

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 13

June 2025

Chicago, Ill.

chicagotenants.com



RENT STRIKES ROLL ACROSS CHICAGO

READ
INSIDE!

★ NEWS FROM THE TENANT POINT OF VIEW ★



EYES ON THE LAND LORD

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?

SLUMLORD SPOTTED!

On May 31, a group of tenants and ACTA members hosted a cookout in the courtyard of one of Duane Ehresman's buildings on West Arthington Street. The aim of hosting the cookout was to bring new tenants into the fight against slumlord Duane Ehresman. Ehresman owns many buildings in Chicago's Austin and North Lawndale neighborhoods, letting his units fall apart and leaving tenants waiting for their concerns to be addressed. A group of tenants in North Lawndale have been meeting and discussing demands to fight back against Ehresman.

The group fired up the grill and ACTA members and tenants enjoyed hot dogs and chatted in the courtyard as people passed

through. Shortly after the cookout began, an unexpected guest arrived -- Duane Ehresman himself. In an aggressive and confrontational manner, Ehresman addressed his tenants and the ACTA members present, saying, 'I've heard you've been calling me a slumlord.' He was clearly upset that his name had been smeared in Tenants Talk.

'When tenants report it, we take care of it,' Ehresman followed up -- a blatant lie. In response to this, one ACTA member recounted an experience that many struggling Ehresman tenants have faced: receiving an eviction only five days after rent was due. Despite what he'd like you to think, Ehresman has no sympathy for his tenants. 'That's your story' Ehresman said. No Duane, this is just one of many tenant stories, and one you have chosen to ignore. Is this what taking care of your tenants looks like?

A tenant in a building further down Independence Boulevard then asked Ehresman about the status of her basement laundry room, which is still covered in sawdust and overflowing trash cans after a maintenance project. It's been over two weeks since the tenant raised this issue to Ehresman. 'Nothing's getting done around here, really,' she concluded, to which Ehresman shook his head and walked away. Confronted by just two examples of tenants who hadn't been taken care of, as he put it, Ehresman had had enough.

After Ehresman left, more tenants arrived and chatted. Tenants shared their experiences living in Ehresman's buildings, and more instances of big

and small maintenance requests that have repeatedly been ignored. In the coming weeks, they plan to officially establish an Ehresman tenant union and deliver Ehresman a demand letter.

Duane tenants are fed up, and they're fighting back. Are you a Duane Ehresman tenant? Are you having issues in your apartment? Join the tenant union by contacting ACTA at (773) 770-5650. ★



★ NEWS FROM THE TENANT POINT OF VIEW ★



REPRESENTATIVES RALLY AROUND LANDLORDS

A common point echoed in the media whenever there is a threat to even a tiny percentage of a landlord's profits is to "think about the mom and pop landlords". The frequency with which these mom and pop landlords are trotted out for the press would make you think most apartment buildings are owned by small families struggling to get by. It is often forgotten that these struggling landlords who can't even afford the slightest mandatory repairs have tenants living in their buildings actually dealing with the mess they've created. The tenants renting these apartments should know better than anyone else that "mom and pop landlords" aren't worth protecting.

For tenants, there is no such thing as a "good landlord." All landlords, no matter how big or small, are united by one thing: profiting off of tenants like you. That's the

definition of a landlord, plain and simple. They might hide it behind professionalism or generosity, but they aren't stupid. When the money gets tight, who are they going to screw first? Not

themselves of course. For all landlords, tenants are their cushion when times get hard, and their spending money when times are good. The money you work hard for is going into their pockets.

When it comes to politics, tenants should have power. We make up more than

half the city, after all, and landlords are a minority. So why do anti-tenant laws seem to pass with no difficulty? The reason is that landlords take advantage of the disorganization of the tenants and appeal to the interests of another large group, the homeowners. Recently, Illinois legislators passed a bill which has been called a "crackdown on squatting" after a media blitz publicizing cases of "homeowners" who had "squatters" break into "their" homes and live there. The story is always the same, a "property owner" discovers people living in their home and gets upset when police don't immediately throw the residents onto the street.

The "Squatter Bill," as it has been titled by every major news outlet, will prevent legislators from putting anything in the Code of Civil Procedure that prohibits or interferes with the cops abilities to boot "trespassers" and their belongings from a property. So what makes a "trespasser?" In short, people who live in unused, empty buildings. In the most extreme and highly uncommon circumstances, this means people who break into houses and stay there. The news is littered with false claims that this is a common occurrence. More often, this means tenants who have overstayed their lease, even by a day. The bill emboldens police to kick people like you and me who desperately need housing to the curb with impunity. This bill claims to deal with the "problem of squatters," but does not ask the real question: why are there squatters in the first place?

Of course the stories rarely mention the other side, that the supposed "squatters" claim they are legal tenants of the apartments. The lengthy eviction process is designed to protect tenants from power crazed landlords looking to empty out their apartments with a moment's notice. The new bill makes it clear that when it comes to word against word, tenant against landlord, landlords win out.

The driving force behind this bill came from various realtor's associations in Chicago and Illinois. The same groups who have fought for landlord power and against tenant first laws for decades. These lobbyists, often landlords themselves and funded primarily by landlords, pump money

into the media to manufacture and amplify stories of squatters. But the problem is obviously not widespread enough to justify so much money and effort. Millions of dollars don't change hands to protect a few scattered homeowners. The real target? Tenants

like you.

The eviction process isn't meant to protect squatters. It's meant to protect tenants. Landlords saw an easy way to rally support behind a bill that weakens tenant protections and they were successful. Even supposedly progressive reps, most notably, senator Graciela Guzmán who sponsored the bill. Guzmán has voiced her support for tenants being pushed out of their homes, but actions speak louder than words. Whether she's secretly in the pocket of landlords or she's just that oblivious, Guzmán has struck a blow against tenants.

The lesson tenants should take from these types of bills is that we cannot trust the law to protect us. We cannot trust our representatives to protect us. Tenants must come together and fight, not only for the right to our homes today, but the right of our children and our children's children to their homes in the future. The only way to secure this right is to decisively defeat the class which seeks to erode tenant rights. Landlords cannot exist without profiting off of tenants, and every right tenants have cuts into the landlord profits. This is why they fight against tenant protections, often spending millions of dollars to weaken the slightest tenant protections.

It is time for tenants to cut off that stream of money and take control of their homes and lives. Our hard work will not remain a cushion or "spending money" for landlords. But as tenants rise to the challenge and the stream of rent is cut off, we will face resistance from all landlords—that includes the so-called "good" landlords. It is true now that a victory for any landlord is a defeat for tenants, but the opposite is just as true, and every victory achieved by the tenants in the

All-Chicago Tenant Alliance will signal the coming defeat of the landlords. ★



★ NEWS FROM THE TENANT POINT OF VIEW ★

RENT STRIKE update

Four months have passed since the beginning of The Belden Sawyer Tenant Association's (BSTA) rent strike began, and both the landlord Drew Millard, and the intrepid tenants remain at odds. Drew Millard has refused repeatedly to negotiate with the union, but he is bending. In addition to the units on strike from BSTA, the forces from up north have remained resolute. Tenants from Fuerzas Inquilinos de Broadway y Cuyler (FIBC), who are also being displaced by Drew Millard have now been on strike for three months. The total being held back from Drew Millard's pocket is pushing over \$100,000. Not including the money he has spent on legal fees and hiring PR assistants to fight the bad press.

This month, tenants from FIBC faced illegal lockouts when the management company hired by Drew Millard, 33 Realty, changed the locks to their buildings without ensuring the tenants had keys. Tenants in Chicago are supposedly protected from this sort of lock change, but while the law is harsh on tenants it is lax on landlords. Police on the scene filed a report, but decided not to push for any fines. Tenants were left propping the doors until the standoff ended and 33 Realty provided keys.

The tenants of FIBC fired back immediately. On the 20th FIBC filed a lawsuit against Drew Millard and 33 Realty for discrimination, retaliation and unacceptable conditions in the building. The lawsuit details some of the terrible intimidation which Drew Millard has inflicted on the tenants since the beginning of the rent strike. Of note are the sections in the lawsuit

detailing the effects of Millard and 33 Realty's actions on the children in the building. According to the lawsuit, multiple children in the building have shown "Symptoms of trauma". One tenant's "16 year old son fears coming home from school to find himself locked out of his home, causing him to lose sleep, experience headaches, and fall behind on his schoolwork." The 98 page lawsuit also mentions that another tenant's "8-year-old daughter has exhibited

increased stress levels and gets excessively nervous whenever she hears a knock at the door, fearing she is about to be removed from her home." Since the suit, the knocks at the door from agents of 33 Realty come almost daily, part of a tactic to intimidate tenants into "self-evicting" and leaving their homes.

While the lawsuit is another tool in the tenants' playbook, the tenants know the

importance of keeping the pressure up outside the courts. On the Saturday after the lawsuit, tenants, and supporters showed out in force at a press conference outside the building. FIBC leaders spoke in front of a crowd of over one hundred neighbors and tenants from around the city.

Behind the speakers, ACTA members held towering banners, big character posters painted with words on the rent strike. Supporters held masks shaped and painted like wolves, the symbol of FIBC's union. Postcards were distributed so people could write messages to Drew. The biggest surprise, however, emerged shortly before the speeches began. A giant puppet of the landlord Drew Millard himself scowled at the crowd from above, looking down at the gathering while grasping a single golden key, symbolic of the earlier lockouts.

The rally began between the two unionized buildings standing on opposite sides of a quiet stretch of Cuyler. On any other day, these buildings might not stand out to anyone passing by. There is not much by way of appearance revealing the

¡Las fuerzas arrik ¡El dueño ab



★ NEWS FROM THE TENANT POINT OF VIEW ★

buildings as two of the few remaining islands of the working class in the rapidly gentrifying Buena Park. Neither the ward politicians nor the parasitic real estate developers could have anticipated that the largely silent process of uprooting an entire community would culminate in such a bang. On the day of the rally, it was difficult not to see the chanting of the crowd and the impassioned speeches of the tenants as a final desperate resistance to the fate which has befallen the rest of the community in the last decades—a fate which even progressive aldermen and their staffers watched helplessly, washing their hands of all responsibility.

Because the neighborhood's population has been systematically replaced, many of the neighbors FIBC could have called on for support are already long gone. Still, these tenants will not be moved without a fight. After giving their speeches, FIBC, and ACTA announced that the protest would be moving to Park Ridge, where Drew Millard lives. Tenants and supporters packed up and set off to confront Millard at his house.

Millard's Park Ridge home could not be more different than the Broadway-Cuyler buildings. Its gaudy, colorless entrance is a depressing sight compared to the warm and welcoming Buena Park brick. Whereas the tenants' building was clearly meticulously designed, the Millard mini-mansion seems to have been assembled almost at random from an assortment of the cheapest materials. Everything is surface level. The tasteless front is betrayed by the sides which consist of sheer brick and a random smattering of windows. Looking at Millard's abomination of a home, you are struck with the infuriating absurdity of it all. This is what all the misery Drew inflicts is for? Entire families are being ripped from their communities and schools, displaced so that Millard can afford this tasteless suburban monstrosity?

The character of the neighborhood improved tenfold when tenants began to arrive carrying signs, chanting, and singing in protest. The puppet of Drew Millard turned its eyes on the real Millard's home, daring him to come out and confront the

angry tenants. Surprisingly Millard actually showed his face.

One of the demands against Millard is to negotiate with the union. Millard has repeatedly refused, trying to break the union apart into individual tenants who he knows he can intimidate. This is a classic union busting tactic, so tenants were ready when he said he would talk to one or two people in his home. "It has to be the union, Drew," responded David Amato from the Belden Sawyer Tenant Association, insisting on respect for the cross neighborhood solidarity built up over the previous months. Millard grew angry when it became clear that his cheap trick wouldn't work to break up the tenants. "There is no union!" he shouted at the crowd of unionized tenants. The roar of voices in response immediately proved him wrong, and he stormed back inside.

The protest continued with music, dancing, chants, and even a game of cornhole. Between chants, tenants and ACTA organizers would read the postcards from the first half of the rally, delivering all

the neighbors messages of anger and disgust. Unwilling to face the words of the people, the Millard family snuck out the back, loaded into their car, and drove away, with Drew himself laying low to avoid the shouts of protestors. Millard's daughter also charged out of the house, shouting at the working class tenants to "get a real job!" as she climbed into the white Jeep her father bought her with the rent he's extorted out of his tenants. It was a moment which revealed the extent of the fantasy world the Millards occupy. Many of the tenants work two to three jobs to afford the rent, money which pays for Millard's taxes and mortgage. They truly believe they are the victims, even as they throw mothers, fathers, children and grandparents out of their homes and onto the street.

Once the Millard family was gone, the tenants remained a little longer before packing up and departing. This isn't the end of the rent strike story and it won't be the last protest outside Drew Millard's house. Keep an eye on ACTA for more updates on the strike and how you can support these tenants. ★

¡Paja!

¡Pajo!



★ NEWS FROM THE TENANT POINT OF VIEW ★

I AM A REVOLUTIONARY

I am a revolutionary. But I have not always been a revolutionary. Before I began to seriously commit my life to transforming the world, that is, before I joined ACTA, I spent a lot of time searching for satisfying answers to questions I couldn't ignore. When I was young, I looked at the world and saw problems I could not understand. Why were some people poor? Why did some people hate others for seemingly no reason? Why did institutions like schools which claimed to exist to help people grow and learn seem so hostile to the children inside? We often forget that children's eyes are more sharpened to social problems than the eyes of adults. As we grow older, we gradually begin to accept what we could not comprehend as a child. In the eyes of children, the lives of adults look absurd. I remember wondering why adults had built a world that seemed to make them so unhappy and stressed all of the time. I resented being dragged into that madness.

Like everyone, I grew into the world. All of those questions about the world were still there, unanswered, but my focus turned to more mundane questions about grades, getting a summer job, and applying for college. My last year of high-school in my hometown of St. Louis coincided with the murder of Michael Brown only a few miles away in Ferguson. The aftermath eroded my childhood sense of confusion about how such tragedies could happen. I watched people around me, people from the local government, people that were well respected in my high-school community, even people in my family justify what had happened. I saw people more worried about the well-being of things than people. Rather than questioning the rationality of a society which could allow such things to happen I watched people twist their ideals into defenses of something fundamentally broken. How could people not see the factors which led to Michael Brown's death? Why were they so eager to defend the powerful, who clearly had no need of defending? Not even those people who saw the injustices seemed to truly believe things could get better.

As I grew into my adult life, these questions and those from my childhood began to haunt me more and more. At the same time, things seemed to be getting worse all around me. Still, I had to make money. I moved around from job to job while in school, sticking with each one until things felt unbearable and then moving on for a fresh start somewhere else. Everywhere I worked there were certain things in common: At the movie theater, managers worked my high-school colleagues into exhaustion. At Lowe's, when students quit their summer position to go back to school, the full-timers got the brunt of the

extra work. I was always told that capitalism is efficient, but everywhere I looked companies were cutting corners and overworking their employees. There's nothing rational about making workers miserable, because my miserable workers do miserable jobs. Nobody, workers or management alike, ever seemed to care about anything. Even the people in charge didn't seem bothered that their negligence was the source of so many problems.

I started looking to the past for answers to all of my questions. I thought that if I could learn about the history of the United States, I might find something which would make sense of the chaos. I discovered that not everyone was always satisfied with the way things are. I learned about people from the past who dedicated their lives to revolutionizing the world around them, for the good of all people. Today this type of revolutionary life, dedicated to the well being of humanity rather than narrow self interest seems strange, but in fact, our time

Transformation is hard,
especially if you are trying to
transform something as
large and complex as
society. There isn't a secret
trick that you can discover
and then use to change
everything. You have to start
with what is in front of you,
find the problems that are
keeping you from advancing,
and solve them.

and place here in America is the exception. Throughout the entire history of capitalism there has been a struggle of the people against the ruling class. The absence of a revolutionary movement today is a historical fluke. We have convinced ourselves that we do not need revolutionaries just as we have convinced ourselves that those childhood questions are not worth answering.

When the COVID-19 lockdown started I had time to read and study. This time I was not simply interested in understanding the world. I wanted to know how to change it. I got involved with the tenant union which would later become the All-Chicago Tenant Alliance. I hoped that this organization would allow me to change the world, to make it a better place for tenants. It was a school of hard knocks. We began by organizing tenants against our own landlord, the diabolical Mark Fishman. Fishman has become a well known name in Logan Square, the neighborhood which in a certain sense, he owns. Tenants have been fighting this guy for years, the alderman had a long running rivalry with him, he was even labelled "class enemy of the week" by a midwestern magazine at one point for his

constant opposition to affordable housing for the few remaining workers in his neighborhood. Mark Fishman did just about whatever he wanted, and that was because he had so much money. Looking back, we probably didn't pick the easiest fight.

Still, we went up against him with determination. Even the big fish's money doesn't appear out of thin air. His money was our rent! We knew that if we could convince all the other tenants to stop paying, Mark Fishman would have to listen. He would have to fix up the deteriorating apartments and stop the constant rent hikes. This strategy is called a rent strike, and we saw from the past that it could really work. Tenants round the world have been fighting for dignity by using the only leverage they have (rent!) for centuries.

Even though the weapon was worked out in theory, in practice it isn't as easy as turning off a faucet. We had to start talking to other Fishman tenants, coordinating them, and getting them to come out to meetings. This was easier said than done. Time and time again we met people who were angry at Fishman; their apartments had cockroaches and they were paying way too much in rent, and yet they still refused to stand up for themselves. We learned that many tenants prefer to run away from problems rather than fix them.

We also learned that many tenants are scared. Landlords are more powerful than we give them credit for. All across the city, tenants are dealing with problems, ranging from small inconveniences to utterly inhuman conditions. The common denominator is a landlord who lets things fall apart and knows tenants can't do anything about it. Today I think about this a lot. We like to think we have a lot of freedom in life, but us tenants are actually very limited. People are afraid to speak up against their landlord in any way because they know that landlords have the power. I became a revolutionary because I think it's time for that to change. It's time for tenants to stop being afraid of landlords throwing them out and take their homes into their own hands.

The problems we ran into in our fight against Fishman taught us a lot of hard lessons. It was discouraging at first as Fishman quietly pushed out union members. Even the strategies which should have been legal resulted in defeats. Fishman refused to renew one member's lease while they were in the middle of a legal battle against him for retaliation. Soon after, Fishman cranked up the rent in my apartment until I couldn't afford it and then refused to let me move to a cheaper building. Many people have asked me why I would want to stay if Fishman was really so bad. I wanted to stay because of the struggle. I didn't want to leave the other tenants behind, and flee from the battle the union started. Unfortunately Fishman had the upper hand.

Once I was out of my old apartment, I

★ NEWS FROM THE TENANT POINT OF VIEW ★

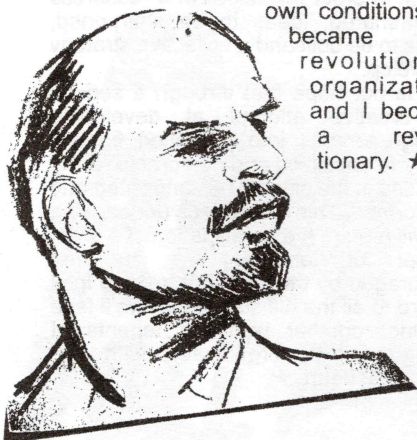
looked back on all of our plans. In theory everything could have worked—but the real world doesn't work according to theory. We needed something better than a theory. We needed a method to change the world, a method of knowing what was possible at any given moment. It was at this point that I deepened my study of past revolutionaries and began to read the writings of Lenin.

Lenin was one of history's greatest revolutionaries. He knew how he could contribute to changing the world, and he did it. But Lenin wasn't an idealist. He didn't sit around imagining a perfect world before trying to build it. Lenin was extremely practical. In my studies of Lenin I began to understand the way forward.

Transformation is hard, especially if you are trying to transform something as large and complex as society. There isn't a secret trick that you can discover and then use to change everything. You have to start with what is in front of you, find the problems that are keeping you from advancing, and solve them. When you solve these problems you might discover new problems. The method of changing the world requires you to identify which problems you can solve, and which of those problems lead you closer to your ultimate goal. It takes determination to take this method seriously, but this is what it means to be a revolutionary.

The All-Chicago Tenant Alliance was born when we were pushed out of our Fishman apartments. It is made up of the people who didn't want to stop fighting for a better world. When we turned away from Mark Fishman we saw an entire city full of landlords, all exploiting their tenants for personal gain. To our organization this isn't just how things are, it is a problem to be solved. If we aren't up to the task, we have to make our organization stronger. This brings me to the last thing it takes to be a revolutionary—an organization. You cannot do anything alone. When ACTA took on the challenge of changing

more than just our own conditions we became a revolutionary organization, and I became a revolutionary. ★



I love my home, I do, I do,

But I would love it more,

If all the windows opened up

And I could lock the door.

I don't want to complain too much,

But it would be real nice

If I didn't have to share my room

With all the rats and mice.

I love my home, I do, I do

I do not want to move

I'd like to make it really nice,

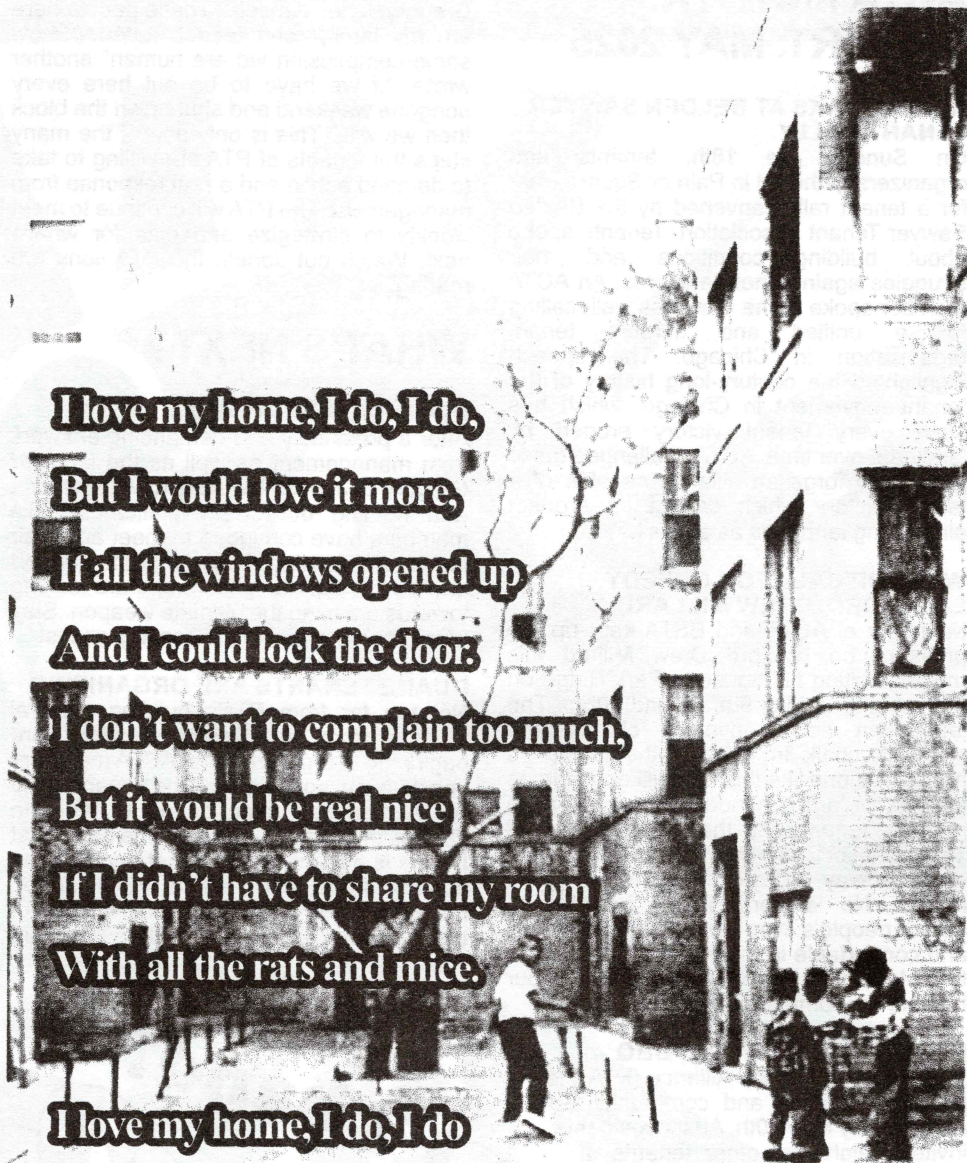
If the landlord would approve.

I wish the millions spent on rent

Would go towards all the blight,

Instead of into landlord hands,

That's why I joined the fight!



★ NEWS FROM THE TENANT POINT OF VIEW ★

ACTA MONTHLY REPORT: MAY 2025

ACTA SPEAKS AT BELDEN SAWYER TENANT RALLY

On Sunday the 18th, tenants and organizers gathered in Palmer Square Park for a tenant rally convened by the Belden Sawyer Tenant Association. Tenants spoke about building conditions and their struggles against their landlords. An ACTA member spoke to the crowd as well, calling for a unified and durable tenant organization in Chicago. The speech highlighted the century-long history of the tenant movement in Chicago, which has seen every tenant victory eroded by landlords over time. ACTA challenged those present to forge an alliance capable of a tenant victory which cannot be eroded: eliminating landlords as a class.

WAKE UP CALL FOR GREEDY LANDLORD, DREW MILLARD

Members of ACTA and BSTA kept up the pressure on landlord Drew Millard this month, visiting his house in Park Ridge on the evening of May 9th, around 10pm. The late night action involved chants and sidewalk chalk in front of the landlord's house. Actions like this one will continue as long as Millard continues his campaign to remove tenants of the Belden Sawyer Tenant Association and Fuerzas Inquilinos de Broadway y Cuyler from their longtime homes. No landlord should be able to uproot people's lives while living peacefully and comfortably in theirs. ACTA's message to all landlords is simple: You come to our homes, we come to yours.

PTA PRESS RALLY AND BBQ

The Parkside Terrace Alliance (PTA) held a press conference and community BBQ on Saturday May 10th. Austin residents invited neighbors, other tenants of slumlord Gregory B Jones, and the news along for this event. The PTA wants the rest of Chicago to know the conditions that they are suffering under, and that they are not giving up the fight anytime soon. The tenants demand answers from East Lake Management and Gregory B Jones as to who they're paying rent to, and why they are continuously being lied to when they get any response at all. After speeches from members of ACTA and two tenants of the building- Ms Hattie and Ms Williams, the reporters were given a tour of 143 N Parkside to see the extent of the negligence while the others listened to music, grilled and enjoyed hot dogs, and talked with each other. Many tenants

wrote postcards to be sent to slumlord Gregory Jones himself. "These people here are my family" one tenant stated. "Show some compassion we are human" another wrote. "If we have to be out here every doggone weekend and shut down the block then we will." This is only one of the many steps the tenants of PTA are willing to take to demand action and a real response from management. The PTA will continue to meet weekly to strategize and plan for what's next. Watch out Jones, the PTA lions are roaring.

WHAT'S NEXT?

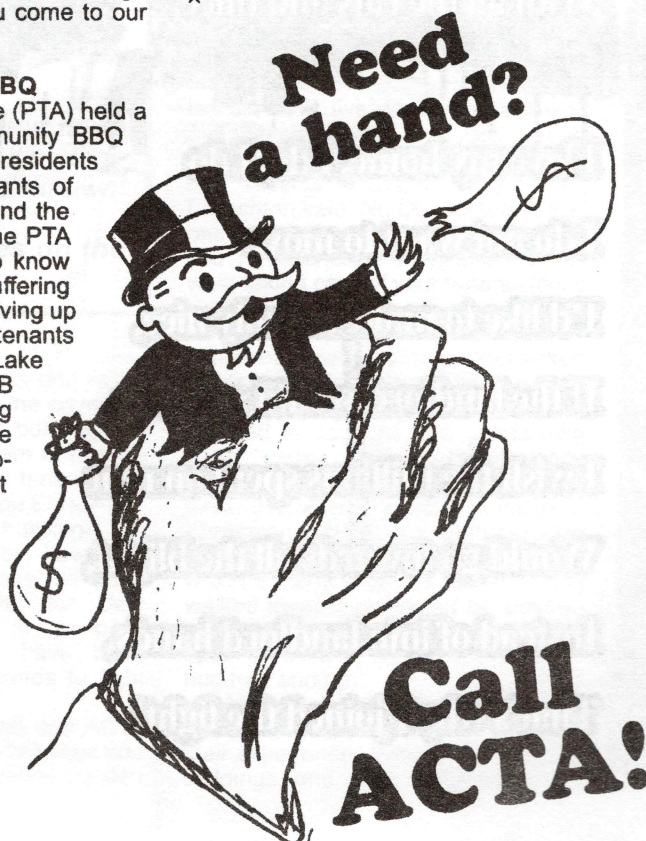
PTA MOVES FORWARD

After a press rally and demanding answers from management as well as the landlord Gregory B. Jones, the Lions have been met with nothing but empty platitudes. PTA members have continued to meet and their forces are growing. They have the support and love of their neighbors and are looking towards grasping the ultimate weapon. Stay tuned for more info in the coming weeks!

DUANE TENANTS ARE ORGANIZING

Not too far from PTA's building, several tenants from a different slumlord are beginning to organize. After ACTA members knocked on some doors the tenants and ACTA members soon began to meet to discuss their issues. Number one being that Duane is a huge slumlord that neglects the tenants! ACTA and tenants will keep on meeting and working to organize the rest of the neighbors. Duane you better watch out!

★



ALIANZA DE INQUILINOS DE TODO CHICAGO



ALL-CHICAGO TENANT ALLIANCE

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. ★

TENANTS
TALK
KIDS PAGE!

The Collector of Homes

—Chapter 2: Euclid Ave.—

Angie and Freddy read the paper slowly at first, feeling an ominous feeling creep over them. Freddy shivered as he whispered the signature aloud, "The Collector of Homes".

Angie wiped her eyes and then looked up at where the brick apartment building they called home should have been. She wanted to believe this was all a dream, and that she would wake up to her morning alarm any second now. It wasn't a dream.

"We'll have to go and get our house back from this guy. I know where Euclid avenue is. We can take the bus," Angie said, trying to sound brave for Freddy. She definitely didn't feel brave. Freddy sniffled but then nodded and the two turned around to head for the main street.

Both the children watched through the window of the bus as they left their neighborhood behind. They passed old brick buildings and unmowed lots, then apartment buildings like theirs but with fancy gates and brand new windows. After that they passed beneath towering gray buildings covered in windows. These buildings seemed to watch threateningly as the bus drove by, wondering what two kids were doing so far from home. Finally the bus turned a corner and the concrete gave way to green. Perfect lawns and winding driveways led to houses that looked more like castles than anything Angie had seen in her own neighborhood. It was hard to believe that near Euclid street, one person could have as much space as forty people back on Maypole.

"Euclid Avenue! This is our stop!" Angie exclaimed as the bus began to slow. Freddy grabbed his backpack and both dashed for the door.

"You kids be careful out there all alone!" the driver called after them as they hopped onto the sidewalk. Neither of the siblings heard her though, because they were already on their way down Euclid Avenue.

Freddy and Angie only made it a block before a stern voice stopped them in their tracks.

"Stop! What are you kids doing here?"

Angie and Freddy turned to see a policeman looking down at them. His arms were crossed and his eyes narrowed in suspicion.

"We're coming out to meet someone. Someone who took our home," Freddy said quickly. He thought that surely the officer would understand. If the policeman heard what happened surely he would step in and help them get their home back.

"Not to make trouble, I hope. I'm out here because there have been reports of a kid around your age causing a disturbance in the neighborhood," the officer pointed to Angie.

"It's not me, officer. I promise, we just got off the bus. We're here to meet with the Collector of Homes." Angie said, trying to keep a respectful tone like she had been taught. On hearing Angie mention Collector of Homes the officer smirked.

"Another one, huh? I'd turn back now, kids. You're out of luck," the officer said with a menacing smile.

"But he has our home! Aren't you going to help us get it back?" Freddy shouted, losing his calm and tearing up for the second time of the day.

"It's his now. That's how it works. If he pays for it, he gets to have it. There's nothing I can do about it," the cop said, shrugging nonchalantly.

"But we live there!" Freddy argued.

"Come on Freddy. He's not on our side," Angie said, turning and pulling Freddy by the hand.

"Don't cause any trouble now," the policeman called after the children, "and if you see the kid I'm after, don't even think about helping her!"

The children continued down Euclid Avenue, each house they passed bigger and fancier than the last. When they reached 33 Euclid their jaws dropped. It was less of a house and more of a manor, built of silvery-gray stone. The yard, all grass colored a neon shade of green, was enclosed with a spiked iron fence, painted all black. At the side of the house Angie half expected to see a horse drawn carriage, but instead there was a sleek white car. The front entrance was flanked on either side by massive limestone pillars. A glimmering golden 33 on the door itself told the children they had the right place.

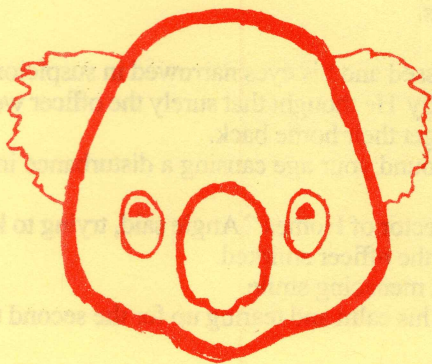
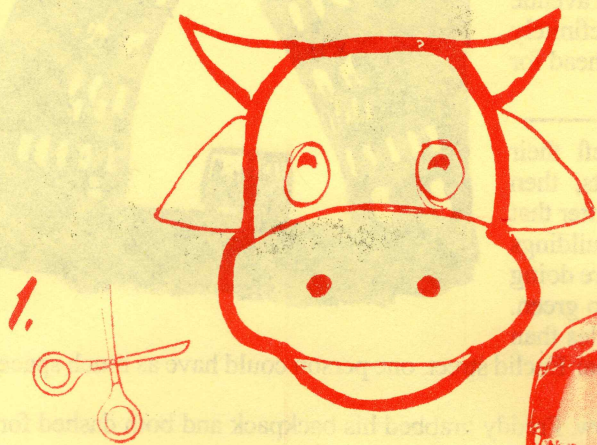
Freddy and Angie looked incredibly small standing in front of the massive house. They looked at each other one last time for courage and then prepared to confront the person who took their mother, their neighbors, and their home.

To be continued...

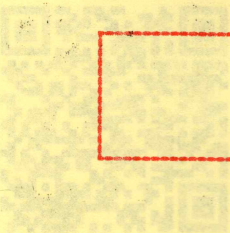
To read the first chapter of the story, scan this QR code!



FINGER PUPPETS



MAKE YOUR OWN STORIES!



To read the first chapter of the story scan the QR code