

TENANTS TALK

NEWSPAPER OF THE ALL-CHICAGO TENANT ALLIANCE

★ WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON? JOIN THE CITY-WIDE TENANT STRUGGLE! ★

TEXT (773) 770-5650!

ALIANZA DE INQUILINOS DE TODO CHICAGO



ALL-CHICAGO TENANT ALLIANCE

Issue 17

October 2025

Chicago, Ill.

chicagotenants.com

THE WAR ON TENANTS THEN AND NOW

LET ME JUST
SAY: PEACE TO
YOU, IF YOU'RE
WILLING TO
FIGHT FOR IT.

- FRED HAMPTON

READ ABOUT
THE STRUGGLE
INSIDE



FREE NEWSPAPER FOR TENANTS

★ 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 ACTIVAS DE LA DAMEN

The four building tenant union in Rogers Park has been quite busy in the month of September. In an effort to strengthen the union, Captains worked towards a pay via money orders campaign. This began just a week or so before payments were due which meant that the union had to act quick. In a matter of days information about the campaign and about how to pay was communicated to as many tenants as

possible. Within a few days after the start of the campaign logistical strategies began to solidify regarding who would collect the payments and when to deliver the payments. In total 56 tenants were part of the campaign. After this, the union identified



problems with this strategy and have been working towards improving how the union works.

Outside of this, the initial conversations with the 49th Ward office came to fruition, culminating in building inspectors looking at the four buildings the union represents. This led to the City of Chicago opening over 30 administrative hearing cases against ARK Management, as well as a civil lawsuit through the Circuit Court of Cook County.

EHRESMAN'S FALL

The momentum against Austin and North Lawndale's premier scumbag, landlord Duane Ehresman, continues. Tenants in the Austin area have taken up the call against the scourge of the landlord's negligence. One tenant, eager to organize, has been canvassing and

flying. His effort led to a successful second building meeting where tenants interested in fixing their apartment building met over the issues they're currently facing. Surprise! The building has dozens of issues as ACTA has seen in many buildings in this slumlord's portfolio. With this information, a list of demands has been penned. Currently the tenants are talking to their neighbors gathering more support. Stick like mold in a slumlord's neglected wall to this group's action. They are moving forward in taking power away from Oak Park's worst.

Duane is bilingual in his slumlordship. ACTA canvassed a building where many of our new Venezuela neighbors reside. In a building meeting and subsequent conversations the same issues- found everywhere- appear. They have issues with mold, bed bugs, lead, high rent, and disrespect. A full house of neglect. Many of these New Neighbours fear that ICE will be used in retaliation. In September and October federal forces have been terrorizing Chicago. They rightly fear the current horror of fascism. ACTA doesn't back down from any force threatening tenants. Together we respond to all issues by being well organized and diligent. Fuera Duane. Fuera ICE.

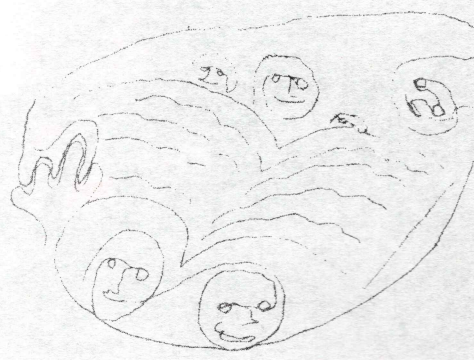
ACTA AND FIBC'S ANTI-ICE BLOCK PARTY

Early in 2025 the greedy investor, Drew Millard, purchased two buildings in the Buena Park neighborhood in Chicago. Right away he sent letters to all the tenants informing them that he is kicking them out. The reason? He wants to gut the buildings and create luxury housing.

The tenants of those two buildings, with the help of ACTA, quickly organized and created their union by the name of Fuerzas Inquilinos de Broadway y Cuyler (FIBC). The members of Fuerzas are Mexican workers who have lived in their apartments with their families for multiple generations. The union's goal is simple: to remain in their homes.

It should be noted that the tenants of FIBC are organizing at a time where Hispanic people as well as migrants in general are being villanized day in and day out. The bold decision to fight their landlord was made with this looming over their heads. Despite this, FIBC organized and is in the midst of one of the longest rent strikes in Chicago since at least the 70s.

However, the threat of ICE is very real. In the past few months two members of FIBC received terrible news from their families across the country: their loved ones had been abducted by ICE. One was detained for 2 months and released when it was shown his detention was illegitimate, a process which cost his family over \$20,000. Another is awaiting trial in the southern parts of the country, far away from their home. On September 7th, to support our friends and comrades, FIBC and ACTA held



★ NEWS FROM THE TENANT POINT OF VIEW ★

a block party with the hope of raising \$5,000 for legal fees for their family members as they fight against the state's current reign of domestic terror.

After a long day behind the grills and ticket booths, we are happy to report that the block party was a smashing success, and our local communities were able to show out in support by the hundreds. The block party filled the corner of Broadway and Cuyler with music, spirited conversation, and children's laughter. The union raised money throughout the day through a mixture of carnival games, food, raffles, and souvenirs, and although ACTA and FIBC members were hard at work running the event and cooking the food respectively, we, too, were able to enjoy this moment of jubilee in the thick of the rent strike struggle.

The grand total of money raised... over \$10,000! ★

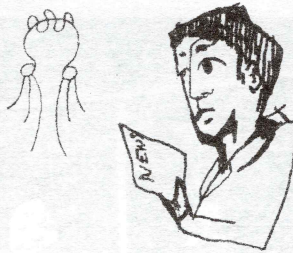


“RENT IS HIGHER THAN A MOTHERF**G ROCKET. FOR NO REASON. LIKE THEY THINK THEY CAN GO TO HOME DEPOT AND GET SOME LIL BULLS**T BOARDS AND NOW EVERYTHING IS \$1700. LIKE NAH.” - POOH**

ACTA MONTHLY REPORT: AUGUST 2025

ACTA RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The All-Chicago Tenant Alliance began the first four-week training courses for organizers looking to become a part of ACTA. The training covers ACTA's methods of organizing, the theoretical basis of our organization, and our pedagogical techniques. The sessions include adaptations from Learnin' Marx, a course on Marxism for organizers which has been taught to organizations in Chicago, New York, and the UK and supplemented with additional training in the everyday activities ACTA members engage in. After four sessions we hope that new ACTA members will be prepared to think creatively about all of the challenges that come with revolutionary tenant organizing.



ACTA ATTENDING “THE WORLD TRANSFORMED” CONFERENCE

Fellow members of the Tenant International have extended invitations to The World Transformed conference in Manchester, England to North American tenant unions including the Los Angeles Tenant Union, Crown Heights Tenant Union, York South Weston Tenants Union, and the All-Chicago Tenant Alliance. ACTA has delegated two members to attend on the organization's behalf. If you or a member of a tenant union you know is going to be in attendance, please reach out to us! We are looking forward to meeting fellow tenant unionists from around the world.



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.

★

★ NEWS FROM THE TENANT POINT OF VIEW ★

AUSTIN TENANT UNION STRIKES DEAL

August 27, 6 p.m. 32 tenants are packed around their building leaders as they read aloud the offer given to them by Infinity Capital in the third round of negotiations. Less than 24 hours before, ACTA and PTA's leaders huddled around their computer screens and combed through the offer. They decided it was time to call for a vote. Ms Hattie, one of PTA's original leaders, described what she was feeling in the hours leading up to the vote: "I was feeling a little bit undetermined, I didn't know what was going to happen. I knew we had the plan in place, but I didn't know what the tenants were thinking. I was just a little undetermined."

The tenants traced their fingers along on the sheets they were given that explained the details of the deal. After a brief discussion, the Parkside Terrace Alliance was ready to vote on the offer they had battled for over the past seven months. Ballots were passed around and the ballot box was placed in the middle of the lawn. The leaders exchanged anxious glances as the votes rolled in. "We started to tally the votes and I saw that big number. I said to myself 'Oh wow is this really happening!'" Ms Hattie read the results... "Yes... Yes... Yes... 32-0!" The vote passed unanimously. "I said we did it, we accomplished something."

The deal was a package of demands that the PTA had collected and delivered months prior: forgiveness of all rent debt, a rent-free month of August, the removal of a drug-dealing tenant, new security cameras, a security guard, a new property manager and janitor, the return of security deposits, and a commitment to make repairs. Overall, ACTA estimates that the deal cost Infinity Capital over \$100,000. In return for these concessions the tenants in the building agreed to start paying rent again.

Readers of Tenants Talk will remember that the PTA used a variety of the common tactics to pressure their landlord. In April they stormed the offices of Eastlake Management to deliver their demand letter. In May they held a press conference to expose the conditions they

faced. In June they filled their building with pro-union posters. In July they sent a demand video to Infinity, and finally in August they entered negotiations with force and determination.

All of this activity applied pressure on Infinity and solidified the union's bonds in the building, but there was one tactic that stood above the rest: withholding rent. Since the winter, an increasing number of tenants in the building said enough was enough, and stopped paying rent. This style of withholding is significantly more risky than a coordinated rent strike. Without being sure of who has stopped paying rent and when they stopped, it is much easier for the landlord to pick tenants off one-by-one through eviction notices. It is also much more difficult to use the withholding as leverage because it was not initiated with an agreed upon demand that the landlord could fulfill in order to end the withholding. A significant amount of organizing was necessary to centralize and solidify the firepower righteously unleashed by the tenants.

Despite this hurdle, the tactic worked. Why? On its face, the answer seems obvious: the landlord was desperate for

money, so he gave in. But Infinity Capital is an enormous company that is responsible for a portfolio of properties that is worth hundreds of millions of dollars. Certainly the relatively small amount of rent that was being withheld did not make a dent in their piggy bank. What was particular about this case, though, was that Infinity Capital has been trying to sell this building ever since it bought it in August of 2024. Who would want to buy a building with no cash flow?

So, with their multi-million dollar deal being held up by the determined tenants, Infinity was forced to the negotiating table, but only because those same tenants were organized into a force that could consolidate and direct their leverage.

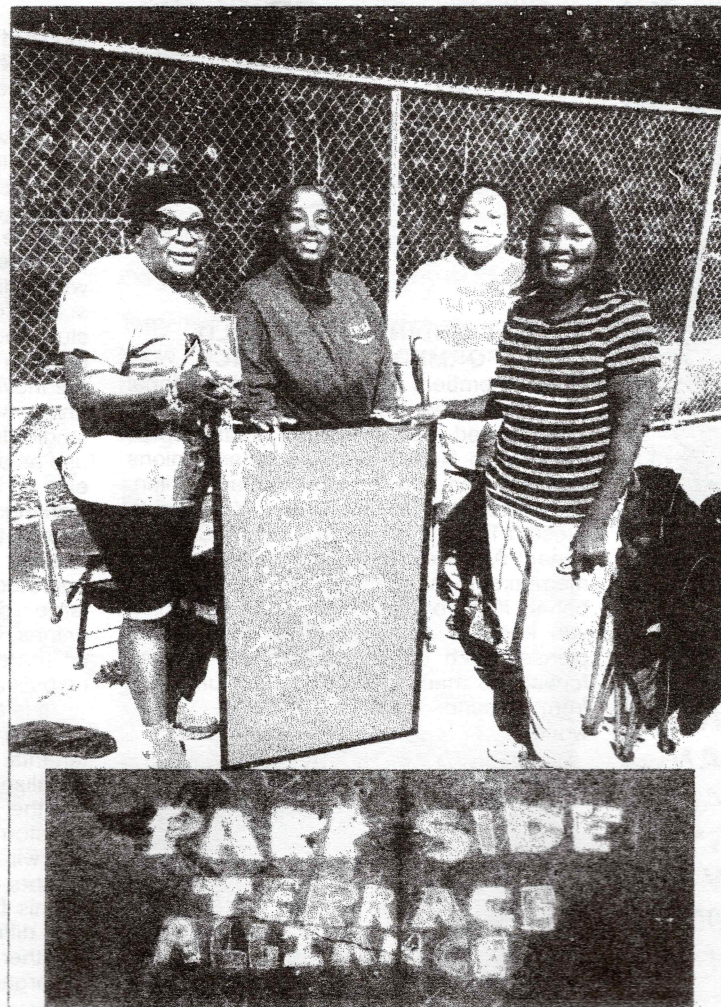
However, simply approving the deal did not end the fight. In order to have documentation of the rent forgiveness, tenants had to sign and receive a copy of a lease amendment stating that their debts have been forgiven. In a fit of incompetence, Eastlake Management nearly jeopardized the deal. As tenants filtered into their offices throughout the week, managers like Darendra Carr berated the tenants and said they had no idea what they were talking

about when they asked to sign the amendment and receive a rent receipt. This disrespect was compounded when Eastlake closed the office an hour early one day before the deadline and did not open the Parkside office as promised in the deal. It was only after the PTA successfully demanded a three-day extension that the final forms were signed.

So have the lions of Parkside retreated to their dens, complacent with what they've won? Hell no! "I know if I don't stand for something, I fall for anything." Ms Hattie remains crystal clear about the lions' direction. "My mindset is like I gotta do something, we gotta fight until the end."

Their struggle is just shifting into a new gear. Dozens of repair requests remain unfulfilled and new ownership is on the horizon. The lions know that ending the fight now would spell disaster in the future.

They also know that they need to take charge of their own union as ACTA seeks to bring more tenants to the level of organization that PTA has achieved. This stage brings new problems and new insights, but for Ms Hattie, the same mindset remains: "We gotta work a little harder. It's going to take time, but the wrong thing to do is to be frustrated. We gotta pull together, we gotta pull in, pull close." ★



★ NEWS FROM THE TENANT POINT OF VIEW ★

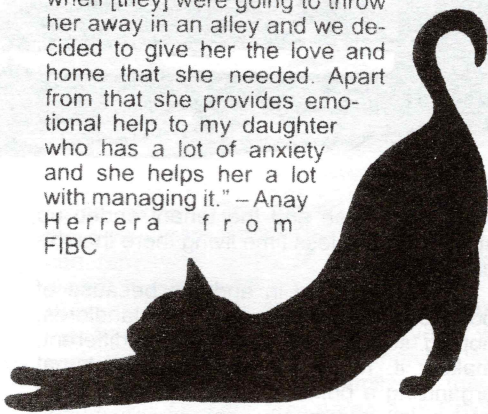
THE CAT IS THE GUARDIAN OF THE SLUMS

Looking into the history of how humans and our furry friends we keep at home began, the most common story we hear is that humans and cats started their multi-millennia history by chance. As human development evolved to the point where the growth of food (in other words agriculture) became the primary way that humans organized their labor for meeting their diet, pests like rodents quickly found a bountiful source of food. Rodents looked at the piles of grain as if it was their free buffet.

This is where our little kitties come into the picture. With the abundant source of rodents, cats soon came into the areas where people were living because they would find rodents and other pests to feed on. Since the cats were taking care of the rodents and since they are adorable little creatures, humans quickly began to form a bond with them.

Today, every other tenant in the city will tell you a tale about their furry companion. To many of us who rent in the city, the role of the cat remains the same as it was back then. The landlord's terror impacts everyone and everything we hold dear.

"I don't think landlords should charge for them, they [cats] depend on us and they don't take up space. She means a lot to me because she is like my granddaughter, she is grumpy but we love her. We adopted her when [they] were going to throw her away in an alley and we decided to give her the love and home that she needed. Apart from that she provides emotional help to my daughter who has a lot of anxiety and she helps her a lot with managing it." —Anay Herrera from FIBC



Many landlords across the city will exploit the love we have for other living creatures to fill their pockets even more. What's more insulting is that many slumlords who fail to provide a safe home will often charge a fee to have a cat, a cat which is meant to help with the very problems the slumlords cause! ★

WHO IS IMRAN KHAN?

What do you get when you cross a lawyer and a landlord? Aminur Rahman "Imran" Khan Esq., the Khan-Man of Rogers Park. Imran Khan is new to the world of real estate and he's doing everything he can to prove he's made of the right stuff. Khan recently bought five buildings in Rogers Park with borrowed money and empty promises.

Who is Imran Khan? Tenants in Rogers Park know him as the person who bought up their buildings and immediately hiked rent. They know him from his aggressive emails and dismissive behavior. He's the type of man to spend the afternoon at his slum buildings haranguing his tenants. He says he understands what it's like to be poor, but he drives a white Ferrari and lives in a luxury apartment in Trump tower. He is a member of GoBundance, an exclusive club for millionaires. One thing is clear, Khan is nothing like the working class people that will be displaced by his gentrification plan for Rogers Park.

The buildings themselves have countless issues, from broken windows, to rodents, peeling paint, clogs, and leaks. Because of the deteriorated state of the buildings, rents are low. When buildings get to this condition and go up for sale, the only people willing to buy them are either slumlords who don't have any plans or greedy investors with big plans to make the buildings "profitable" and have no qualms throwing families out of their homes to do so. Which one is Imran Khan? Tenants are starting to find out.

Since taking over the building, Imran Khan has informed tenants that he will be raising the rents up to 60% even before making any significant fixes to the building. It's clear that Khan bought these people's homes knowing that if they couldn't afford to stay they could be replaced by someone who could. **It's extremely clear that Khan is a gentrifier, and whether he admits it or not, his investment is effectively a gentrification plan that will push people out of Rogers Park who have lived there for decades.**

Among the tenants being displaced are those who have called these buildings home for 20, 30, even 40 years. These are people who have been living in this building since before Imran Khan graduated high school, before he passed the bar exam and became a lawyer, since before the last of his humanity drained out of him and he decided to put his greed before the dignity of our neighbors. We live in a world where men like Imran Khan can come in one day and throw families out of their homes without taking any responsibility for what they are doing. The landlords can pretend they are not responsible for what is

happening to people across Chicago, but the tenants know the truth. The market isn't raising their rents. Imran Khan is.

The tenants are fighting back. They have formed a union called Fuerzas Activas de la Damen to stand up to Khan's gentrification plan. Since the union formed, Khan has doubled down on his aggression towards the tenants. He has threatened to throw out tenant's property and threatened multiple lawsuits to silence the union and keep tenants from organizing. He has repeatedly lied to the union and the officials of 49th ward. Khan has repeatedly claimed he bought the buildings four months ago, when in actuality he finished the deals in January. He has hired people to go to the building every day to convince the tenants to abandon the union. He has hired people to spread fear about tenants about the legality of their organization. Most recently Khan declared that he had dismantled the union and that only 14 tenants hadn't made a deal. A day later that number was suddenly about 30 tenants. The real numbers? More than double what Khan's been claiming. Despite Khan's bluster, the union is still strong. The tenants will not be silenced. The right of tenants to unionize is protected by the RLTO, something the lawyer Imran Khan should know if he were actually any good at his job.

Already city inspections have resulted in possible fines and a lawsuit against Imran Khan, and yet his aggression has only increased. It is becoming increasingly clear that Imran Khan does not have what it takes to work in real estate. He is flying by the seat of his pants, wasting borrowed time and borrowed money. He is on the line for somewhere around \$25 million in borrowed cash for what he thought would be an easy investment. It is going to be anything but easy. As soon as his investors realize their mistake Khan himself will be tossed aside by the real money and a new middleman will take his place. The tenants will be ready then too, until landlords learn that they can't take people's homes without a fight. ★

"IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT, YOU CAN LEAVE!"



★ NEWS FROM THE TENANT POINT OF VIEW ★

WHAT MAKES A HOUSE A HOME

DUANE EHRESMAN, CABRINI GREEN, AND FIGHTING FOR DIGNITY

It's time we checked in on slumlord Duane Ehresman to see what he and, more importantly, his tenants have been up to. Whatever Duane has been up to, it sure as hell isn't fixing the leaks, buzzers, or washing machines in his buildings!

Since we last left off with Duane at the Arthington Cookout (featured in Tenants Talk 13), where tenants in North Lawndale interested in organizing their buildings met in their building's courtyard, ACTA organizers have been getting acquainted with tenants living in the Austin part of Duane's portfolio. To no one's surprise, the issues in Austin are the same as the issues in North Lawndale. Rats and roaches; broken buzzers and doors that won't lock; leaks in the ceiling over beds and cabinets that fall off the wall onto tenants; laundry rooms full of washers and dryers that don't work. All problems that people have reported to management—only to be ignored.

These aren't the only crimes of neglect that Duane is responsible for. We found one Austin building with a lead violation posted on the front door. A family living in this tower had their child tested well-above what is considered the "safe" amount of lead content in their blood. Though, to be clear, science shows no amount of lead is safe for children — this is simply the enforceable level by CDPH. High lead levels can severely affect children's mental and physical development, and it's critical that these conditions are mitigated swiftly. Yet, on Ehresman Management's site, the building is described as "ideal for families."

"IF I COULD DO IT ALL AGAIN, I WOULD. EVERYBODY KNEW EVERYBODY IN THE BUILDINGS. IT WAS NEVER LIKE THIS. NOW I LIVE IN A BUILDING ALL THIS TIME AND I DON'T KNOW HARDLY ANYBODY. JUST PEOPLE COMING AND GOING, THAT'S IT."

Yet, Duane Ehresman prides himself on generously caring for the young people of Austin as founder and board member of Kidz Express. If you're a Duane tenant, you may have come across a flyer advertising Kidz Express in your mailroom next to condescending flyers telling you to either take care of your apartment or "find somewhere else to be dirty." For those unfamiliar, Kidz Express is a non-profit afterschool program founded by Duane Ehresman and Warren King in 1999. They opened a "cross-peer mentoring" program where teenagers come up through the program, then get the opportunity to become paid mentors to the younger newcomers. Sounds great! But, if Duane is so concerned for the well-being of teenagers on the Westside, he should stop over-charging their families for apartments riddled with rats and roaches. Or renting out units that poison children!

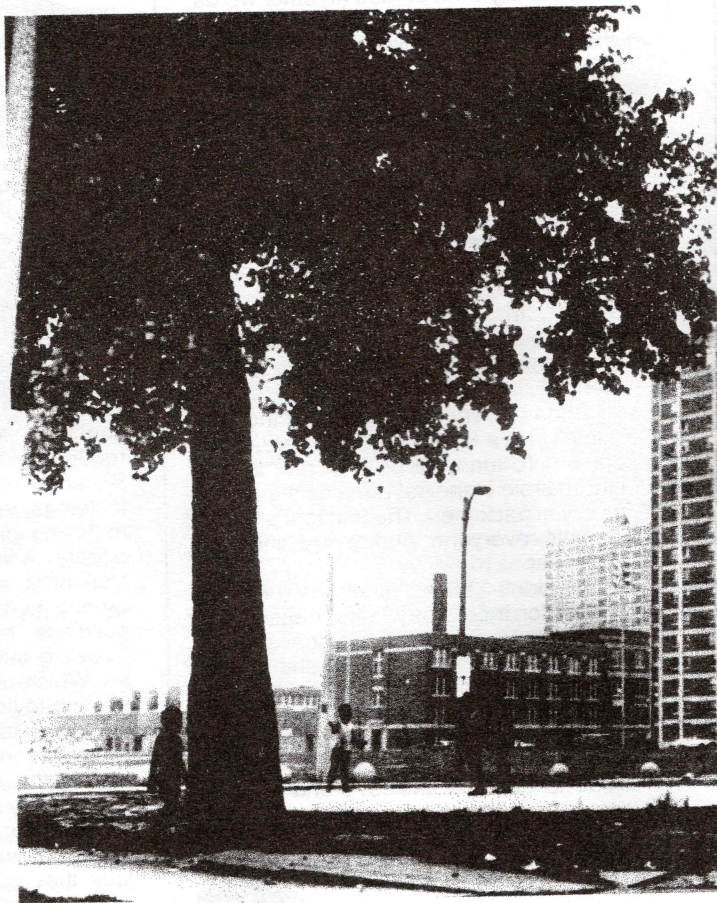
We spoke with a longtime Duane tenant in North Lawndale named Carly, who used to work for him, cleaning apartments before they got rented out. She explained to us Duane's outlook on his business and what he thinks of the people who rent from him, "He hired me, but he didn't want me to take all day to make the apartments immaculate. He just wanted me to do it and get it over with. If there's perfection in it, it's going to take me longer. My feeling was that Duane just felt like Black people weren't worthy of that."

Because of her long history with Duane, she has some sway in getting him to take care of business. "He'll deal with things that are within my apartment. He knows I'm no nonsense about my apartment. He comes in my apartment, whenever he comes in my apartment, it looks just like it looked when I walked in." However, when it comes to problems in the building outside of her apartment, he ignores her requests or does a poor job fixing the problem.

Her skill and enthusiasm for keeping her home neat goes back to growing up with her mother and sister in Cabrini Green. "My mama was no nonsense about her house. When I was living in Cabrini, my mother had a hot pink rug on her floor. Hot pink! Don't let her come home with foot marks on it!"

It's clear though that she is the exception to the rule. It doesn't matter how well you take care of your apartment—for

most, putting in a maintenance request to Duane is a shout into the void. In Austin, one tenant even met consequences for putting extra effort into improving his unit. When he moved in he signed a year long lease. He didn't see the place as somewhere he was going to be living for very long, but still wanted to make it a nice place to come home to at the end of the day. He spent his own money putting a fresh coat of paint in the living room and kitchen, including the cabinets. Duane responded to the home improvements by refusing to



renew the lease and the tenant ended up spending even less time living there than he anticipated.

People moving in and out because of poor conditions and negligent landlords, hoping somewhere else will be different, makes it hard to sustain attempts at organizing a building. There isn't a shared sense of community among neighbors. Carly compares her current living situation to her childhood in Cabrini Green, "if I could do it all again, I would. Everybody knew everybody in the buildings. It was never like this. Now I live in a building all this time and I don't know hardly anybody. Just people coming and going, that's it."

No other housing project in the history of Chicago, and perhaps the entire country has been so demonized, so entrenched in

★ NEWS FROM THE TENANT POINT OF VIEW ★

scandal as that of the Cabrini Green housing project. The multi-building complex built by the CHA (Chicago Housing Authority) consisted of both row houses and 23 highrise towers. At its peak it was home to around 15,000 people. In what can best be imagined as a situation of building without thinking (that is if you want to give CHA the benefit of the doubt), CHA was soon unable to keep up with maintenance of the complex.

Carly moved to Cabrini Green at seven years old with her mother and 12 year old

deteriorating. The tenants of the Cabrini Green complex built their lives there, and worked to form their community, with diminishing help from the very people that placed them there. Despite the mounting issues, these places were home to many people.

She recalls having fun and getting up to no good with her friends who all lived in Cabrini, including housing activist Carol Steele, who went on to spend years trying to get CHA to honor the promises that were made to Cabrini residents who were displaced from their homes. "I knew the girl who used to manage Cabrini. We grew up like sisters. She did some fantastic things for Cabrini. She made a lot of things happen over there. We went from third grade on. She'd come over to my house and we'd wear my sister's clothes and my mother's clothes after my mother went to work. We'd wear her nice clothes to school and stuff. We was always into something."

For Carly, her memories of growing up in Cabrini have as much to do with all the spots she used to hang out with the other kids as the actual apartment she lived in. She recalls sleeping outside on the ramps, rollerskating and partying in the basement, and getting into it on the playground, telling the older kids to just wait till her mother's brother came to town for his annual summer stay.

"To me, Cabrini was the best years of my life. We had fun. Keep in mind I was nothing but a kid. A kid sees things entirely different from grown-ups. I thought Cabrini was a fantastic place to live. I had plenty of friends over there."

Many tenants like Carly took pride in their lives in Cabrini. A name that might not be familiar to our readers is the 'Brigade House'. A group of tenants in the Cabrini Green projects, members of the Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade (RCYB), who lived in the towers a few years before their demolition, organized a resistance to the destruction of the place they and their neighbors called home. In the late 1990s, despite doing very little to fix building issues, CHA began to do something worse. Under the guise of "urban renewal" it began to displace thousands and thousands of people from their homes. The RCYB stood firm against the call to tear down the towers. Their base, the Brigade House at 1142 N. Orleans, where they worked to organize tenants as well as talk and read with tenants, was on the chopping block. The house had its water shut off in September of 1998. But this didn't deter the group. A few months later the gas was cut.

"TO ME, CABRINI WAS THE BEST YEARS OF MY LIFE. WE HAD FUN. KEEP IN MIND I WAS NOTHING BUT A KID. A KID SEES THINGS ENTIRELY DIFFERENT FROM GROWN-UPS. I THOUGHT CABRINI WAS A FANTASTIC PLACE TO LIVE. I HAD PLENTY OF FRIENDS OVER THERE. "

But the group remained, supported by many Cabrini residents who, like the RCYB, knew that if they didn't stand up for their homes no one else would. Their house remained the only one in the block that was not rubble. It took a sustained campaign from the city to finally remove them, and demolish the house.

"We stand by what we have done. We have won a moral and political victory that cannot be taken away or demolished. We have forced the City of Chicago to show it serves a small, greedy, and avaricious class of monied people. The City government is carrying out orders which are against the will of the people of Cabrini Green and against the interest of most people in Chicago. The whole case of the ongoing demolition of public and low income housing and the workings of the housing courts to evict entire communities shows this: that there can be no remedy or relief for the poor that will endure for long while capitalism exists." - A.K. Small of the Chicago RCYB

The stories of Cabrini Green remind us of all the things that make a place feel like home: the people you share it with, the memories you have there, and for the tenants who dare to stand up, the struggle to keep it. While Cabrini has fallen, the dictatorship over the lives of tenants lives on. So long as landlords like Duane Ehresman are able to scare tenants out of speaking up for themselves, and so long as they can hike rent or sell buildings and displace tenants whenever they like, tenants will remain subjected to terror in the present and looking back at the past with rosy vision wondering where it all went wrong.

We desire more than just a house. We desire a home. We must turn our gaze toward a future we desire, and we must take the brave steps toward it. If you share this desire, know that, like Carol Steele and the inspiring Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade of Cabrini Green, we will fight with you for this dignity. Contact the All-Chicago Tenant Alliance today at (773) 770-5650. ★



sister. "When I first moved there in 1957 there was more whites there than blacks. I can remember some of the white ladies would sit out on the playground slides and swings and stuff and sunbathe. It was like that for maybe the first two, three years we were there. After we had been there for five years there was one white family still there. I'll never forget her. Her name was Phyllis Black. She eventually ended up moving to California. We kept in touch for years."

CHA rushed to push Black tenants into this housing complex, blatantly concentrating them to the point that this issue reached the supreme court in the *Gautreaux v. Chicago Housing Authority* case in 1966. With the growing laundry list of issues, the lost court case, and increasing costs, the massive complex kept

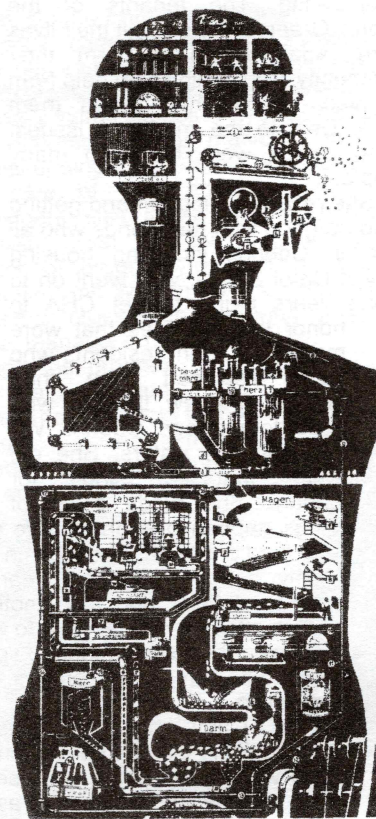
★ NEWS FROM THE TENANT POINT OF VIEW ★

THE FREEDOM OF CAPITALISM

Capitalism guarantees us freedom and equality. We can apply for any job, eat what we like, wear what we want, and live wherever we can afford. No one is standing over us, forcing these choices. But this freedom rests on a paradox. Under capitalism, we are "free" precisely because the vast majority of people are "free" of the very things needed to survive—land, housing, food, and water. It is only because we lack these essentials that we must "choose" to work. The "freedom" to work wherever you like is predicated on your "freedom" from your own means of subsistence. We are not free to do nothing; we are only free to labor. From the employer's perspective, the population is no longer human beings but potential workers—everyone must earn money in order to live. In short, "freedom" is grounded in the privatization of living.

The same logic applies to "equality." We are all the same in that we own nothing and must work to survive. We are all equally laborers. For employers, however, equality takes on another meaning: replaceability. Individuality and unique skills are threats because they give workers leverage—if you produce unique value, you can demand higher wages or leave and cost the employer money. Workers strikes can become incredibly costly as it would require training an entirely new workplace. To mitigate this catastrophe, employers seek to make work as simple, mundane, and repetitive as possible—breaking jobs down into narrow tasks and relying on technology. It is therefore imperative, from the point of view of the employer, that automation increases as quickly as possible. All human interactions, abilities, skills, and personality become superfluous once the division of labor and machinery enter the workplace. This is why, as Marx points out in the 1844 Manuscripts, capitalism "replaces labor by machines, but it throws one section of the workers back into barbarous types of labor and it turns the other section into a machine. It produces intelligence—but for the worker, stupidity, cretinism." The more advanced the workplace becomes, the simpler and more expendable the worker becomes.

Preserving freedom and equality become the most important values capitalism strives to uphold. It does this by ensuring that workers receive as little wages as possible so that they are then free to work wherever they please for the rest of their life. If wages increase too much, they may leave the workforce, undermining their freedom to labor. Poverty and living pay check to paycheck guarantee workers exercise this freedom forever. Increasing one's standard of living not only threatens this but the entire economic system—people will only work if they need to in order to survive. Likewise, equality is secured by defunding any educational program that may risk promoting individuality. We must all be equal in our mundane existence in the workplace and the activities we partake in



afterwards to try and forget it.

This is also why the classical economists did not bother to hide it: they openly admitted that capitalism requires poverty and monotony in order to produce a disciplined workforce. In *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith states that wages must only "be sufficient to maintain [the worker]" and that if wages rise beyond this bare minimum "it will generally encourage marriage and the multiplication of laborers; which will quickly lower them again to this necessary rate."

Contemporary economists say the same thing, only in sanitized jargon. When the Federal Reserve talks about "cooling the labor market," it means raising interest rates so that businesses cut spending, slow hiring, and restrain wage growth. The result is a more profitable environment for employers, as workers must now compete with a growing pool of unemployed people willing to work for less.

In our political and economic system, you are not regarded as a full human being with needs, desires, or dignity. You are seen almost exclusively as a potential worker—someone who must labor in order to purchase the goods necessary for survival. Your value is reduced to what Marx called your "labor-power." This means you sell the only thing you truly "own": your body and its capacity to work. Day after day, eight hours at a time, five days a week, you exchange your life energy simply to secure food, shelter, and water—all things our society has privatized. In this way, capitalism is necessarily vampiric. It does not merely use your skills; it consumes your physical and mental energy, draining the majority

of your waking life in exchange for wages you use to survive.

Your only real leverage in this system is your labor-power. Marches, protests, boycotts, legislation, political campaigns—all of these are powerless if workers continue to show up for work the next morning. Why would the ultra-wealthy, who control this country, care if you march with a sign? From their perspective, it's useful: "Good. Let them blow off steam, shout, get tired—then they'll clock in tomorrow."

Radical change will never come from rituals of protest that leave the engine of capitalism humming. The only value you possess under this system is your labor. That is all you are to it. And if you want to change that, you must withhold it—not alone, but collectively, with your co-workers and neighbors.

Be willing to fight in the one way that truly threatens power. Strike—not for a day, not for a weekend of headlines, but until actual freedom and equality are achieved. ★

TELL LIES, CLAIM EASY VICTORIES

HOW ACTIVISTS AND ALDERMEN CONSPIRED TO SELL OUT SOUTH SHORE TENANTS

Today, the Chicago neighborhood of South Shore is made up of 75% tenants. It has one of the highest concentrations of tenants in the city, and as a result landlords run rampant. In the last year we've seen Landlord greed result in the removal of unionized tenants in the CKO Tenants Union from their homes. The tenants managed to secure a small amount of money for move out assistance in exchange for their longtime homes.

In early October federal agents raided a South Shore apartment building, ransacking every apartment in a deranged anti-immigration assault. Black and Latin American tenants who had lived in the building for decades saw their personal belongings destroyed. South Shore tenants are regularly evicted or pushed out as their buildings crumble into negligent disrepair. What is becoming more and more clear is that nobody will speak up when tenants are pushed around and forcibly displaced. South shore has become a playground for landlords profiting off of misery.

Every day it becomes more and more clear. Tenants have no rights. We have to stand up for ourselves.

Why do the landlords let South Shore apartment buildings crumble? The answer is that they aren't interested in the buildings. Most of the landlords are playing the game of financial speculation. They don't really want that courtyard building with crumbling walls, rats, and regular leaks. But they do want to hit the jackpot. If the value of the land starts to go up, it doesn't matter who or what is on it, the landlords gambling with our homes and lives have hit the jackpot.

★ NEWS FROM THE TENANT POINT OF VIEW ★

The slumlords of South Shore hit the jackpot the day the second most famous war criminal in the world, Barack Obama, decided it would be the site of his monolithic presidential library. Landlords and business owners celebrated when they got the news. The construction of the Obama Center, a literal ivory tower in the heart of black Chicago, involved the buying up of a massive amount of land.

The effects have spread out in a ripple pattern. All around the proposed construction, landlords and investors began to see dollar signs. They scooped up properties like madmen, knowing that the Obama Center would bring droves of new residents with pockets full of cash. The mostly black working class tenants of South Shore have watched as the neighborhood they called home goes luxury. What got more expensive? Everything from groceries to gas, but most importantly, **rent**.

Things were looking bad for the majority of residents of South Shore who rent their homes, but recently the well known community organization Southside Together announced they had collaborated with the alderman of the fifth ward and won a major victory for the residents of South Shore. An ordinance called The South Shore Housing Preservation Ordinance passed on Wednesday, October first. Here at Tenants Talk we were surprised to hear about the big win, and we thought we would look a little deeper.

There is a well-known quote from the martyr Amilcar Cabral, one of the greatest heroes and leaders of Pan-African socialism in the 20th century. It goes, "**Tell no lies, claim no easy victories.**" In the All-Chicago Tenant Alliance we try to hold ourselves to this principle. People's homes and lives are on the line. Misinformation has consequences.

Southside Together and Alderman Yancy are touting the new ordinance as a victory for residents. But which residents? It's a victory, alright—a victory for the 25% of residents who own homes! In fact, for these kinds of residents, the victory goes well beyond the borders of South Shore. It's also a victory for residents of Park Ridge, Hinsdale, and Forest Glen, Los Angeles, New York City, etc, where the people who own the land and the houses in South Shore live! For the residents who do not own homes, however, the South

Shore Housing Preservation Ordinance not only ISN'T a victory, it's a loss! And remember: *this is a loss for the majority of South Shore residents!* Similarly, this loss will be felt well beyond the borders of South Shore by all the tenants in Chicago, as people who are priced out must migrate to other areas and begin competing for the housing stock kept scarce by the dictatorship of landlords.

What is contained in the ordinance?

- The ordinance provides millions in property tax debt relief for the 25% who own homes.
- It reserves city owned lots for affordable housing profiteers to add to their portfolios.
- It provides 25 empty lots and subsidies for developers to build single family homes for people who make up to 120% the median income.

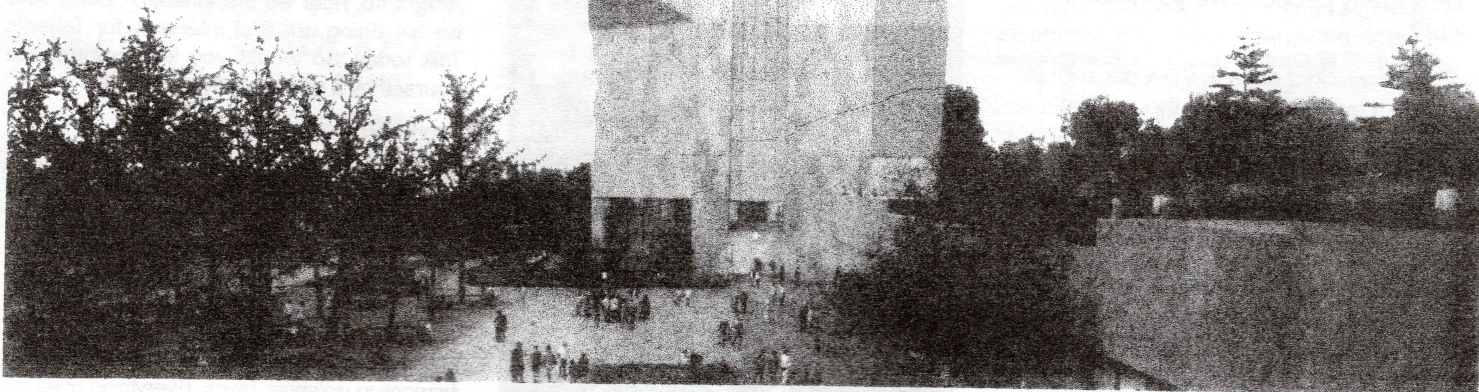
Let's get this straight, the Obama Center is threatening every tenant in the neighborhood of South Shore with a skyrocketing cost of living. Even if they could afford one of the 25 new subsidized single family homes, what about the rest? Thousands of tenants are facing displacement. Even if the new lots for affordable housing actually do get built, this will take years and only cover a small portion of the need. Even then, tenants will have to relocate into these new developments. By then most of the working class residents of South Shore will be gone.

These are the tenants who live in the neighborhood now. They need protection for the housing they live in today. This is what's missing from the South Shore Housing Preservation Ordinance. But when Dixon Romeo, executive director of Southside Together and a member of the Obama CBA Coalition says "our tagline has been development without displacement," he's not talking to the tenants. He's talking to the homeowners and business owners. He knows that the thing displacing tenants is **development**, but he speaks for the homeowners. To tenants development means higher rents, to homeowners it means higher property value. He isn't coy about where he stands. Dixon openly states the strength of the ordinance is that it "creates opportunities for tenants to be homeowners." That's it, no protections for tenants unless they can afford to stop being a tenant.

It has to be pointed out here that when the Ordinance was first introduced by the Coalition, it contained stronger pro-tenant content. Most innovative of this was an explicit division it proposed in the Department of Housing called the 'Office of the Tenant Advocate.' This appointed individual would have been a bureaucrat concerned with the issues that affect tenants specifically and set them apart from homeowners. But of course, as always for the interests of tenants, easy come easy go. When it came time to negotiate over the terms of the ordinance with the titans of the real estate lobby in city government, the activists and the alderman wasted no time sacrificing the tenants and reserving the lion's share of the bounty for the landlords and homeowners.

Every part of this rotten development is part of a plan to turn South Shore into a neighborhood like Lincoln Park. Anyone living in South Shore now who wouldn't be able to live in Lincoln Park will not be there if there are no protections for tenants. The majority of South Shore residents are tenants and yet, **not one part of this supposed victory protects the existing tenants in South Shore!**

This is not a victory. It is a lie that tries to soften the blow of the truth: the gentrification of South Shore has not been stopped.★



★ NEWS FROM THE TENANT POINT OF VIEW ★

TENANT GRAPEVINE

This is Linnea with Tenants Talk. We're out here talking with tenants. Who am I speaking with today?

Kimberly: Hi! My name is Kimberly.

Hello Kimberly. How long have you been living in Chicago?

Kimberly: I've been living in Chicago the majority of my life. Different neighborhoods, only on the West Side though. Currently I live in the West Suburbs. But I was born and raised on the West Side of Chicago.

How long have you been at

M&S Cafe?

Kimberly: I am co-owner. We've been in business over a year and a half now.

Have you been in and around Austin for a long time?

Kimberly: Pretty much - I would say on and off for the majority of my life.

What would you like to see in the neighborhood in the next five years?

Kimberly: I would like to see the abandoned buildings and housing being remodeled. Better

schooling for the children. More clean grounds and cleaned vacant lots. More flowers and plants.

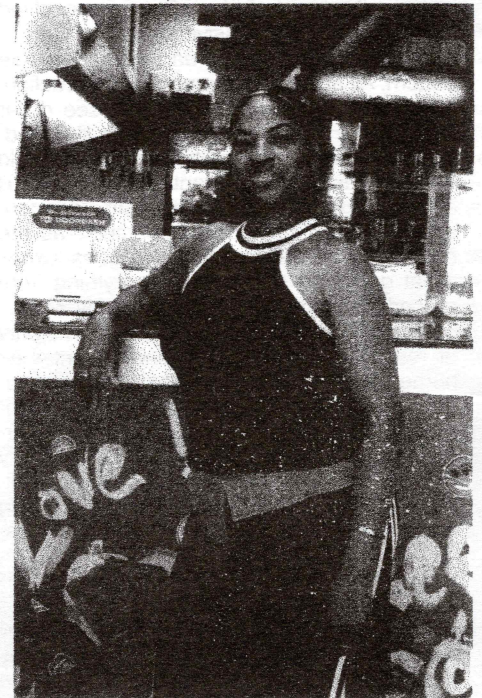
What's your favorite flower?

Kimberly: I love the sunflower.

And yeah, just growing business in the community!

Thank you so much, have a great day.

Kimberly: You're welcome, you as well. ★



[Background]: If you ain't making money you ain't doing nothing! Gotta make money man.

That guy's funny! Alright, do you want to start the story?

Terry: So what am I supposed to say?

Just, you know, the story about the craziest thing you saw at the store!

Terry: I mean, we catch a bunch of weirdos coming up in here. You got somebody coming in here acting like they're buying something, walking around the store, they'll try to grab some chips or juice or something and drink some. And then when they get caught they'll talk about some: oh, I'ma pay for it! I say: where's the money at? They: can I come back in and pay for it? Nah you can't! You got caught stealing, now you can't come back in here!

How many people have you kicked out?

Terry: I've kicked out a few people, a lot of people. I try to talk to them though. Let them know, you don't need to come in here and steal, these people have got good hearts. If you ask for stuff, they'll probably give it to them. Instead of you coming in here stealing. We keep good vibes up in here.

That's good, I like this store a lot.

Terry: It's all about good vibes, no arguing,

no stealing. That's all, you know?

Do you know all the people that come here a lot? Do you know them by name?

I don't know all of them, but most of them I know by face.

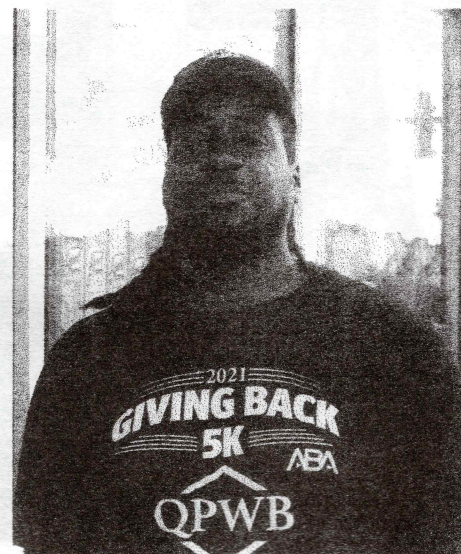
Do you have a crush on any of them?

Terry: Huh?

Do you have a crush on any of them?

Terry: Nah, they've got their mans, you know. I just speak to them and say hi and bye. And do my job.

Alright, thank you. ★



"I love Chicago!"

Why do you love Chicago?

"I don't know, I've pondered, I've contemplated moving a couple of times, and..."

I guess when you're familiar with something you can be more comfortable with it, because I've lived here my whole life, so... I don't know. I guess that's it." ★

Alright so, here we are in Noah Foods. And we are doing our first interview for Tenants Talk today. So would you like to introduce yourself by a name or a nickname?

Pooh: My name is Pooh.

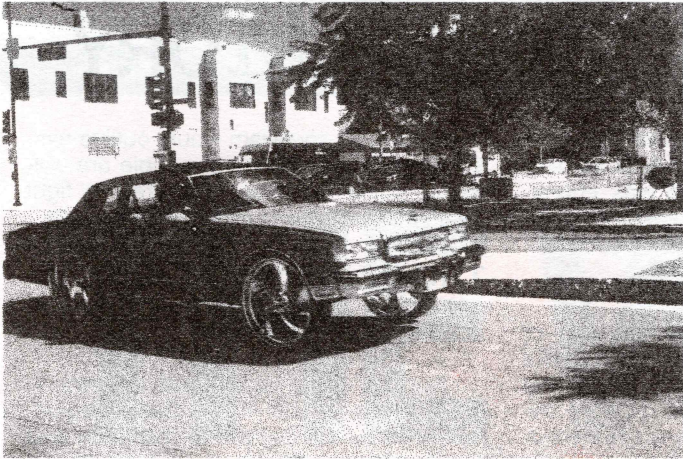
Alright Pooh, thank you for speaking with us. So, how long have you been in Chicago?

Pooh: 32 years. All my life.

And have you noticed any big changes around the city lately?

Pooh: Well in recent years there's been an increase in violence. Taxes. Everything goes up.

★ NEWS FROM THE TENANT POINT OF VIEW ★



There's no more togetherness

Let's talk about togetherness and let's talk about rent. Have you noticed the rent rising?

Pooh: Rent is higher than a motherf****g rocket. For no reason. Like they think they can go to Home Depot and get some lil bulls**t boards and now everything is \$1700. Like nah.

And it's totally unacceptable right?

Pooh: Totally unacceptable. Like people have lives and livelihoods, how do they think people are supposed to afford that?

We completely agree and we think one of the ways to counter this is togetherness between tenants. Between the people that live in the apartments. What do you think have been some of the factors that have led to togetherness declining?

Pooh: Lack of knowledge. Lack of empathy, lack of sympathy. Too much greed. Lack of God. You know, it's just everyone for themselves, nobody is family anymore. Even on the block. There used to be a time when I knew everybody on the block - from the oldest people to the youngest. Now you don't even see people speak to their elders. And that's really sad.

What do you think changed?

Pooh: I think as - some of the leaders, you know, the gang leaders in the neighborhood - when the gang leaders got locked up, everything went into disarray. I think that's strategic from the government of course. You take the leaders, the whole head will fall.

Counterintelligence Program.

Pooh: You know that

Also drugs. And then there's been a total shift in the youth's mindset. In my time everything was off respect - we had to answer to somebody. Now it's just renegade. No respect, everyone thinks they can do what they want to do, nobody answers to anyone, no guidance, no leadership,

no nothing. So when you put it in perspective it's like we're playing right into their hands. Then fathers are a big part too - lack of fathers. Or role models in the schools or the neighborhood in general.

What do you think we should do to reach the youth?

Pooh: To reach the youth?! Mannnnn. They need to make me the president. I got a solution for everything! If ya ass

get caught shooting you get 30 years. If you kill someone, life.

Harsher punishment.

Pooh: Kids can't even play outside any more. You can't even go to the park without somebody shooting ya shit up. That's sad bro. I was outside. In my age, I was outside. Now you got a 13 year old with a gun under his goddamn bed. I'm scared of them! I ain't gone lie to you I'm scared of em. I don't say nothing to em. I'm serious. And it's just for the image. And it came from my generation. Once the war kicked off in Chicago with the rappers and shit - I ain't gone say no names - but once that kicked off, that became what the young ones' focus. That's what they see. They want to get rich and they want to slide. And rap. That's it. Don't get me wrong, your supposed to want to take care of your family. Of course. But the way they're going about it is not good. And it's been going on since like 2010, 2012. I remember when it first happened, I was in high school when the war first kicked off. That's when it really got worse in the city.

We really appreciate this perspective. One of the things we try to do is form unions. A union just being: a group of people who live in the same apartment, deal with the same problems, under the same landlord that's raising the rent, and who form an organization to put forward demands to actually change the conditions. We have a few unions that have gone on rent strike, meaning they stopped paying rent until conditions improve. And this is a way we see we can cultivate leaders.

Pooh: Of course, you always want to hit them where it hurts, hit them in the pocket. See one thing the government loves is their money. And I know that for a fact. You take away the status quo, then you're gonna have a problem. So yeah you always hit them in the pockets. And like you said, if we stand together they can't beat us. You feel what I'm saying? But not everybody thinks like that, you got a bunch of dumbass people in

the world. So yeah.

Thank you so much Pooh, and to close out the interview, want to give us some thoughts on Chairman Fred Hampton?

Pooh: Ah Fred Hampton? Yeah that's my boy. He was for the people. Lived for the people, died for the people. And he was aware. Like when you know, and the government knows you know, they gone take your ass out. That's just what it is.

[Background] Are you a veteran?

Pooh: I was in the Army. I didn't get deployed. But I was stationed in Fort Benning, Georgia.

Anything you would like to reflect on about that experience?

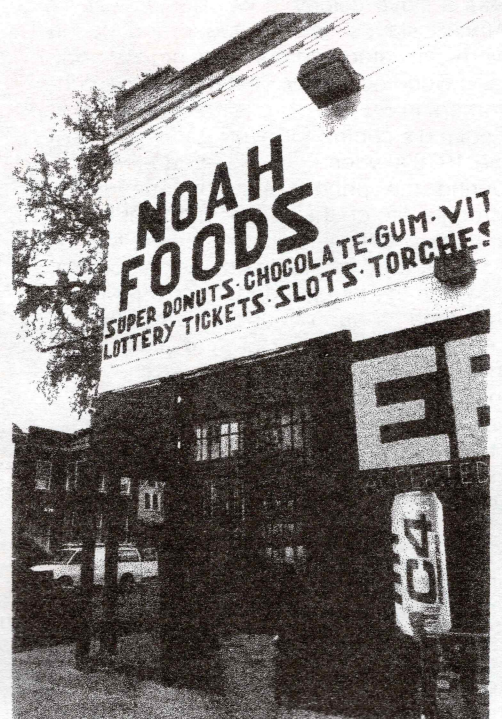
Pooh: The Army is a bunch of bulls**t. A bunch of hurry up and wait. You'll talk to people who really went on those covert operations, and they'll tell you, we were in there doing shit for nothing. We killed all those people for nothing.

Wail Street.

Pooh: Yup, all because they said so. And that be what it comes down to - once you get an order you just go. And this is from my Sergeants and Drill Sergeants I talked to personally. Even other people who are out of the army - veterans. So like, I know what it is in the world, it's just that the people in the world don't care. They don't care or they're too afraid to speak on it. But I don't give a f**k about em.

Good! Well thank you Pooh.

Pooh: No problem. ★



★ NEWS FROM THE TENANT POINT OF VIEW ★

OCTOBER IN REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY

HONORING PAST REVOLUTIONARIES

This month we are featuring three revolutionaries who accomplished great things for their people: Maurice Bishop (left), Che Guevara (center), and Thomas Sankara (right) were all leaders of revolutionary movements who were killed or assassinated in the month of October. This month we remember their lives and recommit to carrying on the causes they believed in. Although these upright men were killed, the spirit of the revolution lives on.

MAURICE BISHOP

"ONWARD TO VICTORY! ONWARD TO THE NEW SOCIETY! PEOPLE OF GRENADA, YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT YOUR CONTINUED EXPLOITATION. YOU HAVE YOUR DESTINY TO FULFILL! EVER ONWARD TO VICTORY!" - The Manifesto of the JEWEL movement

October 19th marks 42 years since the execution of Maurice Bishop, the second prime minister of a small Caribbean island called Grenada.

Historically, Grenada was colonized by Spain, held and controlled by the French and then given to England, all before 1763. During the entire period that it was traded between European states, it was a slave colony, a key destination for African slaves, where sugar and cocoa were cultivated and pumped into the capitalist world economy, destined for the consumers in Europe. The island remained in England's control for over 200 years, until the 1970's when it won its independence. During the period of its independence struggle, life on the island was tumultuous and the country's politics reflected this.

Different sections of society sought power in the independence movement. At this time, Bishop founded the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary organization called the New JEWEL Movement and they represented the popular classes. But they did not win power right away, the first six years of Grenadian independence was spent under the dictatorship of Eric Gairy and his secret police called the Mongoose Gang.

It wasn't until 1979, when the NJM overthrew the government, took power and established the People's Revolutionary Government that the people of Grenada found an independence movement which stood for their interests and not the interests of the profiteers outside of their country. Maurice Bishop was at the forefront of this popular movement until he

was tragically killed in a power struggle within the movement. In the days leading up to his assassination, he was imprisoned and drew massive protests from his supporters calling for him to be freed.

CHE GUEVARA

"As I have already said, in moments of great peril it is easy to muster a powerful response with moral incentives. Retaining their effectiveness, however, requires the development of a consciousness in which there is a new scale of values. Society as a whole must be converted into a gigantic school."

Che Guevara devoted his life to the people. Although he was born to an upper middle class family in Argentina, he found himself questioning his comfortable lifestyle after making a motorcycle trip across South and Central America. Che Guevara saw the struggle that poor and working class people faced as colonizers and compradors exploited the people and countries of the south. He committed himself to changing the injustice he saw.

Che Guevara was a central figure in the Cuban revolution, a revolution to overthrow the corrupt Batista dictatorship. Although Cuba was not his homeland he committed himself fully to the struggle, taking on extreme risk and facing down danger each day. After the victory of the Cuban revolution Che served for some time in the government before supporting other revolutions around the world.

Che's love for the people of the world was not limited to South and Central America. Che traveled to Africa to support revolutionaries in the Congo as they struggled for liberation after the overthrow of Patrice Lumumba. Although Che was ultimately driven from the Congo by right wing forces in collaboration with the CIA, his legacy of selfless devotion to liberation was proven many times over.

Che knew that his dedication would someday come at the cost of his life. Nevertheless he sided with the people of the world even against overwhelming odds. After he returned from the Congo, Che traveled to Bolivia to assist the revolutionary movement there. Even when he was captured and beaten by officers of the right wing Bolivian regime he remained upright and kept his composure. His final words before he was executed are said to have been, *"I know you've come to kill me. Shoot, coward, you are only going to kill a man."* Che was killed on October 9th, 1967. Che Guevara knew even in his last moments that the great desire for human

liberation and socialism would outlive him. It lives on today wherever people are willing to stand together, organized to fight against injustice and exploitation.

THOMAS SANKARA

"When the people stand up, imperialism trembles!"

Burkina Faso is a small country in West Africa. It sits in the Sahel region, bordered by the Sahara to the north and the Sudan savanna to the south. It's an area with rich political history, which continues to this day.

The area now known as Burkina Faso was colonized by the French in 1896 and gained legal independence in 1960 as the Republic of Upper Volta. It turned towards self-determination in 1983 following a coup led by Thomas Sankara, a young Marxist revolutionary who would be a pivotal leader. Sankara's coup came after a wave of popular revolutions in Africa. These included the struggles led by Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, Sékou Touré in Guinea, Amílcar Cabral in Guinea-Bissau, and Patrice Lumumba in the Congo. The common thread in each was an anti-colonial, pan-African socialism that sought to unite the continent and break free from the chains of colonialism, imperialism and capitalism.

Under Sankara's leadership, the country was renamed from the Republic of Upper Volta to Burkina Faso—a combination of Mossi and Dioula words meaning 'Land of the Upright Men' to emphasize the people's commitment to incorruptibility and justice. The people of Burkina Faso subsequently embarked on a revolutionary process that included a nationwide literacy program, a massive vaccination drive, land redistribution to peasant farmers, railway and road construction, great strides towards gender equality, and the planting of over a million trees. This process came to an abrupt halt in 1987 when Sankara was assassinated by his former comrade Blaise Compaoré, who some believe was assisted by the French.

Today, Sankara is a symbol of African liberation from the chains of colonialism and imperialism. The present day Burkina Faso is currently looking to Sankara to understand which direction to go. The world has changed since Sankara was in control, but his example of what makes an upright person is still as relevant as ever. ★

The Collector of Homes

CHAPTER 6: THE HOPELESS

The sun was low in the sky when the bus disappeared in the distance behind Freddy and Angie. They should have still had some hours of daylight, but the sun looked unusually distant. What little light made it to this place was weak, as if it were tired from its journey. Angie knew she was tired. The last couple of days had left her no time for quality rest. She had spent every minute of the bus ride worrying about what her and her brother were going to do. This place was their last hope, but looking at the flat grey expanse, she wondered if any hope at all existed out here.

"I don't like this place, Angie," Freddy said quietly. His voice was muffled by the vast openness.

"Kira said there are people here, people who have been wronged by the Collector of Homes. Maybe they'll know what to do," Angie answered Freddy but she didn't feel confident. In fact, she found herself sinking deeper into despair. It was a despair as grey as their surroundings, without either sadness or rage. She simply took Freddy's hand and they set off in a random direction.

Without any landmarks or distinguishing features, the siblings had no idea how long they had been walking or even whether they were headed in the correct direction at all. They wandered to the point of exhaustion, a point that most others in this place had arrived at, and only a select few had been able to push past. It was there that they found the hopeless.

Freddy and Angie hardly noticed the people at first because the people were sprawled and scattered across the ground, and like that dusty earth, they seemed to all be colored a bland shade of grey. Freddy bumped into one of the grey lumps accidentally and it stirred.

"What do you want?" the person croaked in an irritated voice.

"Oh, I'm sorry. We're here because the Collector of Homes took our mom and our home, and—" Freddy was interrupted.

"I don't care," the voice said weakly as the body it came from curled back up on the ground to sleep.

"Hey! We came all this way because we need some help dealing with the Collector!" Freddy shouted. A few of the other lumps stirred, shushed him, and then went back to sleep. The person in front of Freddy didn't seem to notice at all.

"Come on Freddy, this one won't help us,"

Angie said, sounding almost as tired as the person on the ground.

Freddy and Angie spent about an hour weaving through the hopeless grey sleepers, who could have filled a whole block's worth of apartment buildings, or more. It was a testament to how many people the Collector had displaced. The two children tried to talk to anyone who would wake up and listen, but most only seemed annoyed to be spoken to at all. Angie began to give up.

"I think we should sit down and rest for the night, Freddy," Angie said softly. When Freddy looked over at her she had already sat down in the gap between a few of the hopeless. She looked almost as grey as the ones next to her.

"No, Angie, there has to be someone who will help!" Freddy shouted.

"It's over, Freddy," I'm just going to rest here and we can catch... the bus... tomorrow..." Angie settled down and seemed to drift off to sleep. Freddy dashed over to her and tried to shake her awake, but it was no use.

"Angie! Angie! Come on, don't become one



of them!" Freddy cried.

"Leave me alone," Angie murmured. Freddy froze, tears falling from his eyes.

When realized he couldn't wake his sister, he thought about curling up next to her and falling asleep. Who knows what would happen then? How long would they be out here? Even though he was scared to end up like the people around him, sleep was awfully tempting. Freddy forced himself to remember why he was there. He thought about his home, his mother, his neighbors Mr. Barnes and Ms. Hart. If he gave up now, they would also stay trapped forever in the Collector's collection. Freddy stood up slowly and put one foot in front of the other, forcing himself to move on despite the tears in his eyes and the heaviness in his heart.

The prospects were no better than before. Freddy's perseverance didn't seem to change anything for the hopeless people around him. All he could do as he slowly lost hope was hum a tune that was stuck in his head, the song of the bus driver. Freddy couldn't even remember the words, but he hummed it all the same, to distract him from the bleakness of the landscape around him.

"I recognize that song," a tired voice said from the darkness. One of the grey lumps shifted and looked up at Freddy. Freddy stopped humming, startled. It was the first time one of the hopeless had spoken to him without being spoken to.

"No, no, keep going, it reminds me of a time long ago," the person said, continuing to hum where Freddy left off. The person's voice was growing more energetic. Freddy joined in on the tune cautiously. Freddy began to make out some of the color and features of the man as he lifted himself off of the ground. He was tall and had a dark moustache and short but unruly beard. He was dressed in a green linen shirt, not grey, although Freddy could have sworn it was grey a moment before. The man's eyes were as distant as everyone else's, but he blinked and rubbed them vigorously. When he raised his hands into a stretch his eyes had changed, suddenly sharp and aware. Freddy felt his hope returning.

"Can you help me, mister?" Freddy asked, "I came here with my sister to find people to help us rescue our mom from the Collector of Homes."

The man smiled and clapped once, rubbing his hands together.

"You've already helped me more than I can express. To use the language of the enemy: I owe you one. But, I think we're bound together by more than a debt. I came out here for a similar reason. We have a shared adversary, and I'm sure that together we can rally some more people to stand with us. Thank you for waking me, by the way. My name is Archie G," the man extended a large hand to Freddy.

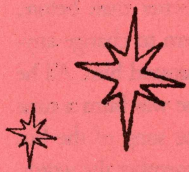
"I'm Freddy," Freddy said, trying to shake Archie's hand with confidence.

"Nice to meet you, comrade Freddy. Now, let's get these people up and moving!"

**WANT TO READ THE REST
OF THE STORY? SCAN HERE:**



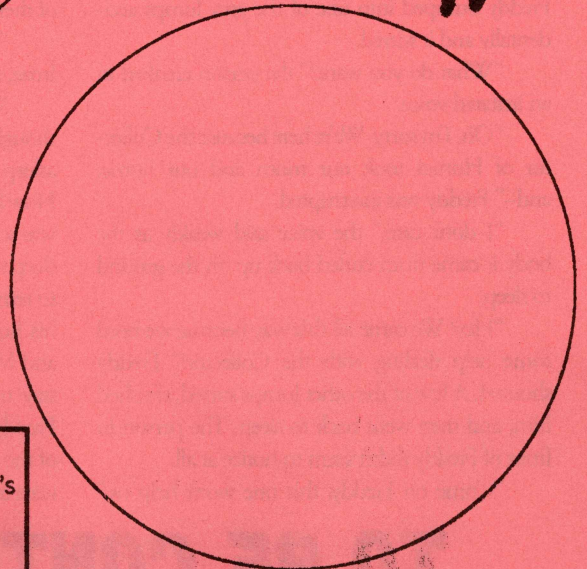
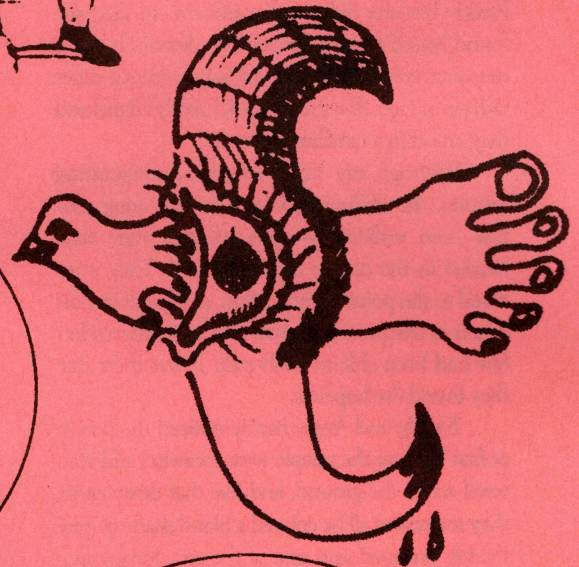
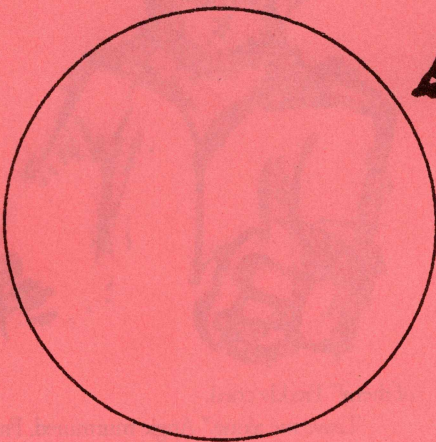
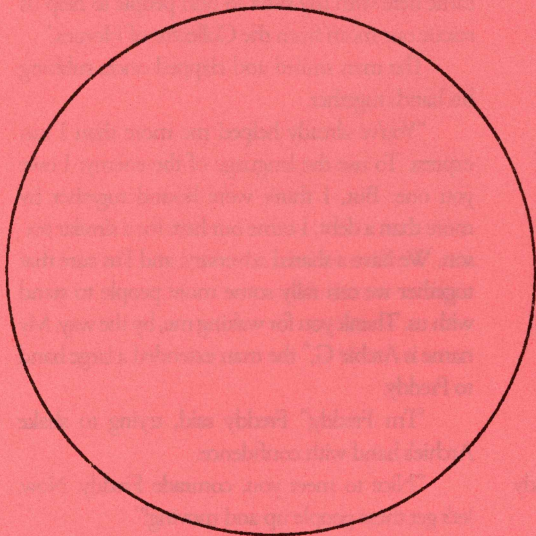
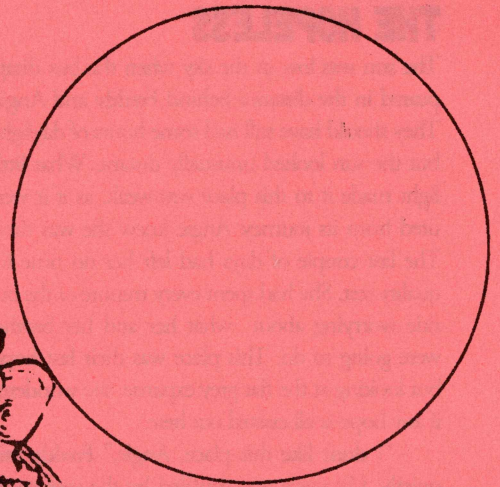
TO BE CONTINUED...



Turn the World Upside Down

On a spring day in the year of 1649, about 20 people assembled on a hill in the English countryside and began to farm the common land to grow food. Their activities alarmed the government and roused the hostility of local landowners, who had hoped to use the land to make money instead. You see the Diggers did not believe that individual people should own land and use it for profit, but rather that the earth should be made available for the poor to cultivate and use as they need. These brave people were harassed with legal actions and violence, and by the end of March 1650 their colony was dispersed. The Diggers wrote a song about the world they wished to see, a world where land would be used for the common good of all people. It was called *'The World Turned Upside Down.'*

Did you know? Common ownership of land might seem like a radical idea today, but over the course of history, many societies have organized themselves this way. What would the Diggers think of the person who owns your apartment?



Imagine a world turned upside down with us. Pair one word from box #1 with one word from box #2 found below. Using the circles above as blank spaces, draw the thing from box #1 inside the thing from box #2, in a strange new world.



#1

United States, Malcolm X,
the rainforest, Donald
Trump, your school,
Palestine

#2

a balloon, a shoe, a tiger's
stomach, the sun, a
diamond