

# TENANTS TALK

NEWSPAPER OF THE ALL-CHICAGO TENANT ALLIANCE

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ALIANZA DE INQUILINOS DE TODO CHICAGO



ALL-CHICAGO TENANT ALLIANCE

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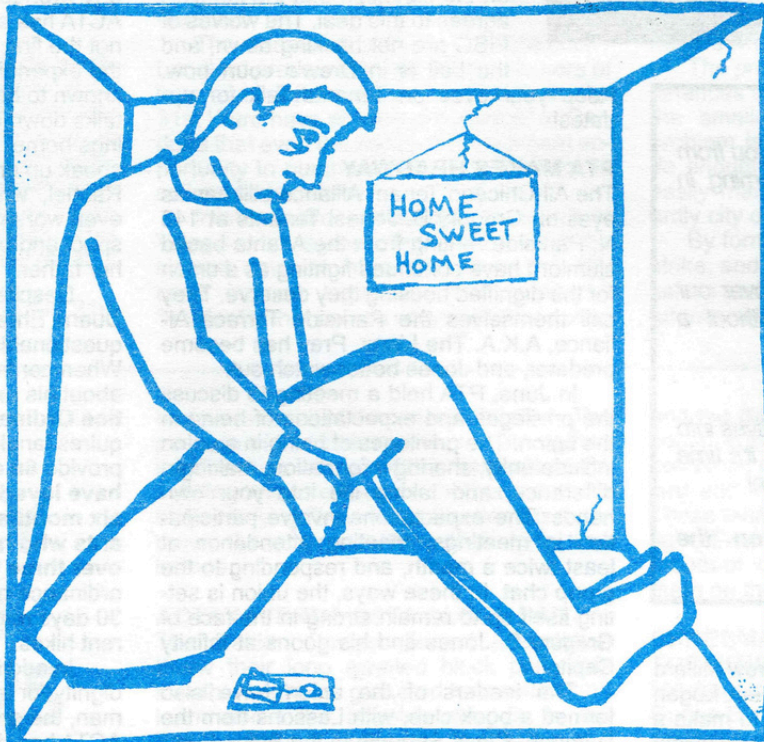
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**YOUR APARTMENT WILL  
KEEP GETTING SMALLER  
RENT WILL KEEP GETTING  
MORE EXPENSIVE**

**YOU WILL  
HAVE  
MORE  
RATS**

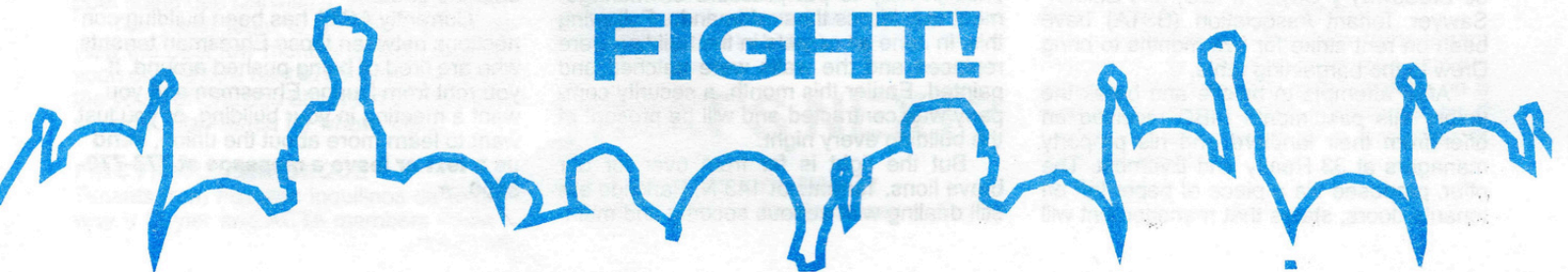
**YOU WILL  
HAVE  
MORE  
ROACHES**



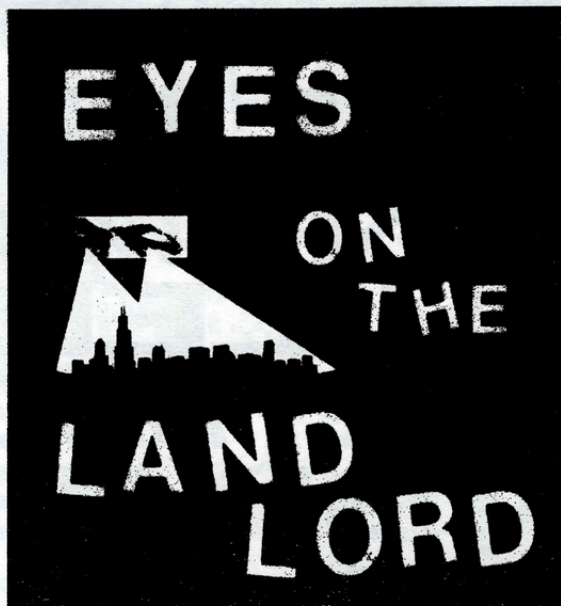
**YOUR  
WORK DAY  
WILL GET  
LONGER,**

**BUT YOUR  
WAGES  
WILL GO  
DOWN**

★ **RESILIENCE IS NOT A  
VIRTUE UNLESS YOU  
FIGHT!** ★



★ NEWS FROM THE TENANT POINT OF VIEW ★



### Keep your eyes open!

*Don't let your landlord isolate you from the tenant movement blossoming in Chicago!*

### Be ready!

*Decades of landlord control over our neighborhoods won't end without a fight!*

### Stay smart!

*Landlords pump their perspectives into every news outlet in Chicago; it's time tenants had a voice of their own!*

*Tenants Talk has eyes on the landlord. Do you?*

## FUERZAS NEGOTIATES

Over six months ago, gentrifier Drew Millard bought three properties between Logan Square and Buena Park looking to make a buck. His master plan? Kick out the current tenants and replace them with richer ones. In the world we have today, if you're rich enough, you can rule over the homes of others. Little did Drew know, the current residents were looking to drag him into the world of tomorrow: one where tenants have a say in remaining in their homes. The unionized tenants of the Fuerzas Inquilinos de Broadway y Cuyler (FIBC) and Belden-Sawyer Tenant Association (BSTA) have been on rent strike for five months to bring Drew to the bargaining table.

After attempts to belittle and break the union, this past month FIBC received an offer from their landlord and his property managers at 33 Realty and Everest. The offer, proposed via a piece of paper left on tenants doors, states that management will

forgive back-rent withheld during the strike and offer \$2,000 to tenants if they agree to leave their apartments and avoid going to eviction court.

Does he think these tenants are dumb? FIBC firmly rejects this offer, and have proposed their own demands through the following counteroffer:

1. One-year leases with the option to renew;
2. \$1,000 per month;
3. Forgiven back rent;
4. Negotiate with the Belden Sawyer Tenant Association.

As an undeniable show of good faith, the two-building-wide tenant union has offered to surrender the entire south building on the condition that the landlord agrees to this deal. The wolves of FIBC are not backing down, and the ball is in Drew's court now.

Keep your eyes on Tenants Talk for updates!

## PTA MAKES HEADWAY

The All-Chicago Tenant Alliance still has its eyes on Gregory B. Jones! Tenants at 143 N. Parkside renting from the Atlanta-based slumlord have continued fighting as a union for the dignified housing they deserve. They call themselves the Parkside Terrace Alliance, A.K.A. The Lions. Prey has become predator, and Jones better watch out.

In June, PTA held a meeting to discuss the privileges and expectations of being in the union. The privileges of being in a union include unity, sharing information, making a difference, and taking life into your own hands. The expectations involve participation in meetings, meeting attendance at least twice a month, and responding to the group chat. In these ways, the union is setting itself up to remain strong in the face of Gregory B. Jones and his goons at Infinity Capital.

The leaders of the union have also formed a book club, with Lessons from the Damned: Class Struggle in the Black Community as their first book for discussion. This book is a collection of reflections and writings on class struggle written by poor and working class black people engaged in the struggle for liberation.

PTA's demands have been heard by Gregory B. Jones. PTA sent their first list of demands in March, and held a press conference in May to put pressure on management to address these demands. Following this, in June all carpets in the building were replaced and the walls were patched and painted. Earlier this month, a security company was contracted and will be present at the building every night.

But the fight is far from over for our brave lions. Tenants at 143 N. Parkside are still dealing with serious security and main-

tenance issues in the building. There is also no clarity about when their building is potentially being sold or not, which is a rumor tenants have been hearing for months from property managers and which was confirmed in an email from Jones himself. Stay tuned for more updates on the fight at Parkside!

## SLUMLORD SPOTTED! (AGAIN)

Duane Ehresman showed his face again after a small meeting with tenants in the courtyard of one of his buildings. This is now the second time he has confronted tenants and organizers looking to stand up against to Ehresman and demand dignity. Tenants had just finished describing repeated eviction threats, failures to make satisfactory repairs within a reasonable amount of time, and concerns about the potential sale of the building.

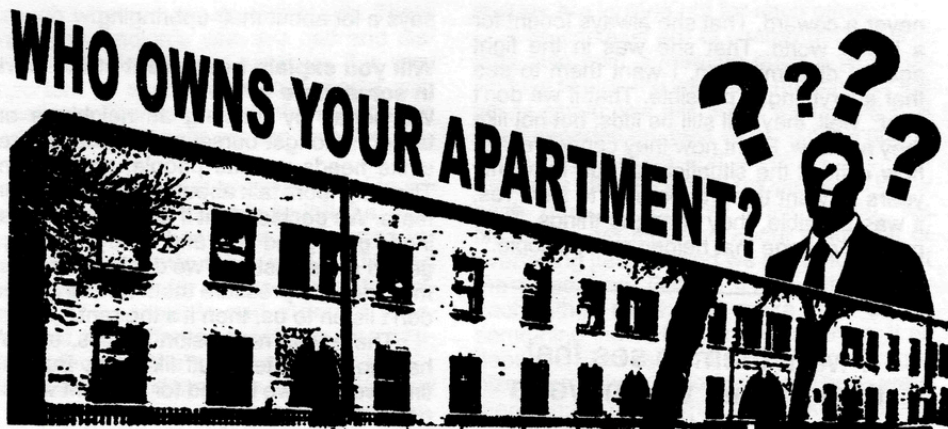
The landlord, Duane Ehresman denied any wrongdoing, implying that the tenants ACTA has spoken to were all lying. This is not the first time Duane has tried to deny the experiences of his tenants. He is known to be patronizing and frequently talks down to the people who call the buildings home, especially those who cannot speak up or stand up to him. His daughter Rachel, who works for him, is reportedly even worse, treating tenants with disrespect and breaking agreements made with her father.

Despite his high image of himself, Duane Ehresman has been engaged in questionable and even illegal conduct. When confronted after the tenant meeting about his regular violation of the **Fair Notice Ordinance**. This ordinance legally requires landlords who want to **raise rent** to provide **60 days notice for tenants who have lived in the building for at least six months** and **120 days notice for tenants who have lived in the building for over three years**. Duane has violated this ordinance numerous times, only providing 30 days notice in his most recent wave of rent hikes.

In addition to demanding repairs and dignity for all tenants who rent from Ehresman, the group of tenants organizing with ACTA has discussed the concern that Ehresman, who is growing old, might try to pass his portfolio on to someone looking to flip the buildings. Even tenants who haven't had major issues beyond the usual pests and negligent treatment from the landlord are looking to build a powerful union in the buildings so that when it comes time for Ehresman to sell, they aren't pushed out onto the street.

Currently ACTA has been building connections between those Ehresman tenants who are tired of being pushed around. If you rent from Duane Ehresman and you want a meeting in your building, or you just want to learn more about the union, **send us a text or leave a message at 773-770-5650.** ★

★ NEWS FROM THE TENANT POINT OF VIEW ★



## WHO OWNS YOUR APARTMENT?

### A WINDOW INTO THE WORLD OF LANDLORD OWNERSHIP

Chicago is a city owned by criminals. Entire neighborhoods have fallen under control of organized criminals. No, I am not talking about gangs, I'm talking about a variety of professionalized criminals who rob people, endanger them, and strip them of house and home without ever facing any justice. That's right, I'm talking about the landlords, including the one that owns your home.

Think I'm being extreme? This very summer, in early June, tenants living in a building on South Martin Luther King Drive received notice that they would have to be out of their homes in two days—two days! This wasn't one or two tenants, this was 70 units, all of which had been "good tenants" paying rent each month. Common sense says that the money they were paying should have gone to repair their building, but no, the owners did nothing, ignoring warning after warning until the building was foreclosed by the city. Years of neglect had led to the city declaring the building unsafe for residency. Just like that, 70 units emptied out. What can you call someone who causes so many families to lose their homes except a criminal?

Slum conditions in Chicago aren't new. Since the late 1800s Chicago has been known for filthy tenements, segregation, slums and ghettos. The slumlord, often imagined as a wealthy landowner who neglects the properties of working class tenants on the other side of the city, is another famous character in the history of our city.

In the past, these slumlords would be recognizable faces to the tenants they exploited. Today, that is rarely true. Technological advancement, unstoppable driven forward by global industry, has been put in the service of slumlords. "Human progress" has allowed slumlords to rule their real estate

empires anonymously from states thousands of miles away. You'll never see their face; all you'll know them by is the obscure name of their limited liability companies. The slumlords of today go by titles like "RE Infinity Fund LLC", "Axiom LLC", "Concord Capital LLC" and more. Unlike a real name, these titles are chosen to make it *harder* to identify the company.

Why do slumlords use limited liability companies (LLCs)? Because they want protection from you and the city. LLCs split up the sum total of slumlord's properties into isolated legal bubbles. Each one is separate so that if you or the city sues them and they can't afford it they won't have to sell all their other properties to pay for it. If they can't pay one mortgage, their other properties will be safe.

Say your slumlord neglects your apartment and the ceiling collapses while your child is taking a shower. You can try to sue the slumlord responsible for the expenses and injury he has caused, but you'll find that on paper your slumlord isn't the legal owner—his LLC is! It doesn't matter if the slumlord has 1,000 other properties across the city, raking in rental profits in the millions, if the specific LLC that he put your building under doesn't have the funds, the slumlord will simply shrug and smile because the rest of his empire is safe.

On top of that, LLCs make it difficult to find out who the slumlord in charge actually is. Even if you find the LLC that owns your building, many of these LLCs are managed by another LLC. Gone are the days when the average slumlord went around his own buildings demanding rent each month. Now they keep themselves and all their supposedly legal business hidden behind layers and layers of bureaucracy.

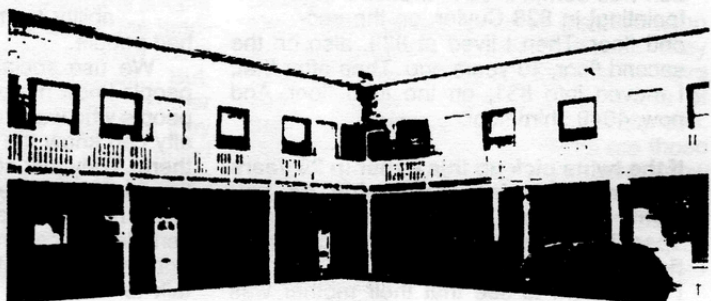
The changing state of landlording has isolated slumlords from the realities of the business, but it also isolates you from them. The

result? Your home is owned and controlled by a faceless entity which may or may not have a single person behind it at all. They are insulated from the guilt of exploiting working class tenants and protected from fault when disasters do happen. They can continue collecting their checks in peace. Nobody is to blame when the building deteriorates, or at least, that's how tenants are supposed to think.

But the buildings do deteriorate, as the tenants in the Martin Luther King building knew very well, and there is someone responsible for diverting all of the money away from building repairs and into their own pockets. By the time the banks foreclosed the Martin Luther King Drive building, the owners had already checked out. Nobody knew who was responsible for the criminal neglect. In the court papers, the defendant was listed as "6116 MLK LLC, a New York Limited Liability company...unknown owners".

You might be asking yourself, how can so many tenants and their families be thrown out on the street without anyone asking any questions? Don't people want to find out who is *responsible*? As a matter of fact, nobody involved in the process, the banks, the city, and definitely not the landlords themselves care about seeing an ounce of justice. ACTA was curious, so we looked into the matter. Tenants Talk was able to track down the owners who let these people's homes deteriorate. Criminals *Maurice and Hana Ronit Sterling* collected rent from poor tenants on the South Side of Chicago while relaxing in their cushy Brooklyn home. Everyday life in New York City continued as they let their building halfway across the country crumble around its residents. They're still there living it up even now while the tenants search for new homes.

Will Maurice and Hana Sterling ever see justice? It's probably too late for that now, but tragedies like the one on Martin Luther King Drive are playing out all across the city. As we've seen, landlords are protected from any consequences as they let people's homes deteriorate. In ACTA we believe the city should belong to the people who live in it—the only people who care to take care of it. As we've seen, landlords are capable of dodging consequences and hiding their identity, manipulating the system to protect their rent profits. It's time tenants hold them accountable. ★



★ NEWS FROM THE TENANT POINT OF VIEW ★

## INTERVIEW WITH ANAY OF FUERZAS INQUILINOS DE BROADWAY Y CUYLER

*This is an interview and discussion that took place on Wednesday, June 18th, between two comrades, Anay of Fuerzas Inquilinos de Broadway y Cuyler (FIBC) and Danny of the All-Chicago Tenant Alliance (ACTA). Since February, Anay with the help of ACTA has been tirelessly organizing her neighbors who are in the frontlines in the war against landlords.*

**What's your first name, where are you from, what do you do for a living, what are the top three Post Malone songs?**

I'm Anay, I'm from Aguascalientes, Mexico. I'm a cashier at a fast food restaurant. My three favorite songs? I like Hey Jude by the Beatles; I like We Are The World by Michael Jackson, and I like Losers by Post Malone. [laughs]

**Why do you like We Are The World?**

I like the message of the song, I like the unity and how they tried to help make a change.

**How many kids do you have and how old are they?**

I have five children. They are 21, 20, 19, and the twins are 6.

**They were born here?**

Yes. Brandon was born when I lived on the second floor of the building, there [pointing across the courtyard to an adjacent tower to the southeast], in that apartment. And Derick was born when I lived from the front on the second floor [pointing to the tower behind us, where they all currently live].

**How many units have you lived in here?**

All together, four. When Brandon was born, I lived in that one [pointing] in 828 Cuyler, on the second floor. Then I lived at 829, also on the second floor, 19 years ago. Then after that, I moved into 831, on the third floor. And now, 4049, third floor.

**If the twins pick up this paper in 20 years and read this interview, what do you want them to know about yourself, specifically your reason for deciding to fight so hard?**

I want them to see that their mother was

never a coward. That she always fought for a better world. That she was in the fight against discrimination. I want them to see that everything is possible. That if we don't fight...well, they will still be kids, but not like they are now. Right now they cannot realize how difficult the situation is, but, in twenty years...I want them to be able to say "Yes, it was possible, they changed things. They made a change that helped many people."

I want them to see that their mother was never a coward. That she always fought for a better world. That she was in the fight against discrimination. I want them to see that everything is possible.

**We have talked a lot about the types of pressure that a tenant union can apply in a fight with the landlord (economic, legal, reputational, moral). Will you give our readers specific examples of how Fuerzas has used these different types of pressure?**

Economically, we're on rent strike, we are not paying rent. We're not paying rent, because if he doesn't get the money from the tenants, things can't move, that's why it's bad for him. It's pressure, the money, because he needs it.

We have done marches. At the 33 Realty offices and at [the landlord, Drew Millard's] house. Because the people have to know what kind of person is living next door. He wants to tell them, "I am a good neighbor," and all that. And he might be—in his own neighborhood! But come to the city, I will show you other things. In the city he tries to film families, throw them out, scare them. His employees have no ability to manage, either. They are bad people.

We use social media trying to let the people know more about everything so that people who want to do business with 33 Realty can know the type of people that work there. They just come and throw the [eviction notices] papers on the floor, as if we didn't have the hands to grab the papers. Terrible education! We've gotten nothing from management, we are simply trying to talk to them and they have ignored us. It

says a lot about their upbringing.

**Will you explain how a rent strike works in some more detail?**

We began by meeting as neighbors and talking amongst ourselves. Because a rent strike needs various people, not just one. The neighbors talk about their concerns and fears. We decided that if they weren't listening to us in good faith and were just trying to get rid of us, instead, we'd take these common ideas to pressure them and say, "If you don't listen to us, then it's the rent."

There was repression for this, too. We had no hot water, stuff like that. But each time we met, we looked for different ways to pressure them. Using the press, etc. Some way or another, because otherwise nothing would happen. There are many factors [of a strike], unity, holding rent, etc. For me, it's resistance above all else. It is not easy to be here, to have men come and knock on your door when there are children and minors here in the house.

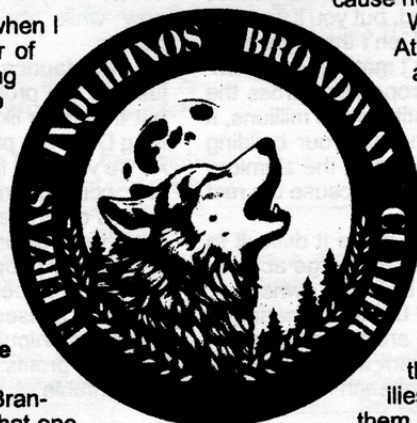
**Why economic pressure, though?**

He doesn't want us here, and we are here, but he needs our money to move forward. He needs our money to do anything, he wants us to leave but if you want our money...it's 50/50... you want your money, Drew? Work together with us, and you'll have it. If you don't work with us, you don't get it.

**Why should tenants organize their neighbors into unions?**

It's important that tenants organize, communicate, and meet their neighbors because they can do a lot together. There are many tenants who do not know that their rights have been taken away from them. People have to unite, talk to their neighbors and learn that they have rights. You might not know your rights, but maybe your neighbor does. Many tenants are afraid, but maybe there is someone else in the building who will say, "Okay if you are afraid, then I'm not going to be. I'm going to help you."

Tenants don't have to go through what many people have already gone through, or



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through what we are going through. There are many landlords who are bad and discriminatory like the one we have. It is very important to search on social media with questions. There's a lot of information now, and if you don't know, we can help you.

**For our readers who are interested in organizing unions in their buildings, can you explain the structure of Fuerzas Inquilinos, its relationship with ACTA and the weekly activity of the union (for example, the schedule and different functions of the different meetings, the captain structure, the group chat, etc.)?**

Well, as we mentioned, we had the 120-day notice of termination. You [ACTA] came and brought information to all the neighbors. Initially, all the neighbors said, "Well, we are going to leave." They didn't know that we had rights. I didn't know either. David [of the Belden Sawyer Tenant Association] came and left some papers on the doors with information and later came back with the comrades in ACTA. You came here, shared information and we exchanged numbers, otherwise we wouldn't have known that ACTA existed. We learned that BSTA was going through the same thing as us, that they [33 Realty] were being violent. This is how we started talking to the neighbors, knocking on doors. Sometimes we did it together, sometimes just ACTA. You have done a very good job with us, dedicating

your time to come.

Now we have meetings every week, we choose the topics. It depends on the situation and what is happening. We have a big meeting every week to keep all the neighbors informed and answer questions. We vote if we have something important to decide, everyone votes, because the union is not just one person. Captains were chosen from each tower to keep the building's residents informed about the building and to hear their needs and their concerns. The captains also tell them not to be afraid when management comes to knock on your door and pressure them. Above all, it is so that the union sees that they are not alone and

that we are looking out for each other.

The captains are in charge of that. And they also hold a meeting once a week on Fridays to plan the weekend meeting for the whole group. We talk about everything that has happened the past week, did the goons come to intimidate and scare us, etc. But meetings are also where people get to know each other better. We drink coffee, we laugh, we get stressed about a little bit of everything [laughs] and we get emotional at the same time. But we try to get to know each other more and make [the union] something that is familiar to ourselves. It all depends, like I said. But the neighbors organize themselves, little by little. There were many neighbors who didn't know each other, but little by little. BSTA has also been in the process with us, shoulder to shoulder, fighting the same bad, cruel, heartless, landlord.

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**Do you believe that your experience in this building is typical for Mexican tenants in Chicago? Why or why not?**

I think so. Well, it depends. I do think it's typical, but in some places it's worse than others. It depends on the owner, it depends on the building, it depends on the people who stay there. But yes, in general, I think it's worse for Mexicans. There are many people who have their services cut off, many people who are threatened, and many [of us] will not say anything. They discriminate against you because you are Mexican and you don't speak English. Many people think that because you are Mexican and you don't have legal status, they can discriminate against you. Most of the time you can't tell by someone's skin color whether they were born here or not.

In any case, what can I lose? I have to fight and I'm not leaving. I have rights. But yes, I do believe that there are many people in my condition. I have seen how the landlords come here to threaten people, scare them and so on, cut their services off... But, here we are in this building fighting. In other places, the Mexicans don't know that they don't need to let themselves be trampled on, or let people tell them lies, or threaten them, so they choose to leave out of fear. I don't think it should be like that.

**I think the situation for Mexicans is espe-**

**cially bad because landlords, bosses and the police can take advantage of your legal status. For example, if you don't want to work for 10 dollars an hour, what can you do? Your status is an objective obstacle.**

I have an acquaintance who works in a garden and he works in the heat all day for 100 dollars because he is Mexican and can't speak English. There is another lady I know who works in a restaurant, and she is not given tips or food all day long, and they do not pay her for overtime because she doesn't speak English. She's afraid of reporting the person who pays her wages.

It has a lot to do with your status, there are many Mexicans who think that because they don't have papers that they're going to have to leave, when that's not the case. You have rights, there are offices downtown that you can call and ask for help, they will come and help you.

I know many people who tell me this. I tell them, "Seriously? They are not paying you for your hours?" Their bosses are breaking the law. We have rights. Even if you have papers, many people think you don't because you are brown or you are Mexican. Many people are ignorant because it doesn't matter what color you are...brown, whatever...this can't be confused with being Mexican, many of us are mixed.

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**Do you remember last week at the meeting when our comrade was talking about division among Mexicans? Do you think there is a division between the earlier wave of Mexican immigrants who have been here for a while and have money, and the Mexicans who arrived more recently?**

Yes, unfortunately, there is discrimination among Mexicans. Many, although they have been here for years and maybe have companies or restaurants now, some of them are humble people and will help you. But some of them will not. There are those who discriminate against you. I don't know why they think like this, but...these are your people. These are your people! It doesn't matter if you've been here 40 years, 30 years, 20 years or one week, these are your

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people. It's your own blood that runs in our veins, we are Mexicans. Why discriminate? It's your people. You have to support your people. The other day when I was downtown and ran into [Anthony Quezada] and I told him, "These are your people. [Our building] is the last building of Mexicans in Buena Park. You have to help your people. We're the reason you're in your position, it's your people who voted for you. We're who you have to fight for."

But, yeah, there is division and discrimination, it's sad. Instead of joining together, many people stick their foot out so that you trip and fall.

**Last week when you sent the picture of the soldaderas in the Mexican Revolution to the captain's group chat, what were you thinking about and what did you hope it would make them think about?**

[laughs] I like the picture a lot and I said, "Look, this is your history, this is our history, this is where we come from, Mexican revolutionaries are what we come from." I sent it to motivate the comrades. To say, "Here we come, we're badasses, we're Mexican." There is no need to be afraid if there were women in those times who did not have as many rights as we do, if they could do it, now we can. That's why I sent it. I wanted them to feel proud of where they came from, who fought for us, so that we will do it too.

**Do you think that before the union, you thought about these kinds of things?**

Well, I like history a lot — [Marina, a neighbor in the union, comes out her back door to wave at us. We wave back and Any yells to her, "We're having history class!"]

I really like motivational stories. Obviously, that one is personal because it is Mexican history.

**You are in the lineage of this type of resistance fighting now, that seems pretty cool to me.**

Yeah, I like it a lot. I like it when the neighbors, especially the girls, see that our resistance changes things little by little. They see the changes, I can see they are more motivated and happier. That's what it's all about, not being afraid. We are going to make a change.

**What has the experience of organizing this tenant union changed about your values or ideas about the world?**

Has it made me see the world differently? It's different when you're not doing anything. I had always thought of doing many things to make a change, but none of them really touched me. And now that it has touched me... it has changed a lot inside me. More than anything, things get to me now. People say "Oh, no, it's not possible." I say, "Yes, it's possible." If they changed their mind, things could change, too. It has made me more strict about everything. I ask a lot from the comrades. I have always been like this,



but the struggle has made me more so. I want everything to be perfect. But it can't be, you have to understand the people to depend on the people. There are people for whom it takes more time, more understanding, and there are people you have to be more strict with.

In this aspect, yes, I have changed. I like things done well, I am strict with myself, and this has made me more strict but at the same time, more patient.

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I want everything to be perfect. But it can't be, you have to understand the people to depend on the people.

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**It's a dialectic. There are two opposite things at once.**

Yes. I have high standards, I am strict, but...

**Me too. In the struggle we need everyone to be very focused, militant, intelligent, creative...Do you think you'd like to continue organizing tenants after the fight here is over?**

Yes, so that those who follow can form unions, take care of their people and learn that they have rights and can help more people. We learned from you; other people can learn from us. It's a chain that is becoming longer and longer. It's a chain that is uniting and teaching more people to form unions. The city is big, but together we can organize it.

**Yes, ACTA needs you. I want to talk about one more thing. We have insider knowledge that some of the employees of 33 Realty are sympathetic to your struggle and disagree with how the company's leadership has treated you and your neighbors. What do you want to say to those employees, what can they do concretely to support Fuerzas Inquilinos?**

Well, I'm happy to hear that there is someone in the office who has a heart. The ones who knock on my door are very rude people. [laughs] But really, it is very good to hear that there are people with a heart who do have feelings and sympathy for the Mexicans.

How to help... Well, talk about it with your coworkers, make your bosses see that what they are doing is wrong. They're displacing and destroying families, moving children around. If you are sympathetic toward us, it's because you know that what they're doing is bad. You may have gone through the same thing before or have an acquaintance who has. Any information that you can provide to us that might help us would be very good...and we would love to meet you. [laughs]

**If they wanted to have a meeting with you, would you?**

Yes, we'd like to meet with them and hear their worries and doubts...of course!

**Great. Is there anything else you want to say to the readers?**

No...only to support us. If you have any doubts about us, we are here in the building, come meet us. We will make you feel very welcome and you will see how joyful Mexicans are, we love to be kind. My house is your house. ★

★ NEWS FROM THE TENANT POINT OF VIEW ★



## TENANTS BETRAYED AGAIN!

Last month, we wrote about how city representatives often rally around landlords by supporting anti-tenant legislation. Even tiny measures toward protecting tenants in Chicago are met with pushback from legislators as a result of pressure from landlords who can't extract as much money as possible from tenants in their buildings. This month we're here to report they're at it again!

Aldermen Felix Cardona Jr. of the 31st

Ward and Gil Villegas of the 36th Ward are currently working to introduce an amendment to the Northwest Side Preservation Ordinance that will exclude their wards from its protections. This ordinance, considered a measure of anti-gentrification by city legislators, includes increased demolition fees for landlords attempting to tear down older, multi-unit buildings in order to build higher-priced single-family housing as well as a tenant right-to-purchase program for residents of Avondale, Hermosa, Humboldt Park, Logan Square, and West Town. You can read more about what this ordinance means for tenants in Tenants Talk 8.

Soon after it passed in September 2024, the ordinance was amended to reduce the viability of the "Opportunity to Purchase" for tenants, and now two wards may be removed from protection by the ordinance altogether. Although Aldermen Cardona and Villegas initially voted for the ordinance, they have both recently reconsidered this decision.

The reason for this reconsideration? Landlord pressure in their wards. Owners of four multi-unit apartment buildings in the 31st Ward have already complained to Cardona that even the watered down tenant opportunity to purchase affects their ability to sell property quickly.

In other words, specifically the words of Villegas who agrees that sales can't be slowed down in his ward either, the city can't impose legislation that makes it "harder for that person who wants to capital-

ize on the largest asset they own." Yet again, aldermen opt to support the property owners under their jurisdiction rather than the tenants. They are fine with a more rapid gentrification process in their wards if it means those with money aren't complaining.

Consideration of assets and investment opportunities reveal the way homeowner ideology functions in relation to the future. "You're messing with their retirement," Cardona was quoted saying in an article about the ordinance. To Cardona, the future of a single, wealthy landlord is more important than the many tenants that live in their building.

What about our future? What about renters in Chicago who don't have the passive income of an investment property, the many of us who don't have private property to lean on, who will work long after we reach "retirement age?" Why is defending the landlord, the property owner, so much more important than protecting thousands of renters who want to stay in their homes?

The problem is the landlords, not the ordinances attempting to provide tenants with the smallest amount of protection. The problem is also that ordinances will never do enough to protect tenants, and can be easily manipulated and defanged by cowardly city officials.

By forming tenant unions, going on rent strike, and improving our conditions by ourselves and for ourselves, we can defend our futures, and our ability to live securely. ★

## ACTA MONTHLY REPORT: JUNE 2025

### THE YOUNG QUESTIONEERS FINISH THEIR WINTER PROGRAM

ACTA's youth project, the Young Questioners, delivered the final activities of their "winter" program. This month they focused on teaching youth about Palestine and the principle of thinking of others. Each activity was inspired by the Palestinian activist and poet Mahmoud Darwish's "Think of Others."

The youth team is working hard to review the past few months of work, and will soon decide how best to continue educating the youth of Chicago about the international struggle. Stay tuned for what's next.

### FIBC FAMILY BARBEQUE

Tenants from Fuerzas Inquilinos de Broadway y Cuyler and ACTA members threw a

barbecue for all of the tenants' families. The purpose of the barbecue was to strengthen relationships with all of the residents of the building and to celebrate another month on strike, defying Drew Millard's attempts to remove these tenants from their long time homes.

### ACTA ATTENDS BSTA BLOCK PARTY

The Belden Sawyer Tenant Association threw their long awaited block party this month. Neighbors gathered to socialize and learn about the ongoing struggle in the Belden Sawyer buildings. The party also raised money for the Rent Strike fund which goes towards legal and other expenses associated with going on rent strike. To raise funds, there was raffle, dunk tank, and t-shirt sales.

The winning t-shirt design from our online t-shirt competition sold out entirely at the block party. If you want to support the strike fund, check out our Instagram (@all\_chicago\_tenant\_alliance) and stay tuned for the next round of t-shirts!

## WHAT'S NEXT?

### RENT STRIKES CONTINUE!

Fuerzas Inquilinos de Broadway y Cuyler

and the Belden Sawyer Tenant Association continue their rents strikes, facing down the combined displacement efforts of Drew Millard and management company Evermet. These tenants are not going down without a fight. Each month of their strike is another month of lost profits for the ones who want them on the street.

### EHRESMAN TENANTS ARE COMING TOGETHER

Meetings continue at buildings owned by Duane Ehresman, owner of dozens of properties in Lawndale and Austin. This month we held a barbecue and a trash clean-up in and around Duane buildings.

### PTA GAINS GROUND

The Parkside Terrace Alliance saw some of their early demands met, but the struggle for full dignity and control over their homes continues.

### NEW BOOK: TENANT SPRING

Are you interested in the state of the tenant movement in Chicago? Are you curious about ACTA? We have been working on a new publication to address these issues. If you're interested send us a message at 773-770-5650! ★

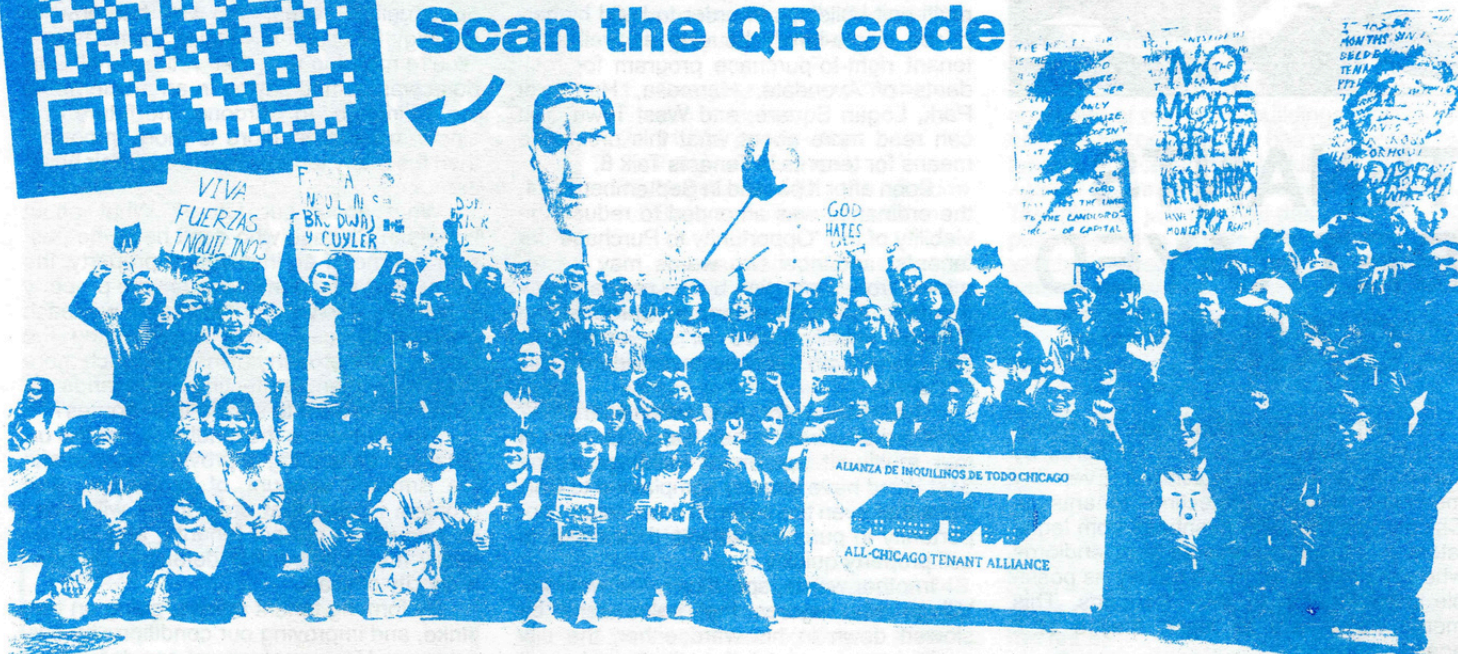
★ NEWS FROM THE TENANT POINT OF VIEW ★



## Want to organize your building?

# JOIN ACTA

### Scan the QR code



## WHAT IS THE ALL-CHICAGO TENANT ALLIANCE?

The All-Chicago Tenant Alliance (ACTA) is an organization of Chicago tenants who organize tenants into tenant unions. We do this because we believe that building robust tenant organizations is the only real way to stop the landlord terror that we've witnessed firsthand in the slums of Chicago. Relying on laws made by and for landlords has only gotten tenants so far. Realizing this has led us to stress the economic relationship

between tenants and landlords as the key arena of struggle because, put simply, landlords care about one thing: money. If a solid organization of tenants is able to threaten the flow of cash to the landlord by way of a rent strike, the landlord will be faced with an existential decision: do what the tenants demand or go broke. It is ACTA's goal to build this capacity in the unions we help birth.

On the citywide scale, ACTA's intention is to create an organization of tenant unions: a union of unions. We understand that the 'housing crisis' cannot be solved piecemeal—a union here and a union there will not lift all of Chicago's tenants from their scandalous conditions. The thousands of slums across the city are not the result of a prevalence of bad landlords, but instead are the inevitable result of the commodification and private ownership of housing, where landlords own more homes than they can use as a way to generate profit and nothing

else. In order to confront this fact, ACTA is working to build a united movement of strong tenant unions that can begin to change how housing is owned and operated. We believe that this will require a large degree of coordination between unions, in order for tactics and resources to be shared, ideas to be sharpened, culture to be built and a collective strategy to develop.

It is our hope that through a serious and creative attempt at developing Chicago tenants into a unified fighting force, the racialized and deplorable reality of renting in the city will be confronted and transformed. This is a serious undertaking that will require the participation of a great number of tenants. We are not discouraged by this fact, but instead look forward to all the difficulties that we'll face standing together with the tenants of Chicago. Join the organization with your interests at heart. ★

# The Collector of Homes - Chapter 3: The Collection

Angie and Freddy stood outside of the frightening iron gate, looking in at the massive house inside. The last thing separating them from the Collector of Homes now was soot colored iron with unwelcoming spikes at the top. Neither of the children knew what they would find if they could get to the other side and make their way into the house.

"Maybe he'll answer the doorbell?" Freddy said, pointing towards a small button with a speaker.

"Go ahead, press it," Angie replied, pushing her brother towards the PA system. Freddy raised a shaky hand and pushed the button. Immediately a sharp buzzing sound rang out, causing both Freddy and Angie to jump.

After a moment, a tinny voice sounded from the speaker.

"Who is it?"

"We're here to get our home back!" Angie shouted at the PA.

Freddy, encouraged, added an excited "yeah!"

The voice on the other side of the speaker grumbled. There was another loud buzzing sound. The siblings watched as the enormous gate swung inwards, opening the path to the Collector's house. Freddy walked forward slowly, wary of some sort of trap. Angie followed just behind, keeping a watchful eye on her little brother.

"Maybe we should peek into the window, just to see what we're walking into," Freddy said as he neared the house. He stepped towards the manicured lawn at the edge of the path but before his sneaker touched the grass a screeching rang out from the direction of the house.

"DO NOT WALK ON THE LAWN!" screeched the same voice as before, this time from speakers mounted near the front door. Freddy jumped back to the center of the path and then made up his mind to just go inside, trap or not.

The children walked up the steps but before they reached the top the door swung open and a towering man in a black suit with a face resembling a pug stepped out onto the stoop. The man looked like he had started lifting weights as a child and never slowed down.

"Are you the Collector of Homes?" Angie asked.

"No, that is my employer. Follow me." The gigantic man waved them in and led them down a hall. The inside of the house was cluttered with decorative glass domes, sort of like snow globes, each of which contained a different tiny building.

"Angie, I think these are other people's homes," Freddy whispered.

Before Angie could respond, the man led them into a luxurious looking office with a desk at least four times as big as the one the children's teacher sat behind in class. All around them, piled almost to the ceiling in haphazard stacks were glass domes containing every imaginable type of home from towering highrises to cozy bungalows.

The children were so overwhelmed by the sight of the glass containers that they hardly noticed a small man sitting behind the desk with a red tie. His hair was spiked up slightly to look thicker than it really was. His face looked like the face of a man who had received a lot of compliments but deserved none. On the desk in front of him, next to a mess of papers, was a placard that said:

## The Collector of Homes

"Thank you for seeing them inside, Mondo. So, let's get down to business. You're here for which building?" the Collector asked in a nasal voice even smaller than he was. He adjusted his seat and smoothed his tie. A pile of homes tumbled to the floor loudly but the Collector seemed unphased. Mondo watched them from his position near the door, breathing heavily.

"We live on Maypole avenue. It's a brick building with a courtyard. We planted pink flowers out front. We live in apartment 2C." Angie informed the Collector.

"You'll have to be more specific than that. Do you know how many pleasant multifamily buildings on Maypole I own? When did you sell it?" As he spoke the Collector shuffled through papers on his desk, never looking up at the children.

"We didn't sell it! You took it just this morning," Angie added desperately.

"Oh, you weren't the owners then? You were tenants?" The Collector spat, "you're in luck. I think I have the building you're talking about right here." The Collector turned in his rolling desk chair and plucked a single glass dome from the top of a precarious looking stack. He held it out to the children, leaning over his desk so that they could inspect the home inside.

Sure enough, there was the brick courtyard building with the pink flowers out front. When they looked closer, Angie and Freddy could even see their mother, frozen in place in the apartment, resting her forehead on the glass window and looking out as if still waiting for them to come home from school.

"They are people's homes," Angie gasped.

"Mom!" Freddy shouted when he recognized her. He reached for the glass container, but the Collector snatched it away.

"Ah! You can't just take this from me, it's mine. Mine," the Collector repeated the word twice, savoring the sound of it. "But I'll let you have it for a fair price. What will you give me for it?"

Seeing she had no choice but to try and make a deal, Angie spoke up quickly, "I'm a good gardener, I can plant flowers out front and take care of the bushes, and Freddy is an excellent dishwasher," Freddy almost protested, but Angie silenced him with a glare.

"Good, good. Gardening, dishwashing, and how much money are you offering in addition to these services?" the Collector asked.

"We don't have any," Freddy squeaked. "You don't have any money?" The Collector wheezed. "How do you expect to buy a house without any money!?"

"We didn't come to buy it. There must be a mistake! You took it from us!" Angie cried.

The Collector darkened and when he spoke his voice was cold and angry. "I did not TAKE anything. I bought that building fair and square. If you wanted it so badly, you were free to buy it any time before today. Now, I'm a businessman, not a charity worker. Mondo, show these two out!"

Before the children could protest, the large man lifted them easily and carried them back down the hallway littered with homes, back down the steps, back across the path to the gate. The iron gate buzzed again and swung open as Mondo approached with the children. He tossed them roughly onto the sidewalk and the gate slammed shut behind them.



To be continued...  
To read the first chapter  
of the story, scan this QR  
code!



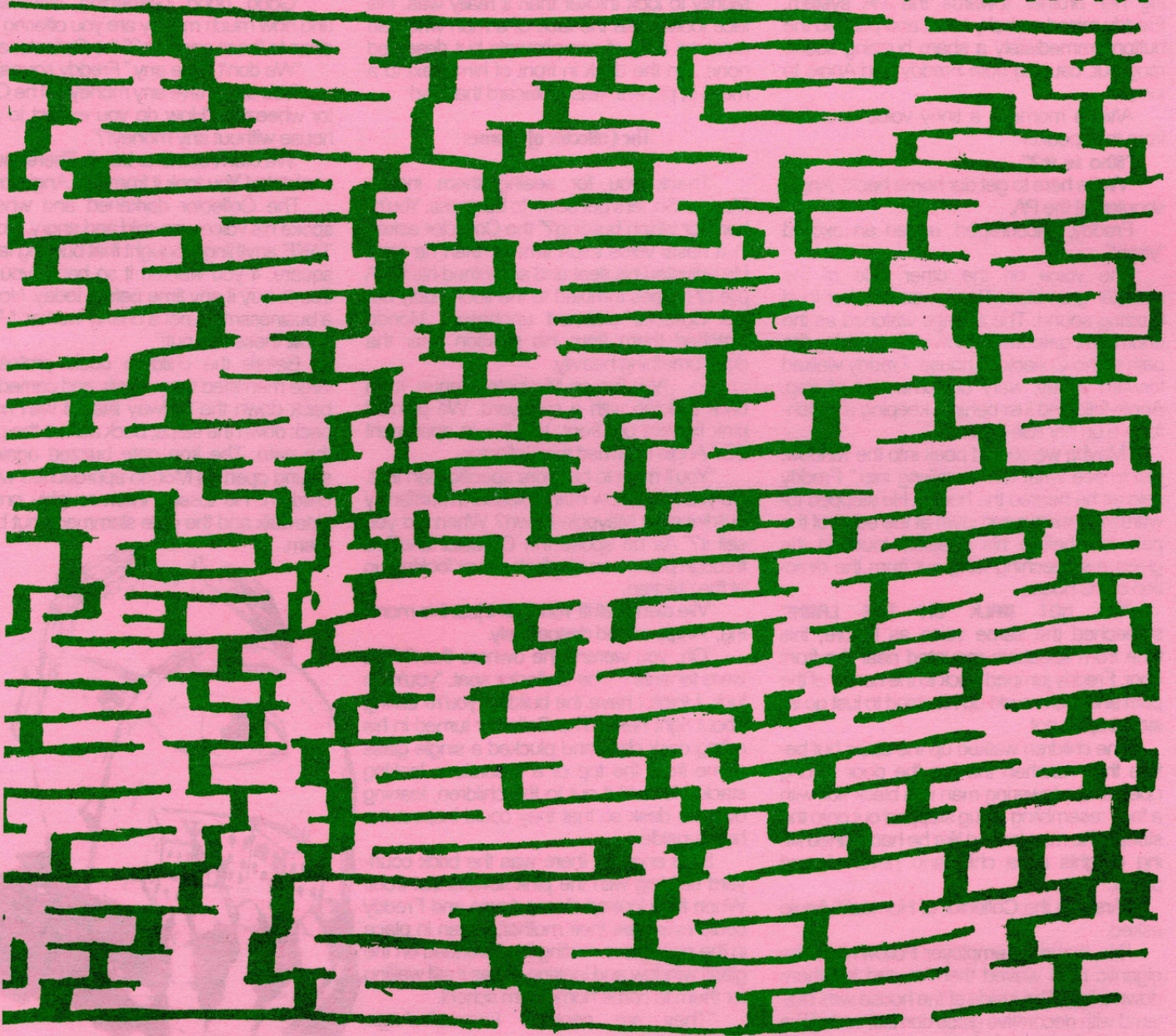
**Will Angie and Freddy get their home back? Pick up next month's edition of Tenants Talk to see the next chapter of the story!**

# ACTIVITY PAGE

In this issue of Tenants Talks, we learned that landlords hide behind something called a Limited Liability Company (LLC) to avoid getting in trouble. If they do something wrong, their company is held responsible and they get away with their crimes!

Wait a second, look out! The walls of your apartment building are falling apart! The front of the building says it's owned by "Fancy Homes, LLC", but you called for help and they never answer the phone... Can you find the lazy landlord that owns the building?

↪ START



Mr Leech



Mr Rat

