

URBAN CORE

The Heart of the City | February-March 2022

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BOSTON TENANTS WIN \$50 MILLION FOR REPAIRS, CONTINUE FIGHT AGAINST PRIVATIZATION

By UFAD Boston Branch



UFAD member and Bromley-Heath/Mildred Hailey resident Tia Wheeler reading tenant demands at UFAD press conference on February 3rd.

Boston Mayor Michelle Wu, in her latest publicity stunt, recently announced \$50 million in funding for repairs at Bromley-Heath/Mildred Hailey Apartments, one of the largest public housing developments in Boston. Surrounded by Boston Housing Authority (BHA) officials, the corrupt official tenant organization which hasn't held elections in years, and the developers who are planning to privatize the public housing project, local politicians made hypocritical proclamations that "public housing is our future," even as their actions show

that they fully intend to make public housing a thing of the past.

But before getting into that, one thing should be made clear: this \$50 million did not come because the Mayor cares, but because tenants have waged a tireless struggle against the slumlord practices of the BHA. In recent months, dozens of Mildred Hailey residents have written public letters demanding repairs, confronted BHA officials at public hearings, and held rallies. This is why the city felt forced

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Mayor Michelle Wu's January 20th press conference. Her executive order doesn't even mention affordable housing.

to throw us a bone, and shows what can be accomplished when we band together to organize.

However, \$50 million is far from enough. For one, BHA's corruption and wasteful spending means this money could easily disappear without much of anything happening. But more importantly, systematic neglect of the property by all levels of government have caused major structural problems to the buildings. And those can't be fixed with a one-time investment of \$50 million.

This is actually a token investment meant to pacify residents so that the government can move forward with its long-term privatization agenda. Currently, BHA is privatizing or planning to privatize nearly 60% of the public housing in Boston, including Mildred Hailey Apartments.

The Mayor also released an executive order which uses vague social-justice babble to cover up its gentrifying agenda. For instance, it talks about

"replacing segregated living patterns with truly integrated and balanced living patterns" and "transforming racially and ethnically concentrated areas of poverty into areas of opportunity." This is just an updated version of the racist "deconcentration of poverty" rhetoric used by the government and developers for decades to justify the destruction of minority and low-income neighborhoods.

Behind the jargon what they are really saying is this: "the problem is minorities and low-income people, they are bad, their communities just bring problems. So the solution is to scatter them and make way for expensive real estate development. That way the rich people who move in can maybe rub off their success and civility on the few remaining poor people they may have to live next to."

UFAD responds with a press conference and rally.

In response to this PR stunt, we held a press conference at the complex on Wednesday February 3rd during which we also released a petition signed by more than 120 residents of the development. The petition demands a permanent stop to the privatization of the historic public housing site and full funding for renovations, while retaining it as true public housing. UFAD member Tia Wheeler, a longtime



Telemundo covering UFAD's press conference.

resident at the development, read out the group's demands:

1. An end to privatization efforts at Mildred Hailey and other developments, and investment from the government in renovations while keeping them public housing.

2. Accountability and transparency on the part of BHA with regards to the \$50 million allocated by the Mayor, and that residents be fully informed of and given a say as to how these funds are used.

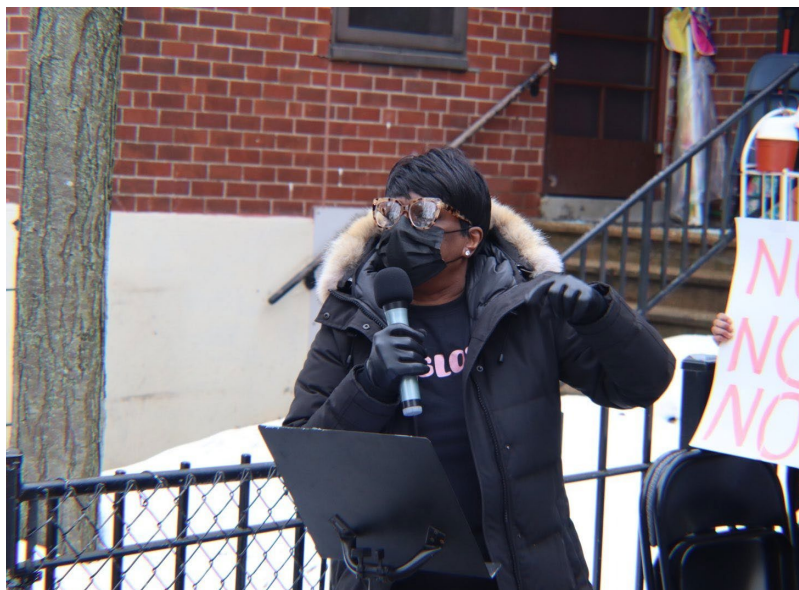
3. In the spirit of Tenant Management, residents be given maintenance training and hired to help maintain the upkeep of buildings and the grounds.

4. The Mildred Hailey Tenant Organization, currently a puppet of real estate interests, must restore elections and honor its bylaws.

Jacque Cummings, a longtime community activist, said during the conference:

"This is more than a development. This is more than a public housing site... This is home. This development has been a role model for low-income housing across the United States... We've learned to speak up, and we've learned to speak up from the finest, and her name is Mildred C. Hailey. Her sweat and tears went into this development... You [BHA] have tried everything to take this development. Now you wanna come up and say the only way you're gonna fix these apartments is by privatizing this development? That's not gonna fly... We don't need to privatize Bromley Heath/Mildred C. Hailey apartments. We need to fix them up for the nice residents that live here and call it home... we don't need Section 8."

UFAD member Pastor John Wheeler, Tia's father and son of Mattie Wheeler (a former



Community activist Jacque Cummings.

member of Mildred Hailey's Tenant Management Corporation):

"They want this property because they know that this is a rich place. They left it before, when they thought it wasn't gonna be nothing. But the people have turned it into something, and now they want it back... Our founder Mildred Hailey said that we are family. Family sticks together... This is our home, this is where we live. And if we have to fight for it, that's what we shall do. We're gonna continue to fight until we can't fight no more. And at the end of us fighting, the young people will take this over... We want it back. Tenant management."

MEDIA COVERAGE

Read about recent UFAD organizing against privatization in *Dig Boston's* February 1, 2022 article:

SPECIAL FEATURE ON THE PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC HOUSING IN BOSTON

Read online: bit.ly/digprivatization

HARLEM RIVER TENANTS PROTEST PRIVATIZATION BY SLUMLORD C+C MANAGEMENT

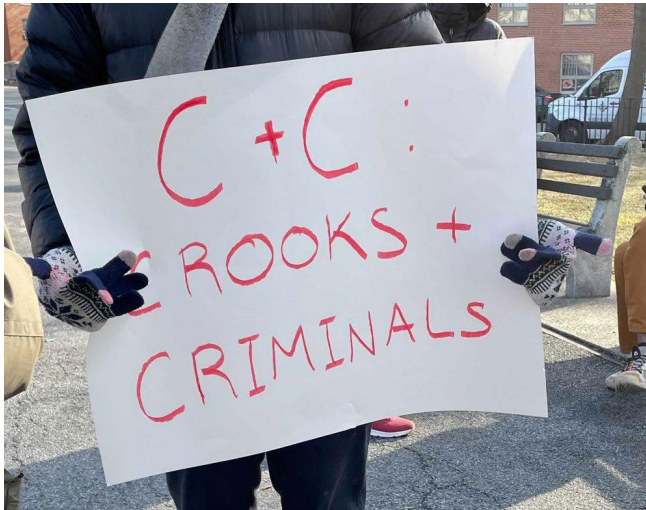
By UFAD New York Branch



Top: February 19th protest at Harlem River Houses. Bottom: February 25th protest at C+C Management's office at 1735 Park Ave (Photo: Adrian Childress)

Tenants of Harlem River Houses in New York City recently held two protests against the takeover of Harlem River by slumlord C+C Management, and more broadly against the privatization of NYCHA. NYCHA had initially planned to hand over Harlem River to C+C in Spring 2021, but tenants organized to oppose the privatization, using tactics such as protests, petitions, and lawsuits. The key in all of this was not hoping for a “magic bullet” solution, but instead building up the power

and the unity of the people day by day. This slowed the privatization down, and due to tenants’ complaints and appeals, HUD opened an investigation into NYCHA’s violating people’s rights throughout the privatization process. And yet, NYCHA announced in mid-February 2022 that HUD had approved it and C+C would take over the following week. Somewhat unsurprisingly, HUD never reached out to tenants to inform them of this, or of the status of the investigation into NYCHA.



NYCHA claimed that tenants were on board with the privatization because the Tenant Association President had supported it. However, the current Tenant Association doesn't really represent the tenants. Last year, over 150 tenants signed a petition opposing the privatization – which the TA president, NYCHA, and HUD have completely ignored. What's more, the bylaws state that a president serves a three-year term and that elections must happen every February, and yet the current president has sat on the Board for over 13 years and there hasn't been a real election in over a decade. Recently, UFAD tenant organizers started a petition that has 45 signatures calling for real elections for the Tenant Association.

On February 19th at Harlem River Houses and February 25th at C+C's office at 1735 Park Ave, tenants from Harlem River and other NYCHA developments, UFAD members from Boston, and students came together to protest this outrage.

At the first protest, held at Harlem River, UFAD member and Harlem River tenant Vanessa exposed the absurdity of C+C trying to buy

goodwill from the tenants by setting up a "pop-up" food pantry: "We have to teach our children to learn to fight when it's wrong. We can't have no fear. We will not be displaced. We will not move. We will fight this until the very end. In Harlem River Two [the high rise building in the project], there's been no gas since November. You got a pop-up food pantry, how about some pop-up heat? How about some pop-up hot water?"

At the "pop-up" pantry, which was held the day before the protest, C+C called the cops on tenants and non-resident organizers who were handing out fliers for the protest and informing tenants of their rights. When the cops tried to tell UFAD members that they weren't allowed to be on the premises since "it is now private property," UFAD members stood strong, read off the relevant rights to organize at the development, and refused to leave. This was the first day that C+C officially took over the project, and it was telling that they were immediately trying to violate tenants' rights, especially the right to organize. At the protest itself, the same cops showed up and again lied and said that people were not allowed to protest at the project itself, but once again people stood strong and refused to budge.



A Harlem River resident said to the police on February 19th, "This is why there's always a problem between the police and people. You step up when you're not needed, and when you're needed, you don't show."



Tia Wheeler, UFAD member and tenant at Bromley Heath/Mildred Hailey in Boston, spoke about how housing authorities neglect buildings to justify privatization: “Human beings shouldn’t have to suffer the machinations of a bunch of corrupt individuals who sit there in their plush little condos, while everyone else is having to deal with health issues.”

Lydia, another tenant and member of UFAD, spoke about how the privatization is part of a larger effort to push poor Black and Latino people out of the neighborhood and bring in rich tenants. She noted the need for tenants to come together and stand strong against privatization and gentrification. Her speech resonated with the crowd, and was picked up and played on the Independent’s radio show on WBAI.

The following February 25th protest was held at C+C’s office on Park Ave in Central Harlem. As soon as people began to gather outside the building, C+C rushed down and closed the gate in front of the door. Like a little lord raising the drawbridge to his castle, they hid inside the office as the people outside spoke out against the outrages and injustice they have faced at the hands of C+C. Samantha, a tenant from Harlem River and UFAD member, noted that she had been through the shelter system with her son to get her apartment in NYCHA,

and that now C+C’s takeover threatens to put them back in the shelter system. However, she said that she would not be afraid or deterred and would stand strong against their nonsense. Her courageous remarks inspired the crowd. John Maher, a NYC civil rights attorney who is suing L&M (one of the major investors in the privatization of Harlem River) also spoke and emphasized the importance of not just focusing on C+C, but also the big money behind privatization. He said that while C+C does the dirty work of managing the property day to day, the big investors are the ones who make the real money off of privatization and they are pushing it across the city and the country.

Ms. Nina, a tenant at Harlem River and UFAD member was one of the MCs in the event. She noted that C+C plans to tear up the fire proof floors at Harlem River and that, following the pattern of other privatizations, they will likely do shoddy and cut-rate repairs. All of



*Ms. Nina opening up the February 25th protest after C+C closed the gate to the building.
(Photo: Adrian Childress)*

this will turn the project into a tinderbox and risk another tragedy like the recent fire in the Bronx which killed 17 people. In fact, there was a fire this February at the Williams Plaza project, which was recently privatized and is managed by Reliant Realty, the same company which managed the building that burned in the Bronx. Thankfully no one was hurt in the fire in Brooklyn, but it shows how these privatizations are laying the ground for more deadly infernos in the near future.

A number of students from Columbia University came out to both protests. Organizations like Columbia Housing Equity Project and Student Workers of Columbia came out in numbers to support the struggle of tenants in Harlem against privatization and gentrification. Their support is a shining example to students across the country that activism should not be confined to issues on campus alone (though those are numerous and serious), but also should engage with larger issues in the society, particularly those in the working class neighborhoods surrounding the campuses. The NYC branch of UFAD built these ties

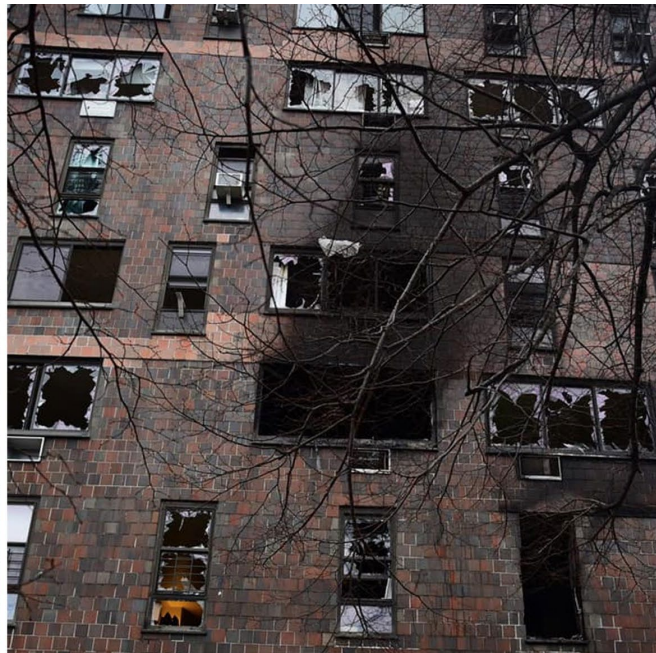
with students at Columbia through working to support their union struggle last semester, and these sort of links have been essential to building up a larger united front effort against gentrification.

In the wake of these protests we are planning a protest at NYC Mayor Eric Adams' office, to expose the corrupt role he is playing in pushing privatization and courting money from the banks and developers.



BRONX FIRE: SLUMLORDS AND POLITICIANS PROFIT, PEOPLE SUFFER

By Ryan Costello



Reliant Realty manages Twin Parks in the Bronx, where their neglect of the building led to a fire that killed 17 people. Four days prior, 12 people died in a Philadelphia Housing Authority fire.

On January 9th Twin Parks, a 19 story building in the Bronx, NY caught fire. The fire quickly spread to other floors, killing 17 people and injuring dozens. Although this was the deadliest fire in NYC in decades, it has received little media attention. After a week of media coverage and a few speeches by politicians, everything went back “to normal.”

No committee to investigate the reasons behind the fire, no plan of action to ensure this doesn't happen again, and no real consequences for the slumlord Reliant management, which runs Twin Parks and dozens of other buildings in New York City alone.

Politicians like newly-elected and scandal-ridden NYC Mayor Eric Adams played a tried and true card to misdirect blame for the fire. Instead of talking about the fact that the tenants

at Twin Parks didn't have heat for months, instead of talking about the thousands of complaints against the management company for safety violations, instead of talking about the lack of basic repairs which left the building falling apart, Adams blamed the people who died in the fire.

He condescendingly condemned residents for using space heaters, but what else were they supposed to do in a NYC winter with no heat? He also blamed them for not closing the door to their apartment, which would likely have slowed the spread of the fire. What he failed to mention is that many apartment doors in the building were broken, and did not close automatically as they should have.

This sick form of victim-blaming is typical in U.S. politics. Like when a Black man gets

killed by the police and the politicians and media pundits are quick to say “he shouldn’t have resisted arrest.” But it’s striking how little accountability there has been for this fire. It shows how little the elites care about the common people of this country, and how politicians like Eric Adams work with the slumlords.

Many residents in public housing are worried because Reliant Realty is set to take over New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) projects across the city and run them further into the ground. “Renovations” when public housing is privatized often involve tearing up fireproof floors and replacing them with cheap fiberboard which goes up like a tinderbox in a fire.

To get the true story of what happened in the Bronx fire, members of the NYC branch of UFAD investigated the site about a week after



Bike-share racks that Reliant had installed in front of Twin Parks initially blocked fire trucks from getting close enough.

the fire. At the time most tenants were still living in the burned up building, and only on the floors where the fire was really bad were people moved out (if they survived at all). Tenants noted that the building had no fire escapes and that they had been complaining about this for years, alongside thousands of other issues in the building.

Tenants noted that this isn’t the first winter that Reliant Realty has left them without heat, and it has been a common occurrence for years. Many were angry that, while Reliant promised to find them new apartments while the building is fixed up, they were only offered apartments in other Reliant buildings. Given the company’s notoriety as a slumlord, tenants were justifiably worried that they would end up in another deathtrap of a building.

We also spoke to a superintendent at a nearby building who saw the whole tragedy unfold before his eyes. Many of the tenants who died were his friends. He told us some of the story that never made the press.

When the firetrucks arrived, they weren’t able to get close enough to the building at first. This



Rick Gropper is a co-founder of Camber Property Group, which co-owns of Twin Parks. Gropper served as a housing adviser to Eric Adams.



Senator Chuck Schumer at a press conference outside Twin Parks on January 25th. Schumer said he would pursue a federal fire safety bill. However, he has remained silent on the privatization of public housing which leads to these kinds of disasters, after promising in June 2021 that he would oppose the privatization of Harlem River Houses.

was because Reliant installed pylons and a bike-share rack blocking off the plaza in front of Twin Parks. The super noted that this was because Reliant was angry at tenants for pulling onto the plaza to unload their groceries or pick up elderly relatives when there was no parking available on the nearby narrow streets (where it's not possible to double-park and wait). These barriers slowed down the firefighters, costing them critical time.

This fire was not ultimately caused by “irresponsible tenants” who put on a space heater to try to stay warm in the winter. It was caused by a slumlord management company and a series of wealthy investors who ran the building into the ground, left tenants without heat for months and years, and refused to do even the most basic health and safety repairs. They caused this fire. And the scary thing is that this fire is not so unique. Countless buildings

throughout the city, especially NYCHA buildings and recently privatized developments, are in a similar state of disrepair and are literal death traps.

This whole situation with Twin Parks shows that the city government is corrupt from top to bottom and can't be trusted to “do the right thing,” even when people's lives are on the line. Twin Parks residents submitted complaints and called for inspectors from City Hall for years, only for the building to sink further and further into disrepair. Eric Adams' administration sided with the real estate interests, choosing to cover up the true cause of this fire and shield the rich people from liability. This is no surprise. In this country, in which the government is by the rich and for the rich, the only hope for the people is to get organized and fight back. Otherwise this fire will be just the beginning.

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JUDGE SAYS HARLEM TENANTS DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT TO ENFORCE THEIR RIGHTS

By Abbie Zamcheck



May 1, 2021 protest at Harlem River Houses, where tenants have been fighting against privatization since early 2021.

Alongside forums, petitions and protests, tenants fighting RAD privatization in NYC have taken their cause to the courts. Their experience there has been bittersweet. While the courts had delayed NYCHA from taking over their housing, the experience has shown every step of the way that the courts and politicians (even the “best ones”) are in the hands of the developers and business capital, and most recently has greenlit privatizations in the city.

In the 2018 Baez case in NYC, Federal Judge Crowley found that tenants under RAD were no longer entitled to the legal promises NYCHA had provided to remove hazardous lead and mold. Seeing this as an illegal denial of tenants’ rights, the judge ordered NYCHA change its conduct.

Judge Crowley was to hear lawyer Arthur Schwartz’s case this year arguing that the RAD takeover in Harlem River Houses amounted to an unfair and predatory denial of tenants’ rights. However, Crowley died. In a hearing, his replacement stated that tenants did not

have the right to defend those rights by suing in court (called in legalese a “private right of action”). And why did they not have such rights? Because, the judge said, Congress, who approved RAD, would have to specifically grant them the right to sue.

Arthur Schwartz argued in response that to have a right but to be unable to enforce it amounted in effect to not having any right at all, a denial of constitutional principles. The judge basically replied that such was the way the wind was blowing in recent years, so get used to it.

Schwartz now plans to sue HUD for its approval of RAD in NYCHA given that HUD itself has held NYCHA in non-compliance for basic obligations as a Housing Authority, and HUD’s own rules state that failing housing authorities are not eligible for RAD takeovers. In addition, in almost a year neither HUD nor NYCHA answered Freedom of Information requests regarding the RAD takeover at Harlem River, nor did HUD answer tenant complaints

A GUIDE TO NYCHA RAD CONVERSION

RENTAL ASSISTANCE DEMONSTRATION



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



The Legal Aid Society works with NYCHA to privatize public housing. It co-authored the “Resident Handbook” which promoted privatization as the only option for public housing.

of misconduct by the private companies trying to take over Harlem River, including C+C Management.

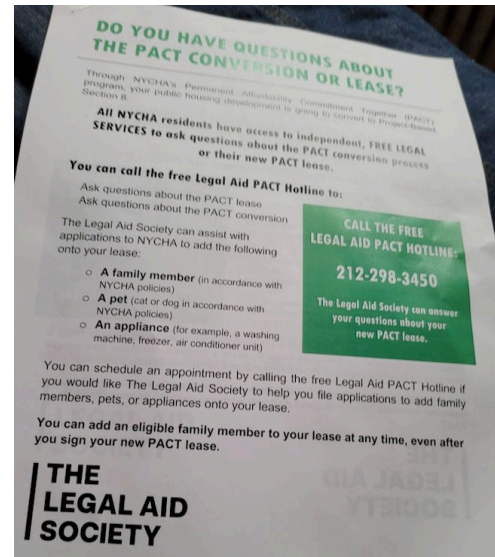
Another lawyer with several decades of experience in civil rights law stated that we should not expect an easy victory in the legal front in this next step, especially given what he saw as a close relationship at present between the administration of Eric Adams in New York, and President Biden in Washington. To side with Arthur’s lawsuit would entail the federal administration siding against the city administration. While the courts are supposed to remain neutral of such bureaucratic alliances, this lawyer said that in reality they are influenced.

Another lawyer we spoke to said that the mainstream social justice oriented legal service organizations such as Legal Aid are unwilling to oppose RAD and other forms of privatization simply because the powers that be have decided (acting through both the Democratic and Republican Parties) that privatization is the only way to go. Representatives of Legal Aid have said “we know RAD is terrible. But it’s also legal.” However, one who looks even briefly into what RAD is about is met with no

shortage of illegalities, such as managers for developers pushing their ways into apartments long before takeovers are approved, threatening tenants with evictions for non-compliance, improperly collecting and disposing tenants’ personal information, and more.

So what do such so-called social justice lawyers mean when they say RAD is legal? They mean whatever their corporate masters want is legal, and that increasingly the corporate owners that really run this country are willing to bypass the legal system altogether, even though this system really overwhelmingly always was “theirs.” As comedian Lenny Bruce said back in the 1960s, “in the Halls of Justice all the justice is in the halls” meaning there is no justice in the actual courts and perhaps the real so-called justice is in the corrupt dealings and “hauls.”

That we have perhaps an even worse situation now only underscores the need to build the movement of the people, to expose cowards and apologists for this rotten status-quo, and build a movement, including lawyers and others, who truly serve the people and are not afraid to not back down.



EDUCATORS OR LANDLORDS? UNIVERSITIES INVESTING IN GENTRIFICATION: BOSTON

By Maya Morris



Gentrification is bulldozing through working class neighborhoods. Expensive housing, trendy coffee shops, and Whole Foods markets are rapidly appearing, appealing to wealthy newcomers and inflating the cost of living for working people. Although they sometimes fly under the radar, universities often play a major role in driving these changes.

Fancy cafes and restaurants know they can rely on student consumption. Landlords also preferentially cater to students, using lease restrictions and other tactics to reserve their units for college kids. While some students can pay these rising rents, more and more residents get pushed out of their neighborhoods. Although students are moving in and paying higher rents, these college kids are not themselves the cause of skyrocketing rents. To understand what's really going on with

this thing of gentrification, we need to see the forest for the trees: that the struggle between students and residents for housing stems from the ceaseless growth, investment, and greed of real estate interests like universities which are driving up rents and gentrifying neighborhoods.

In Boston, as in many cities, the growing student population is driving up rents. Take Northeastern University, which saw an 8% increase in their freshman class just this past year. More students means more tuition dollars and more revenue. But at a certain point, the number of students outpaces the number of beds, and a student housing crisis develops—as it did this year at Northeastern, which failed to house its entire freshman class.

This student population that can't be housed



Former Mayor Marty Walsh with representatives from American Campus Communities and Northeastern University at the ribbon cutting of LightView “luxury dorms” in Roxbury.

on Northeastern’s campus is flooding into the local housing market, worsening the housing crunch in surrounding neighborhoods. Although universities like Northeastern tend to portray these dynamics as outside of their hands, the reality is that they manufacture these housing shortages in order to justify expanding their real estate portfolios.

Constructing new student housing isn’t really about helping students with their housing woes. If it were, universities wouldn’t be jack-ing up prices. A prime example is Northeastern’s new “luxury dorm”, LightView Apartments, which recently went up in the working class neighborhood of Roxbury.

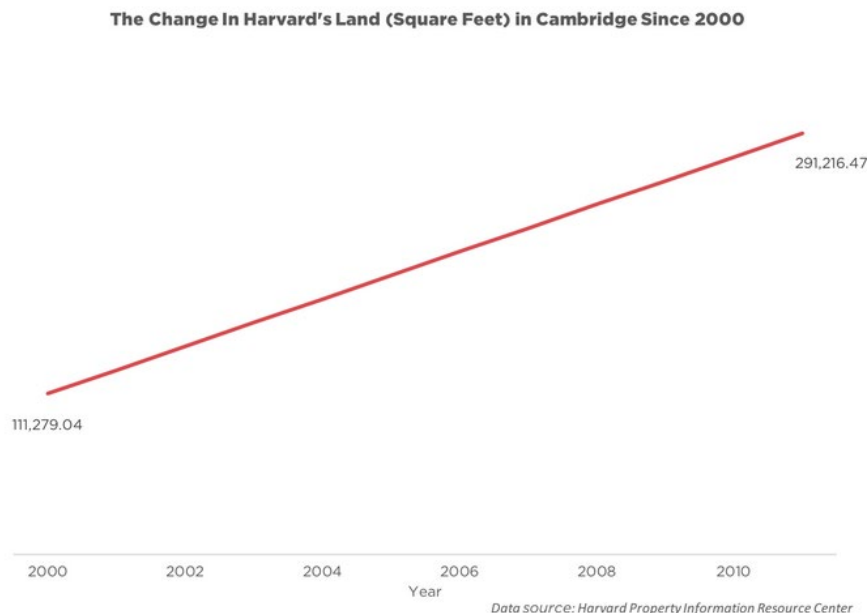
Rents in this “luxury dorm” range from \$1,334 to \$1,694 a month, yet students complain of thin walls, small rooms and broken appliances, all evidence of cut-rate construction. Poor quality, expensive dorms like Lightview show what the creation of student housing is really about: making an investment.

Private businesses know very well that dollars sitting in a bank, unmoving, aren’t the best

for getting richer. To produce greater wealth, businesses invest big money into assets like fancy wine, artwork, or real estate. Universities likewise operate this way: pouring investments into assets such as housing in order to make money. Universities are acting more and more like real estate developers that happen to offer classes, rather than the purely educational institutions they claim to be.

Northeastern’s \$153.4 million LightView project was financed through a Public Private Partnership deal with the real estate investment trust American Campus Communities (ACC) and the Boston city government. Through this partnership, Northeastern got access to outside funding to grow its operations, and the real estate trust got access to a portion of the rents that students pay for dorm rooms. This scheme is functionally identical to any other big real estate deal that produces luxury condos. The effect that this so-called “luxury dorm” has on rents in the neighborhood is the same as when any luxury condos go up.

Although cities and their politicians will claim otherwise, their role in gentrification through



Between 2000 and 2010, Harvard's land holdings almost tripled.

these kinds of partnerships is clear: they work hand-in-hand with real estate and the big banks to gentrify poor neighborhoods through big luxury construction projects, and make big bucks off the high rents.

Most universities pay next to nothing in taxes even as they rake it in through these gentrifying real estate deals. Universities that qualify as non-profits, such as Northeastern, are exempt from property taxes. So while Northeastern's annual tax bill would be about \$44 million, they actually only paid \$1.7 million in "voluntary contributions" to the city. Although this payment was millions short of the suggested amount, the city turned a blind eye.

Gentrification requires an orchestra of actors: private developers, landlords, investment firms, and the city government all have an interest in gentrifying neighborhoods and driving up property values. Competition drives these groups to seek out greater revenue and profits, which only come through further development, land acquisition, and higher rents. The interests of these groups are based on

their hunger for greater returns. With greater returns follow greater numbers of residents and students who are either paying more to stay in their neighborhood or are forced to move out. While these groups play their money games, students as well as the surrounding neighborhood pay the real costs.

The interests of these gentrifiers are directly opposed to the interests of the people. What is to be done about this? We, students and working people, need to get square on the forces behind gentrification. Gentrification will run its course so long as there is no force to impede these powers from pouring their money into working class neighborhoods. The force of the people, students and residents alike, must coalesce in order to oppose gentrification. By coming together to oppose luxury developments in poor neighborhoods we can derail the plans of these money hungry forces. But we must not stop there. A movement against gentrification must grow into a movement against the larger organization of society: a society that is driven by profit rather than the interests of the people.

DOCUMENTARY ON THE STRUGGLE IN SAN FRANCISCO

By Dayton Andrews



Maria, Sunnydale resident and UFAD member, speaks in front of the Mercy Housing development at Sunnydale that was built on the site of demolished public housing buildings.

In the face of the continued privatization of San Francisco's public housing and lies from the politicians and developers to justify it, tenants are making a documentary.

86 tenants at the Sunnydale and Potrero Hill public housing developments recently signed on to a list of demands opposing the San Francisco Housing Authority and city government's plans to privatize their homes through an "accelerated disposition."

Tenants also contacted the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to express that they were not adequately notified or consulted about this privatization plan and that HUD should reconsider its approval of it. When the San Francisco Regional HUD office finally responded, they claimed that the developers had not only done their diligence to inform tenants but had actively gathered their

feedback. The UFAD requested that HUD show evidence of this claim via a Freedom of Information request, but HUD then claimed that it is unable to provide such information.

It's not a major surprise that HUD won't go back on its plan to gut public housing, and that they lie about the situation. The government is not going to go out of its way to change and fix all this. That HUD goes so far as to lie about the involvement or opinion of tenants is only evidence that they won't take action until forced to do so.

However, as HUD is so easily able to not just lie but lie to the whole country about what it's doing, it matters that the people see through those lies and unite around their common struggles against privatization and neglect.

Tenants of Sunnydale and Potrero Hill decided



Ana from Sunnydale spoke about how few housing options there are for single mothers besides public housing. In San Francisco, market rate for a 2-bedroom is \$3,900.

to create a documentary on their present struggle, to clarify the necessity that tenants and supporters do all that is possible to organize together, and to combat the lies being spread about these privatization schemes. The documentary tells both the tenants' stories and also the story of new efforts to unite tenants in San Francisco public housing and around the country in shared struggle. As Dina, a resident of Potrero Hill put it, "I am making this.. because we haven't gotten any justice for our homes". Tenants hope to share their struggle and create a platform for people that have been ignored for years.

Others want to share why public housing is important. Ana, who has lived at Sunnydale for 11 years, shared her story: "I came to live in Sunnydale and I will repeat this is because of domestic violence in my apartment."

Ana got on the waiting list for public housing in 2005 and waited six years before being able to move into Sunnydale. That entire time she and her young son were living in a small garage. "It was basically a storage unit," she clarified. While moving into an actual apartment was a major improvement, their troubles

didn't stop. "When I moved in, the unit was filthy and in ruins but it was what I needed... the housing authority doesn't come to make repairs. I've had issues with my windows and mold...my room is full of black mold and that's because the roof needs repairs. The most housing will do is paint over the mold". She shares her frustrations trying to push housing to do its job, but maintains that she would rather be here than anywhere else. "Here is good for me, despite the problems, I have what I need." When asked what other options she has outside of public housing, she looked away for a moment before saying "I don't have any other option...there are not a lot of options for single mothers."

Public housing is vital for the working class in San Francisco and across the country, and without it many are going to end up homeless. With the new development plan in San Francisco, tenants are facing more threats from management.

Potrero Hill resident and UFAD member Dina described her interactions with the San Francisco Housing Authority: "a woman from the office told me that if I don't sign [a lease with



UFAD members Dina and Diana from Potrero Hill.

plan to use threats and intimidation to force tenants to comply. Dina described how management tries to divide residents: “for mixed immigration status families, they have to pay even more rent. Our family isn’t mixed status but much of the Latino community is here, and they have to pay much higher rates even now.” The housing authority and the private developers both try to find ways to divide the tenants, with the higher rent for mixed immigration status families just one example.

the private company] we will lose our apartment in 14 days... that is ridiculous to me. These people barely even paint the units. We have cockroaches.” Dina and her neighbors have stood resolute in refusing to sign these new leases, and have not been evicted.

Management has neglected the community for years and now as they move to privatize they

In the face of all this nonsense, tenants are still not giving up. As Alicia, who has lived at Sunnydale for 24 years, put it, “we need to come together... get our torches and pitchforks and go after these people... that’s what it takes. We gotta come together.”

The documentary will premiere in March and can be watched online at theufad.org.



Alicia has lived at Sunnydale for 24 years. She spoke about how the apartments in new developments like the Mercy Housing buildings are tiny and make it nearly impossible to move around in a wheelchair.



Grant Manor has a long history of tenants fighting to save their homes from absentee landlords and others in it for greed. Tenants have paved their own way forward.

federal funding for a renovation. The residents were relocated and when completed in 2002, all those who wanted to come back did.

It was then that we elected a new tenant board with Jessie Carter as President. The bylaws specifically say that the board must have elections every two years, with staggered term limits. However, the following year, Jessie Carter pleaded with residents to allow him to be re-elected because he had work to do. Since 2003 he has refused to have an election, even though the bylaws state that the board members must get off after two years. Twice already, in November of last year and March of this year, an election process was put together and was ready to go until the board cancelled it at the last minute.

In addition to refusing to hold a real election, the tenant board has not fulfilled their duties. They've signed off on documents that have not been shared with the resident's body, and made partnerships with Cornu Management who then transferred the partnership to the "Planning Office for Urban Affairs" back in December 2018 without the knowledge of residents. Mass Housing, HUD, and the board all keep these deals behind closed doors. The

board even signed off on a \$20 million dollar loan with Wingate Management and the Planning Office of Urban Affairs without the knowledge of residents, leading to a rent increase which caused additional hardship for residents.

Grant Manor residents have been requesting an election for years now. The board has refused, making excuses through their attorneys, who are being paid using money which was earmarked for the residents' activities, not for fighting against residents. We have had enough of this nonsense. Mass Housing and HUD, stop hiding behind your desks and turning a blind eye. Residents need change!

JOIN THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT

**YOU ARE NOT ALONE IN THE
STRUGGLE. THIS IS A NATION-
WIDE MOVEMENT TO STOP THE
BANKS FROM STEALING OUR
HOMES.**

EMAIL US:

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URBAN CORE: A NEWSLETTER FOR THE PEOPLE

Urban Core is the national newsletter of the United Front Against Displacement, featuring news, analysis, opinions, art, and more about the struggle against gentrification all across the country. It was originally created in Boston but has since grown into a national publication, distributed online and in print form.

Urban Core 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 criticisms.



**HAVE YOU RECEIVED AN
EVICTED NOTICE?**

**ARE YOU FACING A RENT
INCREASE?**

**IS YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD BEING
GENTRIFIED?**

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