



# Tenant Solidarity

News and Information from the Tenants Union of Washington

September 2014



*Jett Terrell and Eliana Horn embrace at the Anti-Displacement March in Ballard*

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## You're Invited

### Annual Meeting

**Saturday, October 18 10am-5pm**

**Emerald City Bible Fellowship**

**7728 Rainier Ave S, Seattle, 98118**

### Keynote Speaker:

**James Tracy**

Author of "Dispatches of Displacement: Field Notes From San Francisco's Housing Wars"

### Workshops and other offerings include:

- Panel: Occupy Gentrification
- Know Your Rights: Mold and Repairs
- Organizing Your Own Building: Facilitation

For more details, or to RSVP contact Elaine at (206) 722-6848 x103 [elainea@tenantsunion.org](mailto:elainea@tenantsunion.org)



*TU Board and staff pose for a quick group picture, at an all-day retreat in the Plymouth Housing Building downtown.*

# Director's Corner

Sometimes you pick a fight, and other times the fight picks you. Recently, the Seattle Housing Authority picked a fight with its entire work-able tenants living in SHA housing. While low income tenants across Seattle are targeted by developers, the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) announced its ill-conceived "Stepping Forward" rent increase proposal, an attack on their fundamental right to affordable housing. For SHA to propose a 500% rent increase on Seattle's most low income working families is not only unconscionable, it almost defies belief. Tenants are fighting back: organizing with the TU, 300 SHA tenants flooded the housing authority's public meeting, rallying outside to save their homes.

2014 is proving to be a busy year for the Tenants Union. Not only are we taking on our state's largest housing authority, we are taking on some of the greediest developers. Our twin campaigns against Goodman Real Estate at the Lockhaven and Theodora Apartments have put all developers on notice that tenants can and will fight back against displacement. The Theodora Rescue Committee, the tenant association for the building, have filed a possibly precedent setting federal fair housing lawsuit against Goodman and the building owner, Volunteers of America. Tenants marched through the neighborhood and packed a land use




Jonathan Grant,  
Executive Director

meeting to scuttle plans to redevelop the building.

In other thrilling news, the Tenants Union has launched a major campaign in the City of Spokane, organizing with tenants to fight for a Just Cause Eviction Ordinance. If we are successful, this would be the first time in over 30 years that a city in our state will have expanded just cause protections against retaliatory and arbitrary evictions. TU Spokane organizer Terri Anderson is building a coalition of social justice organizations and bringing together tenants from across the city to fight for this critical tenant protection.

Meanwhile the Tenants Union has agreed to serve on Seattle Mayor Murray's Housing Affordability Committee, and will use our involvement as a platform to pursue the preservation of affordable housing and expand tenants' rights. The housing crisis continues to deepen, but so does the resolve of tenant leaders. It has been humbling to bear witness to the courage of tenant leaders in both Seattle and Spokane, who despite great risk still choose to fight for housing justice for all. ♦



SHA tenants and community members at the Yesler Terrace Community Center to hear about "Stepping Forward".



## Welcome New Staff

**José Camacho,  
Community  
Organizer**

A recent graduate of Washington State University, José grew up in Burien, WA and has participated in local programs geared towards multicultural students. While at WSU José mobilized students with Movimiento Estudiantil Chican@ de Aztlan (M.E.Ch.A) to protest cultural appropriation, and participated as a panelist at the 10th International Globalization, Diversity and Education Conference. Through the lens of racial and economic justice he hopes to advance, empower and educate those seeking housing justice within South King County. ♦

## Goodbye organizing job, hello TU Membership!

by Stina Janssen



Read the complete version of this letter at [www.tenantsunion.org](http://www.tenantsunion.org) in the TU News section!

When I came to the TU three years ago, I was passionate and green. Inspired by the tenant organizing I'd supported in Washington, DC, I was excited to come home to Washington State to add my elbow-grease to our local movement. I also hoped to become the best organizer I could be in the fight for housing justice. When I joined the TU, I found a small staff of three, small Board, and handful of grassroots tenant leaders working hard to breath life back into this long-beloved 37-year-old organization, rebuilding it step by step from near extinction. I added my breath to theirs and joined them in walking that path—and what a path it's been! As the TU grew, so did I, and as month by month the organization gained strength, I gained skills and experience too. Together, we grew a more stable, politically-sharp, member-led organization that could nurture a full-hearted grassroots fight to achieve concrete wins for tenant self-determination, dignity, and racial and economic justice through affordable and healthy housing. In my view, the TU has grown and developed more over the past three years than most organization manage in ten. Thanks to the work of many people, the organization has catapulted back to life and has claimed its place in the movement landscape of Washington State as a grassroots community force to be reckoned with.

*(continued page 11)*

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## Theodora Rescue Committee Update

First, I would like to thank the Tenants Union of Washington, Puget Sound Sage, and Got Green for the Labor Day picnic. It was good to know what other groups are doing to protect the little guy in our fight for social and economic justice.

Secondly, I would like to give an update on the progress we have made in our effort to save our home, The Theodora. Our home is in the process of being landmarked. Both the Theodora Rescue Committee and Goodman Real Estate (GRE) have turned in applications. While we both have our reasons, the Theodora Rescue Committee (TRC) wants to preserve the building for its historical use. For decades it has housed seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities. Goodman on the other hand is trying to take advantage of the tax breaks that come with landmarking the property.

The Theodora was built in 1964 by the local architectural firm Grant, Copeland & Chervenak and is an example of Northwest modernism. It was originally designed to house low income and people with disabilities. Its design uses natural light and pulls the outdoors into the building. The Volunteers of America also had a member on the architecture team.

Since TRC has become involved in the landmarking process, the landmarking board has started on landmarking the whole site by including categories not included in GRE's landmarking application. Another meeting with the landmarking board will be on October 1st, time and location to be determined.

The Theodora Rescue Committee is working hard to save our home but also working on the fair housing lawsuit with the NW Justice Project. Stay tuned and help us win to save our home.

Sincerely,  
Tim Doub, Theodora Rescue Committee

To learn more about the Theodora visit  
<http://savethetheodora.wordpress.com/>



# Eviction and Intersectionality: Why Black Women Need Housing Justice

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By *Denechia Powell*, *Community Organizer*, writes how being evicted changed her life and why we need more Black women in the housing justice movement.

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My heart sank once I realized it was an eviction notice. After coming home from an underwhelming day at work, I looked forward to zoning out on TV realities that were infinitely more exciting than my own reality. I never imagined I would be greeted by a real-life soap opera in the form of an official-looking notice posted on my door. That day, I became the recipient of a one-way ticket on the eviction train, party of one. Needless to say, the notice put a wrench in my ambitious plans for the evening.

Where did I turn first? Google. I didn't know the first thing about eviction. At that point in my life, I thought simply mentioning evictions was a little taboo—I believed eviction only happened to people way more downtrodden than myself. Growing up, whether it was true or not, I always considered my family middle class. Surely, an eviction could never happen to a girl like me (I had yet to recognize that my current job hardly qualified me for a place in the middle class and that my salary bordered those of the working poor).

Upon Googling the foreign concept of tenants being forced out of their homes, I found nothing to ease the anxiety gradually building in the pit of my stomach. The legalese, convoluted language and complete lack of tenant resources I encountered on the Internet provided little information and no peace of mind. I felt lost, dazed and confused. Surely the nice ladies in the office of my apartment complex were willing to negotiate with me to ensure a roof over a fellow woman's head.

Rude awakening: Any sisterhood I ever had with my apartment's white female property managers was null and void now that I was headed to Eviction Land. Solidarity be damned! After pleading with them for a merciful payment plan, they told me my best option was to pay off my balance and move immediately. Of course, I did not have enough money to pay them

what I owed—I was paying far more than 30 percent of my income, which explains why I fell behind on my rent. No safety net in sight, I needed to stay in my apartment as long as possible (which was not very long according to the Google gods).

I never saw the sheriff—I vacated my apartment just in the nick of time. With my tail tucked between my legs and feeling irresponsible as ever, I moved back to Georgia (my home state) to crash on a family member's day bed. I wish I knew then that my shame was unwarranted and that my story of eviction was not an extraordinary one.

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A recent study conducted by the MacArthur Foundation revealed that poor Black women are disproportionately impacted by evictions. The study found that while Black women were only 9.6 percent of Milwaukee's population, they experienced 30 percent of the city's court-ordered evictions.

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This distressing statistic was attributed to a number of factors including low wages, intimidation by male landlords and triggering the aggravation of landlords because of child and partner-related incidents. Apparently, several landlords find eviction justifiable when a Black woman merely makes a complaint about mold affecting her children's health or when she lives with an abusive partner who causes domestic disturbances.

My "Blackness" and my "womanliness" are both things that I love about myself and other Black

women; however, neither polls well in today's discriminatory housing market. Black women face higher eviction rates than any other group because of our marginalized identities. While the term "intersectionality" has been appropriated to reference a plethora of social phenomena, it was originally coined by Black feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe how the multiple oppressed identities of Black women collectively contribute to how people perceive us in society. If you asked me to hypothesize why women of color bare the brunt of evictions in this country, I would point you down the path of intersectionality.

In the tradition of countless resilient Black women that came before me, I made lemonade out of lemons by carving a career path out of a hardship - stopping evictions became my line of work. After

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Black women face higher eviction rates than any other group because of our marginalized identities.

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moving back to Georgia, I tapped into a vibrant community of activism, which eventually led to a job as an organizer for a housing justice organization called Occupy Our Homes Atlanta. Our mission was to repair the devastation caused by the housing crisis in Atlanta by fighting foreclosure and eviction through direct action and public pressure.

Unsurprisingly, the majority of our residents-in-struggle were Black, and many of them were Black women. These women inspired me to no end; they were smart, radical and ready to salvage their slice of the American Dream by fighting like hell to save their homes. I will never forget one of my favorite resident-activists, Mildred Obi. A daughter of the Civil Rights Movement, she occupied her home after being evicted and eventually won it free and clear from Bank of America. Mildred harnessed her power in the name of housing justice and continues to help others in danger of losing their homes. She is a prime example of why Black women need housing justice: Because when we fight, we can win. As Black women, even the seemingly simple act of survival is a fight, so fighting for our human right to housing is inherent in us.

I carry Mildred's spirit with me in my new

position as a community organizer with the Tenants Union of Washington in Seattle, which was recently named the number one city for apartment rent increases in the country. Any push for rent stabilization in Seattle will be a hard-won fight due to a statewide ban on rent control. Displacement and gentrification both run rampant in the city as for-profit developers snatch up affordable housing and drive up rents in historical communities of color. While our city's Just Cause Eviction Ordinance prevents landlords from terminating tenancies at will, still approximately 10 households are evicted every day. I brace myself for all of these challenges knowing that other Black women are in this fight with me ready to create space for other Black women in the housing justice movement. I fervently believe that my role in this movement is to amplify and elevate the voices of Black women because more than any other population, we need housing justice and we need it now. ♦

## Welcome New Staff

**Denechia Powell,**  
Community Organizer



Denechia is a community and political organizer from the Deep South who looks to Ella Baker and Fannie Lou Hamer for instruction and in-

spiration in her organizing. She is a member of the Black Unicorn Collective, a group of Queer and Trans People of Color (QTPOC) dedicated to building community and political power for QTPOC in the Pacific Northwest. A former staff organizer with Occupy Our Homes Atlanta, a radical grassroots anti-foreclosure and anti-eviction organization, she is excited to continue her work in the housing justice movement fighting displacement and gentrification in Seattle. In her free time, she enjoys laughing and dancing as much as possible, especially with her partner Aimée-Josiane and their sassy black cat, Seven. ♦

# Why I Am Fighting Against SHA Rent Hikes and You Should Too

by Rebecca Snow Landa, SHA tenant leader

When I learned about the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) plans to more than quadruple my family's rent I was devastated. According to SHA, they plan on raising all rents on "work-able" tenants over six years, to a point where eventually you would have to earn nearly \$20/hour at fulltime to live in "low-income" housing. This is not realistic for families that have fragile living situations and barriers to earning high incomes. Nine years ago I moved into an SHA apartment, which finally helped me establish stability for my two children. Before that I was living in a domestic violence shelter having escaped an abusive relationship. Both of my children have special needs, so much of my time is spent nurturing them. This works for us—I am there for them, and myself. This is only possible because my housing is stable and affordable. My current SHA rent is set at 30 percent of my income from the disability assistance for one of my children.

The housing authority is telling us there are high-paying jobs out there to make up for their rent increases. But when you actually look for those high-paying jobs they can't be found in our post-recession economy. And SHA's proposal assumes people like me don't already work hard. I have worked hard to improve my situation. Over the past nine years I completed my BA and have worked part-time as a journalist, parent advocate at the juvenile court, and home health-care worker. I am currently unemployed and looking for work

(please contact me with any leads). I focus on self-care and stress-reduction to keep my brain strong enough to meet the demands of my kids. I look forward to resuming work, but under SHA's proposed plan, part-time work that allows me to care for my children would not be enough to pay the rent.

Our situation is fragile—emotionally and economically. SHA's plan to raise our rent could break us. When I found out about their ironically-titled "Stepping Forward" plan a few weeks ago, I began having nightmares about being homeless again, this time with two children. I've worked hard to establish a support network for my small family—neighbors, local friends, membership at a YMCA within bussing distance—and all of that could fall apart if we have to move. Our apartment is not fancy—cheap linoleum floors and several needed repairs—but it's home. We have a second-hand piano, a washer (I hang our clothes to dry), comfy beds, a clean kitchen. We are okay now. But all of that could change. "Stepping Forward—Off Of A Cliff" is what I would call SHA's proposal. It would push

vulnerable families like mine out onto the streets. My kids would have to leave their friends and schools if I can't come up with much more rent than we currently pay. Without me, they would be much more dependent on state services.

Every day when I walk to the grocery store, bus stop, or library I see homeless neighbors living along the bike trails near my apartment. It makes me feel lucky, but also triggers the fears that it could be me and my kids soon. While the city is throwing millions

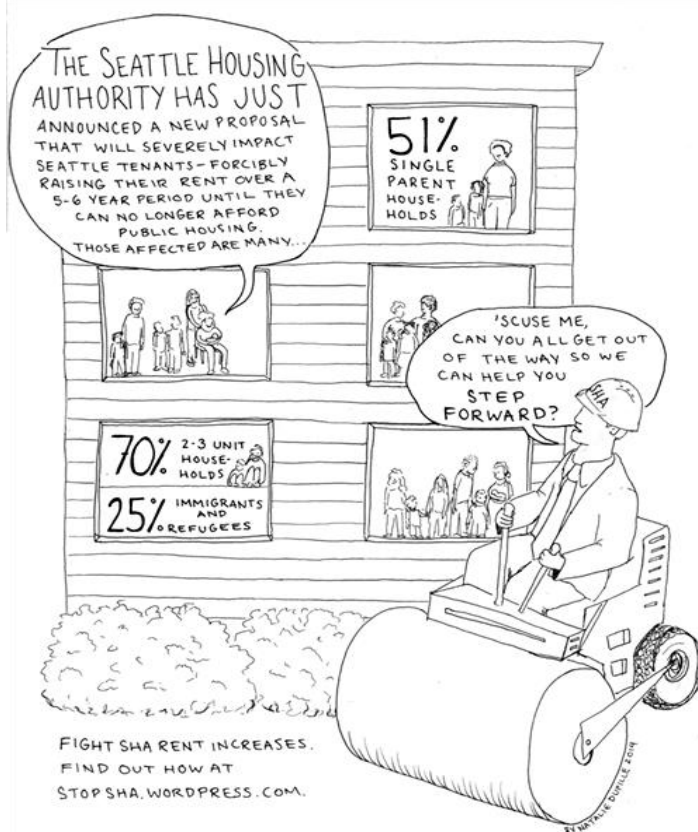


Illustration by NATALIE DUPILE

## Healthy Housing Organizing

By José Camacho

There is a buzz in the air, campaigns are all around us, tenants throughout the region are fired up about much needed changes. Whether they are the individual battles to challenge a single slumlord, to the much larger campaigns that go after institutions who continue to oppress people. The vibrancy of the city is all too real, we see people taking to the streets, demanding a better world to live in crying out for change, in hopes of achieving a healthier way of life.

This is a pivotal time where we must align ourselves and recognize our goals in the Healthy Housing campaign. As the new community organizer for the South King County region I am committed to the Healthy Housing Campaign and our hope to establishing a model for the state of Washington that will continue to improve the lives of tenants.

The primary goal in our Healthy Housing Campaign is to help you as tenants' develop the necessary tools to succeed in an organizing capacity, starting in cities that are continuously being targeted by those landlords who intentionally continue to divest and exploit our communities. There is no hiding that as the prices of rent continue to rise in the cities of Seattle and the core of King County, we continue to see an ever growing and expanding number of tenants being ushered into the South King County region. The issue being that many of these cities are beginning to see more and more neglect in housing by those who see this as an opportunity to make profits. Landlords and investors are buying up lots, properties and homes skimping on repairs and updates to turn a larger profit once they hit a prime real estate market, leaving those who live in these homes to face substandard conditions with little to no relief.

The need is clear: just in my first month as a community organizer at the Tenants Union, I met tenants in a building on Military Road living in terrible conditions, with leaks in the building so bad there were puddles in the hallways. The TU worked with tenants to come together, and were able to get them legal

*(continued page 11)*



*SHA tenants and community members rallying on at the intersection of Broadway & Yesler.*

of dollars away on failed projects like the deep-bore-tunnel, more and more of us can't afford a roof over our heads.

I am working with the Tenants Union of Washington State to stop the SHA rent hikes because I believe that we all must fight this trend of public agencies acting against the public interest. It began in the Universities (my father is a professor and has worried for decades about the sad changes in public education). Now, it's happening with housing. For example, we have already lost one-half of Yesler Terrace. What makes Seattle great is the diversity of our talents, cultures, and classes. More and more people are losing their homes to rent increases, but for the housing authority to make a conscious decision to raise rents on our city's poorest is a tragic self-inflicted wound. We all must work together to fight for the vibrant community we deserve, for more public housing, and for rent control, so that we can have a home where our kids can thrive no matter their economic background. ♦

**If you'd like to join the  
SHA Stepping Backwards  
campaign**

**Contact Denechia  
at (206) 722-6848 X 103  
or [denechiap@tenantsunion.org](mailto:denechiap@tenantsunion.org)**

# Seattle and San Francisco, Why Rent Stabilization Works

By Jonathan Grant

Rents in Seattle and San Francisco continue to skyrocket, both towns victim to their own success with booming tech industries, progressive politics, stunning views of the water, more renters than owners, and both experiencing an influx of wealthier residents.

Of course, an important difference is that San Francisco can regulate rent increases, and because of a state ban passed in 1980 Seattle cannot. Yet, despite the enactment of a rent stabilization ordinance that ties rent increases to the Consumer Price Index (CPI), San Francisco has become the most expensive city to live in the entire country.

Enter the narrative that developers and their proxies push on to the public, that if it were not for all these regulations, the market would increase supply and lower rents for all. It is premised on two incorrect assumptions; that the market on its own will increase the supply of housing to significantly lower rents, and that rent regulations raise prices for everyone not living in a rent regulated unit. They stand to benefit tremendously from this narrative: increasing supply means new business, prohibiting rent regulations means higher profits.

Reiterating the first point in a recent article by Smart Growth Seattle, a think-tank supported by Vulcan and the Master Builders Association, they push this belief: “[r]ather than trying to enact inefficient policy to limit profit-maximization beyond socially optimal levels, why not let market forces do

so? By lowering regulatory barriers, more developers could enter the market, increasing the supply of housing and creating greater competition among landlords... [which] exerts downward pressure on housing prices.” If it is true that a supply side solution will result in affordability, then how many units would need to be built to bring rents down to \$662 a month, the rate a minimum wage worker might afford? This clearly would not happen, because the market is catering to newly arriving wealthier residents.

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**But as we are seeing in Seattle, speculation has already created two markets: One growing for the very wealthy, and another shrinking for the very poor.**

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Supply side arguments also ignore the natural tendency of housing markets to cannibalize existing affordable buildings. Even when it results in greater density, flipping an affordable 20-unit building with rents under \$900 to build a 100-unit building with rents exceeding \$2,000 in its place does not achieve affordability. While rents fluctuate, they trend upward, since 2010 Seattle rents have been driven up 33% in much of the city, well above the consumer price index resulting in a windfall for landlords.

Developers demand that we must discuss supply.



But let's also scrutinize demand. Seattle will add 115,000 jobs between now and 2035, and given the demand for housing it would take an astronomical disincentive for developers to turn down the opportunity to capture this profit potential through building more units. Developers are some of the wealthiest corporations in town who have abundant resources to build when there is demand in the market; reasonably limiting rental profit doesn't constrain growth: a limited demand does. Developers argue that rent regulations effectively create two rental markets; those in regulated units and those that are not. But as we are seeing in Seattle, speculation has already created two markets: One growing for the very wealthy, and another shrinking for the very poor.

With new market rate units out of reach for even moderate income tenants, it then becomes a matter of holding on to what affordability we have. What affordability remains in San Francisco exists

because of rent stabilization, not in spite of it. In this way Seattle is at a disadvantage, as there is nothing to protect or preserve affordable units that are flipped into luxury rentals; like at the Oda, Lockhaven, Adams, Panorama House and Theodora Apartments, just to name a few.

Developers point to San Francisco as a failed experiment in regulating rents, but this is disingenuous. It ignores the aggressive work by the industry to undermine their effectiveness. The California State legislature passed the Costa Hawkins Act that prohibited rent regulations for any building constructed post-1979. The law prohibited vacancy regulations, so that every time a tenant moves out of a rent regulated unit the landlord imposes an unlimited rent increase on the next tenant. Tenant activists are fighting against Ellis Act evictions that are sweeping the city, which according to one report has resulted in over 10,000 low-income people being displaced.

Rent regulation can be a key to addressing economic inequality. According to one estimate low-income San Franciscan tenants have had income savings in the billions of dollars since the enactment of rent stabilization. This brings us back to our hometown, Seattle, the first in the nation to pass a \$15 minimum wage. This bold and necessary accomplishment is a cornerstone in our city's attempt to rectify decades of economic inequality perpetuated by stagnant wages. If Seattle's dive into addressing income inequality is to succeed, we need to advance policies that both take on wage hikes and rent hikes. Because of the state ban on regulating rent our attempt to tackle economic inequality head on through raising wages could be foiled if wages are recouped by an aggressive rental industry that raises rents to whatever the new market can bear. When tenants are told by real estate experts regulating rents to prevent economic evictions goes against their own interests they should recognize that profit, and not affordability, is what drives their motives. ♦



## Welcome New Staff

### Liz Etta, Development Associate & Policy Analyst



A decade of Section 8 housing gave Liz the unfortunate ability to experience poverty first hand. As Liz watched the social effects of poverty consume her and her neighbors' lives, she decided to dedicate her future to creating a world free of inequality and bias. Liz chose internal development and public policy analysis as her contribution to the fight for global change. Liz joined the TU in July of 2013 as our new Development Associate and Policy Analyst after a summer internship as a TU Volunteer Policy Researcher, and she's excited to continue advocating for tenant's rights. Liz conceptualizes each donation as "the beginning of the end of poverty." Liz plans to work tirelessly to promote the idea of giving as an important form of activism, as well as strengthen the TU's financial capacity to serve Washington tenants. In her free time, Liz enjoys maintaining her indoor garden with her daughter and reading political satire. ♦

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### Why She Fights A story by Liz Etta

“So, Ms. Tenant, what exactly are you fighting for?” Tina Tenant remembered this statement from the landlord’s secretary and fondly smiled, as she slid the patio’s screen door to grab some vegetables for her morning omelet. It was Sunday, and she was about to stream her favorite news show. As Tina Tenant picked her crisp green onions and bell pepper, she thought about that question, and whether her and her neighbors won the fight. Tina opened her front door and put a few cherry tomatoes in the basket that hung by the staircase. It had become a sort of tradition to pick a bit extra for Tina’s neighbors.

Tina T. Tenant met her neighbors under unfortunate circumstances. When an old pipe rusted under their building and the water was shut off, Ms. Tenant had absolutely had it. Her third floor apartment had cracked countertops, leaky faucets, and a few terrifying electrical outlets that would shoot sparks if used.

“At least the faucet doesn’t leak anymore,” Tina joked angrily as she made her way to the TU to discuss her home.

Tina had not spoken to more than a handful of tenants in her building before the water stopped running, but within weeks, she contacted the TU and mobilized meetings where neighbors could voice their concerns over their living conditions. With help from the TU, Tina was able to gather a group of tenants to approach the landlord and demand repairs to their homes. After a couple meetings, a phone call to the City, and a very uncomfortable stand-off in the landlord’s downtown office, Tina was finally able to water her balcony container garden. She was finally able to take the buckets out of the sink, and she was even surprised to hear that the landlord was planning a fresh coat of paint to cover the stains from last year’s flood down on the first floor.

As Tina Tenant carefully chopped her vegetables into bite-sized pieces, she thought about her interactions with the TU and the question. Tina placed her paring knife on the new kitchen countertop and looked out of the white framed window. She smiled

at Tyrone, one of the neighbors she met at one of the meetings organized by the TU. Tyrone waved back, and holding the hand of his young daughter, they walked down the stairs. As usual, Tyrone’s daughter ran back up the stairs, grabbed a tomato from the basket, and met her father on the second floor. As Tina sat at her computer, she realized that this – a safe home in a community – was why she and her neighbors were fighting. ♦

### *Now Accepting Submissions*

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We are now welcoming submissions of short stories, articles, short essays, poems, cartoons and other forms of creative writing or visual art which provide insight, reflection, humor, and inspiration on the theme of tenant struggles. Submission should:

1. be original
2. be less than 800 words in length. (Poetry submissions should have no more than 3 poems.)
3. have a title, the author’s name, affiliation, contact details, and word count at the top of the first page (These details don’t necessarily appear in the newsletter.)
4. have any subheadings
5. have any original photos or artwork attached as a separate file

Submissions are reviewed by staff of the TU and selected on relevance. Submissions may either be accepted or rejected as they are, or editors may make suggestions and ask authors to rewrite and resubmit.

Please send your submissions to [elainea@tenantsunion.org](mailto:elainea@tenantsunion.org) or mail to:

**5425-B Rainier Ave S  
Seattle, WA 98118**

*(Goodbye, continued from page 3)*

I want to thank and honor some people! Jonathan for his fundraising leadership and creating incredible organizational stability without the organization losing flexibility (amazing), Eliana for her organizing courage, untiring work ethic, and all you've taught me, Elaine for her birds-eye coordination, trust-building prowess, and unshakable groundedness, Kylin for her dedication, compassion, and always remembering to bring the fun, and Emil for her clarity and for igniting my heart and healing my soul. I am so excited about new staff members Deneicha, José, and Liz--you're each a powerhouse and I can't wait to see what you and the TU will accomplish together! Thank you Jeri Gates, Lynn Sereda, Stephanie Jones, Florencia Ybarra, Garnett Brooks, Michelle Kinnucan, Barbara Jewett, Evan Sugden, Gail Engler, Linda Johnson, Ron Walker, Denis & Joy Rudnick, Warren Palin, and Corey Snelson for passionately changing the world, each other, and me. Thank you to comrades and mentors at Western States Center, Got Green?, Puget Sound Sage, and the WLIHA, CARW, and to my biological and chosen families, friends and mentors, Siobhan Ring and Jon Gould, for all of your support and guidance.

As I am leaving the organization, I have a few thoughts and questions to offer in parting.

**They will try to take your housing; don't let them take your spirit.** We need a culture of organizing and movement building that can challenge the ways capitalism and oppression isolate, divide, flatten, and traumatize us. How can the TU be not only house change-work, but also house the radical work of strong, resilient community-building, trust and mutual support, and grounded personal power? Our power is not just in a vote, but in our spirits, our relationships, our history, our inherent dignity, our connection to place, and in the righteousness of our vision and our work.

**We are a "grassroots lab" for vision, strategy, and movement-building.** We live in a very complex age in which neoliberalism--a globalized capitalist system of privatization and increasing corporate political power--is infecting every neighborhood. How can we develop smart, forward-thinking strategies and organizing structures for long-term resistance? How can we cross-pollinate with other organizations to

turn the tide of hyper-displacement and replace it with a social justice framework for development in our cities (with real regulatory teeth)? How can any policy change campaign build a strong message to shift cultural consciousness and public opinion to towards our long-range vision?

I'm inspired by the words of civil rights activist Grace Lee Boggs: "These are the times to grow our souls. Each of us is called upon to embrace the conviction that despite the powers and principalities bent on commodifying all our human relationships, we have the power within us to create the world anew." If you agree with those inspiring words, please join me in joining the TU as a member. I will be making a donation that is meaningful and affordable to me, I will get the TU newsletter, volunteer, come to actions, and contribute time and energy to the movement for housing justice. Will you join me and become a member, or take your membership to the next level? Please do-- we need every single one of us in this movement! Contact Elaine Agoot, Membership Organizer, to get hooked up at [Elainea@tenantsunion.org](mailto:Elainea@tenantsunion.org).

Solidarity -- see you in the streets!  
Stina

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*(Healthy Housing, continued from page 7)*

representation that lead to a successful lawsuit against their landlord.

We must recognize that as tenants we have the ability to create power that can and will put pressure on these landlords if our demands are not met for safe and healthy homes. The landlord-tenant laws in the state of Washington are all self-enforced, there is no particular agency that will hold landlords accountable, and for that reason we must ban together to create a change, one that will shift the power dynamics and demand justice. There are so many dimensions to the issue of healthy housing and we must all work together, because we deserve the right to live in safe healthy homes, it's our human right. ♦

**The Tenants Union of Washington**

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Hotline: (206) 723-0500

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*Around the Corner*  
**TU Annual Meeting — A Tenant Convergence**  
**Saturday, Oct 18<sup>th</sup> • 10am-5pm**



**Keynote Speaker**

**James Tracy** is a Bay Area native and a well-respected community organizer. He is co-founder of the San Francisco Community Land Trust (which uses public and private money to buy up housing stock and take it out of the real estate market), as well as a poet and co-author of *Hillbilly Nationalists*, *Urban Race Rebels*, and *Black Power*.

**9:30 Doors open**  
**Emerald City Bible Fellowship**  
**728 Rainier Ave S, Seattle, 98118**

**Topics include:**

Occupying Gentrification  
Healthy Housing  
Organizing Your Neighbors  
Campaign Planning

\*lunch will be provided (vegetarian and halal options)  
\*\*translation and childcare available upon request

***Want to attend? Want to volunteer? Questions about accessibility?***

***Call or email Elaine to RSVP:***

***(206) 7226848 X 103 or [elainea@tenantsunion.org](mailto:elainea@tenantsunion.org)***