremely hazardous issues in Mildred Hailey Apartments.

There is a lot of corruption, negligence, and apathy among BHA workers at Mildred Hailey these days. Maintenance workers sit around all day smoking cigarettes and ignore work orders. Many do half-assed jobs when they do work, and tell residents to their faces that they don't care about their problems. Tenants who speak up individually about this mistreatment often experience bullying, big rent increases, and even eviction notices.

Residents understand that funding isn't the whole picture, although it's important to fight for increased funding. It doesn't matter how much money the housing authority has if it just goes into the pockets of corrupt bureaucrats and contractors who don't do their jobs. And we certainly shouldn't expect

private developers, who care even more about making money and doing things cheaply, to be better. For example, in the privatized buildings that the NYC branch of UFAD has investigated, the private takeovers have only made things worse for tenants.

In the end, most of the other points Joe Bamberg made came down to this: "stop thinking and trust BHA. Sure, once the project is turned



the United Front Against Displacement
@TheUfad

Yesterday, @BHA_Boston dispatched one of its 6-figure salaried officials to Mildred Hailey apartments to show up late, talk down to residents, interrupt people and duck questions about the privatization of public housing.



A series of videos of the confrontation with BHA goon Joe Bamberg were posted on the UFAD twitter which show just how rude he really is, and how housing views tenants as stupid and uninformed: <https://bit.ly/3ESBecO>

into project based Section 8, we can't permanently guarantee the subsidy at 30% of your income, but trust us that we will do our best to keep it affordable. Sure, we can't guarantee that you'll be able to return to the project within 10 years, but trust us that we'll try really hard to do what's best for you even though we never have before." These were not his literal words, but the message behind them. They aim to lull us to sleep, but we will not let BHA's dreams

...

of privatization become our living nightmare. To end our conversation Bamberg said, "I can say with absolute certainty that we pay attention to what people need." We laughed in his face in response.

When members of our committee pointed out that in the contract of a similar privatization at Lenox St., the definition of "keeping it affordable" could allow for rents to lose their Section 8 subsidy and go as high as \$2,400/month for a 3 bedroom, Mr. Bamberg responded that we shouldn't worry about the fine print. Who would ever trust someone who says not to read the fine print? Lavette Smith summed up his nonsense perfectly: "You expect us to believe whatever you want us to believe just by saying it? Because you say it's a lie, it's a lie?"

The smug bureaucrats, two-faced nonprofits, and fat cat developers think they can pull the wool over our eyes and step all over us, and not only that, they expect us to thank them for it. But we will not be fooled. We see right through

these lies, and we are working to make sure that our neighbors and other tenants across Boston learn the truth as well. We will keep doing our research, exposing the truth to our neighbors, and building power through independent tenant organizations, as part of this larger united front effort. We can halt the national agenda of privatization, secure repairs for our homes, and much much more.

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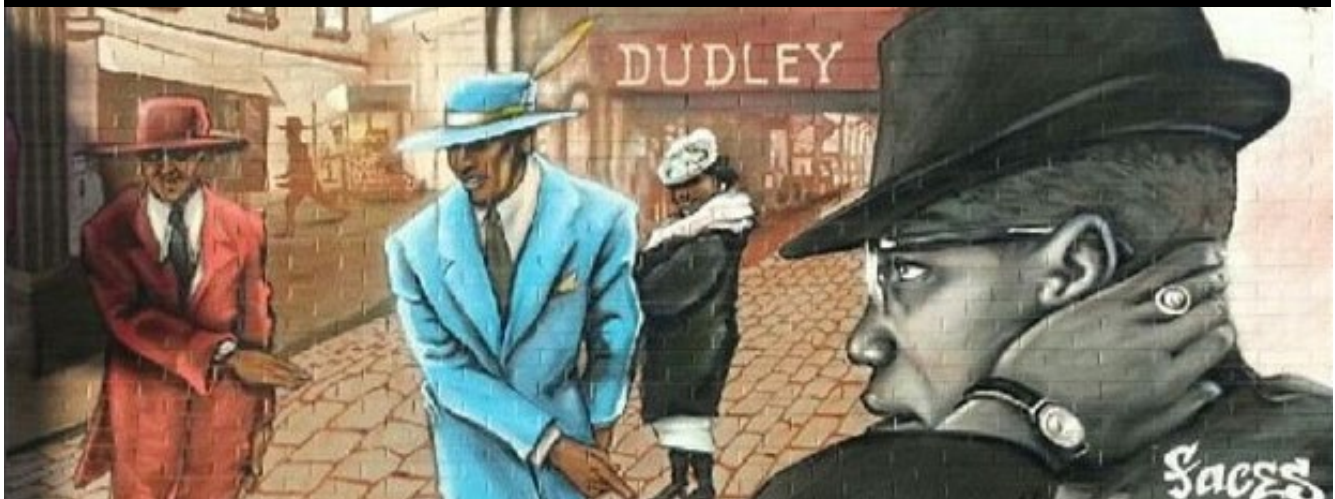
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As part of our efforts to expand printing and distribution of *Urban Core*, we have launched a Patreon. This can be found at <https://www.patreon.com/UFAD>. Patreon is a website that allows people to become monthly supporters to causes, artists, and others. We will be offering three different levels of support, with each receiving a different number of print subscriptions mailed directly to your address. As our national movement has grown significantly over the last six months, the demand for *Urban Core* has risen as well. Having our supporters provide regular monthly funding will let us distribute *Urban Core* far and wide to aid in the struggle against gentrification.



THE STRUGGLE IS REAL, BUT VICTORY IS HERE FOR GRANT MANOR RESIDENTS

Edna R Smallwood



Edna Smallwood is a resident and organizer at Grant Manor, a subsidized development in Boston where residents have been fighting back against a corrupt tenant board, rent increases, gentrification, and more.

Grant Manor Residents have been in the struggle for a while now against the Grant Manor Homeowners Association (GMHA), Wingate Management, and the Planning Office for Urban Affairs (under president Bill Grogan). Grant Manor residents have been asking for and wanting change from the present board of directors for the past five plus years. Last year when this all started the board of directors (GMHA), Wingate Management, and the Planning Office of Urban Affairs (Bill Grogan) were surprised that residents would fight back against the injustice that was taking place.

However, residents organized as the “new Grant Manor Organizers” and came together to change the dynamics for a better Grant Manor development. During this time of organizing the residents contacted Mass Housing, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development both turned a blinded eye to our concerns and struggles to do the right thing and demand an election for residents as requested.

Now the residents at Grant Manor development are looking at the victory line which is so close, because right now we are scheduled to have an election in December 2021, with the upcoming candidate’s night on November 15th. Even though GMHA is still trying to put obstacles in the way, our attorney is moving forward to achieve this goal for the election that is to take place. We know and believe

there are just a few more steps to the process which is looking good.

While this process is taking place, the residents are still addressing issues. One of our elevators in the building was broken for five weeks. Management stated that they were going to install a new elevator, but it has not happened because the elevator is still making the noises it was making prior to the original break down. Then there is the rat infestation that we see every day, morning, noon, and evening. Residents are afraid that the rats will come into their townhouses in the back. Rats carry disease, eat out the car wires, and no one has done anything.

We are also still asking for transparency regarding the \$20 million dollar loan to the building that was approved by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development back in April 2021. This was used to ask for a rental increase, putting hardship on the residents. The money was supposed to be used to make repairs in the units, install new fire alarms, do some roofing work, and install a new elevator, but since the loan was approved we have not seen any real changes. The only changes that some residents have experienced is that their rents went up as promised!

Parking has become such a travesty for residents. Just recently on October 12th my car got broken into because I could not park in the parking lot. Some special residents who are favored by GMHA have two to four cars parked in the lot, and that should not be. One of our residents who is disabled has a handicapped parking space located over the maintenance hole, which is connected to the sewage area, which is a constant hell hole due to the smell that she experiences while getting into and out of her car. This is truly a health issue and should not be. Other residents that live by the sewage utility access hole have experienced health issues and no one is doing anything about. When the resident talked to the management about the

smell they told her that the city is responsible and not management. Her quote is when it's time to pay the rent, the city doesn't receive it, the management does.

Another issue that the Grant Manor residents are asking and fighting for transparency around is the cell phone towers on top of the building which belong to Comcast, Verizon, and T-Mobile. These companies are paying the development, and no one is saying where the funding is being used. Another critical issue that our residents at Grant Manor are concerned about and working on is our security company, Triple XXX Security. Their hands have been tied as to how they handle certain situation at Grant Manor with certain residents. They have been harassing residents instead of keeping them safe.

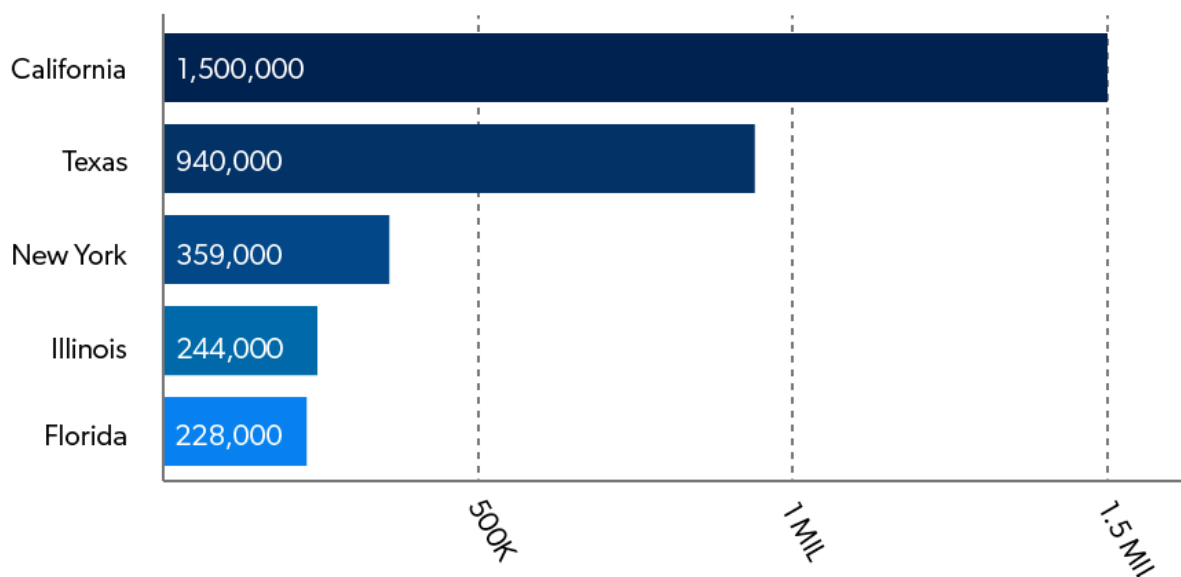
We are continuing to work hard to make sure this election is on point and that we have a new board in place because we have seen surveyors walking around the property, and we know when they are doing that it is not a good sign. It is critical that we move this board out of office which has not been complying with the rules. We aren't even sure that they are not making a sale of the property without the residents' knowledge!

We are focused and ready to take over our development and to make it a better place to live. We are having a Rally with speakers on November 13, 2021, at 12:00 noon, and making it clear that we are not going anywhere and that the victory is ours to celebrate for all residents of Grant Manor development. Our fight is not just about our development here at Grant Manor, but about helping our community across the city, state and the country to know that we together can make the change, to get fair housing and stop big developers from entering and building in our community. Tell the big banks and other entities that we will not be moved, and affordable housing is here to stay!

IMMIGRANT FAMILIES AND PRIVATIZATION: THE HURDLES AHEAD

By Chantelle Schultz

States with the largest number of U.S. citizens in mixed-status families filing taxes



Under HUD guidelines, non-citizens without certain statuses are not eligible to receive federal subsidies for rent in public and subsidized housing per the Housing and Community Development Act of 1980. Non-citizens such as those with permanent resident status or those seeking asylum, as well as several other categories, are eligible for subsidies.

There are around 25,000 “mixed status” families in the US in federally assisted housing that include members who do meet these eligible categories together with those who don’t. Due to the HUD guidelines, for mixed status families, the subsidy (which covers the rent that is not covered by 30% of the family’s income) is pro-rated based on who falls under the eligible category. So if one person is eligible and one is not, the family will receive only 50% of the subsidy for rest of the rent, and will have to pay for the other half – in addition to 30% of their income. This means that mixed status families often pay upwards of 50%, 70%, or

even more of their income towards rent.

When a development is privatized, rents can skyrocket for mixed status families if the rent for a given unit is calculated to be higher than for public housing units. This is very common with privatizations, which are designed to funnel money into the pockets of developers and banks. HUD often sets the rent schedule at or even above the market rate, and the government pays the new management companies the difference between tenants’ 30% of income and the market rate.

For example, at the Lenox Street projects in Boston, they set the rent schedule for a 3-bedroom apartment at \$3,400 per month. Under Section 8 Project Based Vouchers, tenants would pay 30% of their income (say in this case \$400 per month), and HUD would pay the difference between this income and the market rate, in this case, \$3,000. But if someone has a mixed status family and is eligible

for only 50% of the subsidy, they would have to pay 30% of their income **plus** 50% of the subsidy (in this case \$1,500). This would bring their rent up from \$400 to \$1,900 per month. These discriminatory rules lead to people being priced out of the development, neighborhood, or city entirely.

85% of mixed status families are Latino, and almost three-quarters of mixed status families live in California, Texas, and New York. One of the focuses of tenant organizing in San Francisco at Sunnydale and Potrero Hill has been opposing discrimination against mixed status families. The San Francisco Housing Authority discriminates against immigrants in a number of ways. Management is racist and rude, and one SFHA manager at Potrero Hill told an undocumented resident that there was no hope for undocumented people. SFHA has said it cannot guarantee that rents won't be calculated to be higher in the new HOPE SF developments as well as under accelerated privatization of current units, which would mean mixed status families would have to pay more in rent. Documents sent to tenants from SFHA and developers are often only in English, and SFHA management at Sunnydale doesn't even have one single employee who speaks Spanish.

Tenants in San Francisco are organizing against the HOPE SF redevelopment as well as the rule that mixed status families have to pay more in federally assisted housing. At a protest at San Francisco City Hall earlier this year, Lorena, who lives at Potrero Hill, said: "We are being charged more rent because we are supposedly 'mixed families.' This is only a pretext for charging us more money, when other people are paying the absolute minimum rent of \$25. San Francisco complains about the many people living on the streets, but they want to see us living just like them. People are living on the street because they haven't been given a chance to have a home."

In 2019, HUD Secretary Ben Carson proposed a change that would make it illegal for ineligible immigrants to live in public or subsidized housing, forcing families to break up or leave their homes. This year, HUD under Biden announced that instead of kicking mixed status families out of subsidized housing, they've decided to keep them in. This is in part to save HUD money – HUD estimated it would have to pay \$193 million more every year if it provided the full subsidy to the same number of families.

This is an issue that affects everyone in public housing, not just immigrants. In our fight against gentrification and the privatization of public housing, we are fighting against the divide and conquer strategy that the rich and powerful use to keep the people separate and weak. In order to overcome this and win victories in this struggle, we need to unite across different ethnic, racial, and linguistic lines. The news these days focuses a lot on divisions and violence between different groups. They are trying to distract us from the real need to come together in the struggle. They want it to be dog eat dog out there, but if we support each other in the struggle then our collective power will grow and we will be able to overcome all difficulties.

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STRUGGLE. THIS IS A NATION-
WIDE MOVEMENT TO STOP THE
BANKS FROM STEALING OUR
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URBAN CORE: A NEWSLETTER FOR THE PEOPLE

Urban Core was originally created by residents of Grant Manor in Lower Roxbury and the South End, in Boston along with organizers from the United Front Against Displacement. As part of the struggle against gentrification, Urban Core has already been distributed online and in cities across the country. Previous issues have also included articles about struggles in cities besides Boston. Now, we are unifying Urban Core with other publications (People of the Bay and Dispatches Against Displacement) to make this a national newsletter.

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.



**HAVE YOU RECEIVED AN
EVICTED NOTICE?**

**ARE YOU FACING A RENT
INCREASE?**

**IS YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD BEING
GENTRIFIED?**

EMAIL US: Urban_Core@riseup.net

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