





# Renter Week of Action & Assemblies

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The Renter Week of Action and Assemblies is being organized by Homes for All, a program of Right to the City with the support of Carson Watch.



# OVERVIEW

**Rents are skyrocketing. Evictions are at epidemic levels. Gentrification is displacing our children, our families and our cultures. Government cutbacks to HUD and giveaways to corporate landlords are making things even worse. We are facing a national RENTER STATE OF EMERGENCY.**

As millions of us become renters and the crisis gets worse, it's time for us as the #RenterNation to stand up and fight back for our homes and our communities. There are more than 110 Million renters in the United States. Together we have #RenterPower.

This year our fight for a world where all people have dignified and affordable homes is more critical than ever. In cities, towns, and suburbs—on highways and in byways—in the heartland and on the coast—we will demonstrate to the landlords, the developers, and the government that the #RenterNation is rising. From September 18-24, we will take action to declare our renter power for the #RentersNation.

Together we will take the streets to fight for a future where our children aren't evicted from their homes and removed from their schools. We'll come together to build our power, train each other and strategize for Together we can win a future where all people are guaranteed the human right to housing and where people's needs come before profit! Together we can inspired millions to believe that a more just, beautiful and peaceful world is possible and winnable!

## **Who can plan an action? Anyone!**

Whether you are part of a community or housing justice organization, a union, a tenants union or you are just fed up and ready to fight back against the Renter State of Emergency - anyone can plan an action for the national #RenterWeekOfAction. This toolkit will help you with some ideas of planning a powerful action to assert your #RenterPower.

## **To join the #RenterWeekOfAction you must:**

- Agree to the #RenterPower Action Agreements (next page)
- Register your action & add it to the map at [homesforall.org/renter-week-of-action](https://homesforall.org/renter-week-of-action)
- Uplift the shared messaging & talking points of the Renter Week of Action
- Use the hashtags #RenterPower and #RenterWeekOfAction to lift up your action on Social Media
- Submit Photos & Videos of your action to [media@RightToTheCity.org](mailto:media@RightToTheCity.org)

## **OUR VISION AND DEMANDS**

We envision a world where housing is a human right and all people have access to affordable, dignified, and quality homes. A world where communities have control over decisions and resources in our neighborhoods. We believe in a future where the needs of people and the planet come before profits of Wall Street banks, corporate landlords and real estate tycoons.

### **We demand universal rent control, a living wage for all and a freeze on ALL unjust evictions.**

After decades of divestment from low-income communities and communities of color, landlords and Wall Street developers are targeting our communities with unjust evictions, rent increases and displacement. As long as our wages are low and the number of affordable homes decreases—we call for livable wages for all people and universal rent control to end all rent increases that displace and price out our families from our communities. We call for any eviction without cause to be met with fierce community resistance AND for local, state and federal governments to institute immediate moratoriums.

### **We demand an end to Wall Street giveaways and full funding for HUD to guarantee homes for all people.**

We demand that federal government officials stop the immoral and outrageous cuts to HUD. We call for public money to fund homes and communities for our people, NOT profits and tax breaks for Wall Street Landlords and developers.

### **We demand community control over land & housing in our communities.**

If you live in your community, you should decide on the development that happens AND no one should be forcibly or violently displaced as a result of this development. We call for vacant, underused, foreclosed upon and publicly owned land to be placed under the democratic control of communities through Community Land Trusts and Cooperatives to create affordable housing and serve the needs of communities of color and working class communities.

### **We demand the right of all tenants to organize and bargain collectively with landlords without fear of discrimination, retaliation or eviction.**

In many US cities and states a Landlord can evict you for organizing your fellow tenants into a union. The right to organize should be a universal right.

## THE TARGETS

### September 18-21, 2017 we are calling for actions on

- Corporate Landlords & Developers
- Local or State Governments to Support Universal Rent Control
- HUD (Housing and Urban Development dept.) & Local Public Housing Agencies

### September 22-24, 2017 we are calling for assemblies to do political education and build renter power

- Bring together members of the renter nation to share our stories, struggles and visions for the future
- Train and educate each other to prepare for the long haul
- Develop plans to build Renter Power in our local communities.



Renters Day of Action 2016, Nashville.

## #RENTERPOWER ACTION AGREEMENTS

**As organizers and participants in the #RenterWeekOfAction we agree to:**

- **Stand Up for Each Other:** Look out for and take care of the well-being of others. Attend the action with another person or a group and keep track of each other.
- **Honor & Respect Each Other and the Struggle:** Disagreeing with each other is OK, but engage in direct and disciplined disagreements with each other from a place of love and not condemn or talk trash about others to the media or the public.
- **Support & Encourage Those Fighting Displacement:** Follow the leadership of folks directly impacted by rising rents, evictions & gentrification. Encourage each other to believe that we can fight back and we can win.
- **Be Bold & Creative:** Light up the imagination & vision of our people to struggle toward freedom and toward winning #Homes4all people!
- **Work Toward Solutions:** Collaborate & move our collective struggle forward.
- **Center Housing As A Human Right:** Lift up & center the fundamental human right to housing as the core goal and message of the action.
- **Stay on Message:** Only spokespeople talk to the press and use the collective talking points.
- **Build Community:** Our movement relies on our relationships together. Take time to engage with each other and build relationships.
- **Stick to the Plan & Do No Harm:** Act in accordance with my group's agreed plan for action. I won't speak or act in ways that contradict the intention of my group or put other people at risk they have not committed.
- **Non-violence:** I agree to practice non-violent direct action and not harm others.
- **Respect Decision Making:** Roll with and stick to the group decision making process and the decision-making roles the group decides on. Work through disagreements during set evaluation time after the action, unless its an urgent issue.

# RWA AGREEMENTS



Renters Day of Action 2016, Oakland

## **BUILD YOUR #RENTERPOWER TEAM**

Once you know you or your organization is ready to throw down for #RenterPower on 9/22, it's time to build your team. Having a crew to envision, plan and carry out the action is key.

### **Consider:**

Who else in your city is already or also organizing renters or for economic, racial & housing justice? Are there other renters in your neighborhood, building or city you can organize with?

What skills and roles would best support planning an action? Some roles to consider in the planning team:

Lead/Action Coordinators, Media Coordinators, Outreach to your community, Safety and Logistics; Artists, Musicians and Writers; Sign/Flyer Maker(s), Researchers, and people who can fundraise to support the action (more details on specific action roles below)

### **Get To Know Your Team:**

Whether you've all worked together before or this is the first action your planning, it's important to build trust and have good communication about your expectations and hopes for the action. Building unity helps communication and builds alignment between your squad to be able to act quickly and strategically together during the action. As we build power together, we believe it's critical to nurture our relationships and the love between us.

### **Ask Each Other:**

**What are you hoping will come out of this action together? What do you hope will happen after the action? What inspires you to build #RenterPower?**

**What are your concerns or fears about joining this team? What do each of you need from each other to be at your best (during the planning and during the action?)**

**To facilitate a smooth discussion for the planning of an action, processes and roles for the discussion, ask each other: Who will facilitate and take stack? Who will take notes? How will the group make a decisions together? (majority or 2/3s vote, consensus, a combination of these...)**

### **Assess Your Capacity - Be Grounded and Visionary**

The best actions come from a grounded and principled sense of our groups capacities while also pushing each other to think big, bold and visionary. We're calling for bold and imaginative actions across the country - but we believe actions must build local capacity, not destroy it. Take some time as a team to assess your capacity and level of risk:

# BUILD YOUR TEAM

What level of risk is your group willing to take / organize for? (see tactics risk & capacity levels below) What skills does your team have? What resources do you have already or could you tap into to plan your action (money, time, relationships, materials, experience with direct actions)?

## **Plan a time for evaluation and stick to it:**

All kinds of things go down at actions. We get inspired, we get ideas, we have disagreements and we learn. While some evaluation and processing can happen at the action and even immediately after, for a lot of folks evaluation at the end of a long day of action is too much. Schedule ahead of time a post action meeting to debrief and plan next steps that your whole team can attend.

## **Envision your cities day of action!**

As your crew comes together to plan your cities action for the RWAA Renter WeekDay of Action we encourage you take some time to open up each others minds and think about a vision for the day. Building a collective vision can strengthen our bonds for the long term fight. Be creative and have fun with this - think about how you can tap into the imagination of our communities, use references to pop culture or current trends, and how you can encourage and motivate more people in your community to join the fight for housing as a human right.



Renters Day of Action 2016, Los Angeles.

## **Ask Each Other:**

**What would your community look like if housing was truly treated as a human right for all people?**

**Who do you envision being at your action? What will they be doing? How will they be empowered to believe that we can win a world where housing is a human right?**

**What is/are the demand(s) of your action?**

**In your vision, what will make your action stand out of the hundreds of rallies and marches we normally come across? What kind of tactic will build power and change the story about renters and the right to housing in your city?**

**How will tasks be delegated to ensure there can be a follow-up conversation with participants and people exposed to the action?**

## TARGETS

Think back on your vision and hopes for this action and your community.

Who are the people or places that are standing in the way of your vision? Who represents the forces that have historically and are currently harming our communities, displacing our families and destroying our culture and communities?

For the #RenterWeekOfAction we are encouraging actions at the following three categories:

### **HUD (Housing & Urban Development Dept.) & Local Housing Agencies**

As we see even more public money flow towards wealthy developers and Wall Street landlords the Trump administration and its appointees to the office of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are proposing to cut almost \$7 Billion from programs that provide housing to low-income communities, indigenous communities, communities of color and the elderly, and support for community development programs. Target a local or regional HUD office or local public housing agencies. They say cut back, we say fight back!



Renters Day of Action 2016, Los Angeles

### **Actions for Universal Rent Control & Just Cause Eviction Protections**

Across the country rents are skyrocketing and our cities and states are sitting back while our communities suffer. We encourage you to take bold action to call for Universal Rent Control and an end to Just Cause for Evictions, to empower renters or move your communities towards the right to homes for all. Actions could be at city halls and statehouses or creative actions in your community to uplift the need for universal rent control and renters protections!

### **Corporate Landlords & Developers**

Who's making money from skyrocketing rents, slum conditions, and public subsidies in your city? Who are the landlords fighting tenant protections and evicting families

## PICK THE TARGET

to fuel gentrification? Whose lobbying for less regulation and to protect the profits of corporate landlords and Wall Street developers! Target corporate landlords and developers (or their agents such as lobbyist, lawyers, or banks that bankroll their activity) with bold, creative action!

### What's Important in YOUR Community?

While your actions don't HAVE to be at one of these sites, we believe that the more actions across the country that are unified by common sites of the struggle the stronger our message, voice and demands will be. Eviction Courts. Bring the heat to where millions of our people are being impacted

Land or Housing that is being targeted for gentrification. Are you organizing public housing residents whose building is being demolished and replaced with market rate homes? Is there vacant land that could be used to serve your community, but luxury condos are being built instead?

## WHERE WILL YOU TAKE ACTION IN YOUR CITY?



Renters Day of Action 2016, Atlanta.

## **Coordinate Your Action with Other Cities Targeting the Same Targets!**

To the extent possible The RWA planning team is encouraging actions that are aimed at the same target to coordinate with other cities. Examples of possible coordination are:

### **Monday 9/18- Thursday 9/21**

**Actions targeting city halls & statehouses for universal rent control!**

**Actions targeting corporate landlords & developers**

**Actions targeting HUD & local public housing agencies**

### **Friday - Sunday 9/22-9/24**

**National days of political education assemblies!**

Each day we are aiming to ensure that there are at least 3-5 high-capacity non-violent direct actions, 5-10 medium capacity-actions and many more low-capacity actions. Once you've decided on your target and your tactic REGISTER YOUR ACTION with us here, We'll connect you to other cities that are taking action against mutual targets and support you all in coordinating your actions to amplify our impact.

Throughout August and September we will be coordinating Action Roundtables along with direct action trainers from the Ruckus Society to support groups taking action at each of the three main targets in developing highly escalated and coordinated actions. You can reach out to [Malcolm@RightToTheCity.org](mailto:Malcolm@RightToTheCity.org) for more information about these action roundtables.

How does coordinating our actions against the same target on the same day strengthen our actions:

- Coordinated actions allow us to tell a cohesive and compelling story and leverage the actions to get regional, national and international press attention to all of our fights.
- Coordinated actions on the same day, especially if they are at the same target can put escalated pressure on shared targets in multiple locations, disrupting the business of our targets and forcing them to give in to our demands.
- Coordinating actions with other organizations engaging in shared fights, allows you to troubleshoot and to talk to other organizers about how to take on higher levels of risk and action.

What if we want to take action against a target but can't do on the proposed day?

Go for it! We are encouraging the highest level of coordination possible, but even if you can't do your action on the same day as other actions with shared targets, we'll amplify your action!

## Organize an Art Build – bring your action to life!

Art, culture and striking visuals do more than just make your action look good. They communicate your message, tell a story, give your crew an identity and invite people to identify with your fight, and help people understand the issue through visuals. 'Art Builds' are a collaborative and community-driven process that engage your community in a collective process of building your action and visuals together. From bold banners to street theater props or other visuals, bringing your community together in advance of the action build community, trust and strengthens our resilience to win for the long-haul.

Check out the great toolkit for "Creative Direct Action Visuals" from the Ruckus Society [here](http://ruckus.org/) (<http://ruckus.org/>) and reach out to [info@Homes-ForAll.org](mailto:info@Homes-ForAll.org) if you'd like support with organizing an art build in your community!



Piñata of developer at Renters Day of Action 2016 demonstration, Chicago.



Giant puppet of Mayor Garcetti Renters Day of Action 2016, Los Angeles.



Mock funeral at March Renters Day of Action 2016, Brooklyn.

## Sample Action & Risk Analysis

High Risk Disruption	Medium Risk Disruption	Low Risk Disruption
<p>Sit-in or blockade of building/office</p> <p>Risk of arrest, fines, public exposure for families/people engaging in civil disobedience</p>	<p>Community march or rally at site that doesn't not include risk of civil disobedience for example a public memorial mourning the loss of housing</p> <p>Public exposure for families/people sharing stories, agitation from opponents, potential for risk of arrest if action is not permitted</p>	<p>Community Vigil of specific landlord, developer, or elected official.</p> <p>Public exposure for families/people sharing stories</p>
<p>Occupation of public or privately owned vacant land</p> <p>Risk of arrest, fines, lengthy/resource intensive fight, public exposure for families/people engaging in civil disobedience.</p>	<p>Renter Power Block Party / Concert</p> <p>Depends on permitting - can be done as a 'legal' or 'illegal action to hold space and reclaim space. Requires planning &amp; coordination</p>	<p>Press conference to declare a Renter State of Emergency</p> <p>Minimal</p>
<p>Disciplined &amp; Disruptive March that takes streets and disrupts public life (event, traffic, business, etc...)</p> <p>Risk of arrest, fines, legal costs, targeting by local authorities (particularly for black, trans, gender non-conforming, undocumented communities)</p>	<p>Protest or Picketing "Real Estate Showings" or Corporate Landlords over luxury development &amp; high prices rents</p> <p>Threats or intimidation from opponents, potential risk of arrest depending on tone of action</p>	<p>Photo or storytelling booth set up in a public space</p> <p>Public exposure (media or otherwise) for families/people engaging in storytelling</p>
<p>Coordinated Rent Strikes at winning bargaining rights w landlord OR pressuring local officials</p> <p>Risk of threats of eviction, intimidation or retaliation from landlords, police, ICE (depending on immigration status)</p>	<p>Actions to record, impacts of the housing crisis using the #RenterSOS For example exposing poor living conditions, housing discrimination, landlord behavior</p> <p>Public exposure for families/people sharing stories</p>	<p>Neighborhood or Community-Wide Canvass to organize and invite renters and community members to join the fight.</p> <p>Low-risk</p>
<p>Banner Drop on private property of corporate landlord, lobbyist, or public building with security</p> <p>Risk of arrest, fines, legal costs</p>	<p>Short blockade or sit-in in public officials office request meeting date and leave</p> <p>Some risk of arrest fines legal costs</p>	<p>Sanctioned/ scheduled lobby visit to your elected officials</p> <p>Low-risk</p>

## TACTICS

The RWA National planning team has broken down example actions by level of capacity & risk. Think back on how much risk your team is willing to engage in? What will the folks you want at the action be willing to do? Does your group have a member-base that can turn out for mass actions? A militant core that is fired up and ready to take risks? A broad public profile but not a lot of organizing capacity? Are you using this action to build your base, win a demand, or increase visibility for the issue? Based on your answers to these questions, organize your action to suit your strengths. Your messengers should come from people who are directly impacted by the housing crisis and can speak to their experiences.

### **Be creative, be imaginative, be bold, dream big and have fun!**

#### **Individual Actions - Even if you can't take to the streets you can still take action!**

- Put a sign in your window or door saying “We Shall Not Be Moved” and Declaring your renter power!
- Go to your neighbors and get your entire building to put signs on their doors OR hang a banner at your building or neighborhood letting the world know that “We Shall Not Be Moved”
- Tell your story of the Renter State of Emergency. Share your story on social media with the hashtags #RenterPower and #RenterWeekOfAction
- Talk to your neighbors and family about the crisis and get them to take the [Renter Week of Action Pledge](#) too!
- Share your story on the national Can't Wait List to join thousands of others who can't wait for housing.



Mock eviction at March Renters Day of Action 2016, Los Angeles

## COMMON ROLES AT ACTIONS:

Clear roles help keep the action running smoothly, prevent confusion and allow decisions about strategy and safety to happen quickly. Ideally you want different folks playing each role but some roles can be taken on by the same person.

- **Tactical Team Leaders:** (usually 3-4 people) of the action who are the key decision-makers who the group trusts to make quick judgement calls during the action. The team should follow their lead during the action and evaluate and give feedback after the action.
- **Police Liaison(s):** Serve as point of contact with police, identify and speak to the highest ranking officer in charge and communicate police message back to the tactical leadership. This role should take notes of the interactions with police. In smaller actions this role can be part of the tactical leadership team. Unless specifically designated to do so, this person does not negotiate with police or make decisions on behalf of the group.
- **Scout(s):** Scope out site of action, map it out, identify entrances/exits, location/type of security personnel, location of action targets; before the action scope everything out 15-20 min ahead of time.
- **Greeter / Recruiter(s):** people to hand out flyers to passersby, get people to sign in to the action and recruit people to future actions and events and hands out signs, flyers and banners to participants.
- **Peacekeeper(s)/Marshall(s):** Folks identified and prepared in advance to help participants stick to the plan, de-escalate when necessary, address needs that may arise, and communicate messages between our police liaison(s)/tactical leads and participants. often peacekeepers wear something to be easily identified i.e. a vest or armband. 1-peacekeeper recommended per every 25 - 30 participants.
- **Press Wrangler:** Proactively greet press when they show up and connect them to your spokespeople.



Renters Day of Action 2016, Seattle.

## PLAN THE ACTION



Renters Day of Action 2016, Seattle.

- **Press Spokespeople:** Team of individuals prepared to share our message and demands with the press.
- **Chant & Song Leader(s):** Prepped individuals who lead chants (often with bullhorns). Chant & Song Sheets should be passed out and practiced before the action starts.
- **Medic(s):** Those who are trained to help people who have health issues or treat minor injuries (often have water/granola bars/medical supplies and other items to help those in need).
- **Photographer/Videographers(s):** Take photos & videos of people, speakers, crowd and upload photos to social media with the hashtags #RenterWeekOfAction and #RenterPower and e-mail best photos & videos to [media@RightToTheCity.org](mailto:media@RightToTheCity.org) for this action.
- **MC** [if you have program]: Lead the program, introduce all speakers/performers, keep energy up
- **Legal Observer(s):** Trained NLG observers who attend the action to observe, take notes and document any police misconduct and to inform tactical team about legal matters. Find your local NLG chapter.
- **Jail Support Team** (if risk of arrest is planned or possible): Distribute the jail support number to everyone, have basic contact and medical information of folks planning to risk arrest, provides support such as comfort, food, jail support and collection of bail money donations for those arrested. This team goes to the jail to provide support and be present when arrestees are released. Jail support phone call person should be off site so they do not risk arrest.

## **SAFETY & TIPS FOR CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE**

Whether your action will feature planned civil disobedience or actions that involve some risk of arrest, it important to be clear and unified about your safety plan can help keep things as safe as possible for our people. In particular, when confronted with police, black folks, LGBTQ and undocumented folks are often at higher risk for violent or aggressive treatment from the police.

\*NOTE: This is not a complete guide for CD. Cities considering CD should connect with local legal resources prior to taking action.

### **PLAN AHEAD:**

Ask yourselves: : How will your team make decisions together if someone tries to disrupt the action or if things get out of hand and away from the plan? (i.e. the 3 person tactical team will make the call on what to do OR affinity groups planning to do civil disobedience will decide)

**1. Know your city:** Look into what's been done in your city pertaining the issue you're bringing light to. Look up the specific police district you'll be protesting at too. Regardless of how friendly you might think the local police unit is, try to have media be present. Do not count on media to keep the police from abusing their power.

### **2. Be clear about roles & comfort risk levels of participants:**

One way of seeing who can take a more risky role, if things don't go according to plan, is to determine who is "red" (arrest-able), "yellow" (would prefer not to be arrested), "green" (not willing to get arrested). Make sure every person getting arrested knows that they are the ones to determine what their limits are if the police assault them or use pain compliance tactics to try to capture them.



Right to the City protest at Fannie Mae, Washington D.C., 2012 .

### **3. Plan For Jail Support**

Designate a team of 1-2 people that will collect the legal names, dates of birth, emergency contacts, and medical condition information from participants at risk of being arrested. This team is also responsible for contacting any sort of legal support team, such as members of the National Lawyers Guild and/or people responsible for posting bail.

If arrests happen, 2-3 people who are not on site at the action should get down to the jail

as soon as possible. Find out what our folks are being charged with, if they are being held on bail, and what the timeline is for their release, and begin processing bail money if you can. If folks have asked you to get in touch with their emergency contact, call them and give them an update.

#### **4, Secure Communication:**

As the surveillance of social movements evolves and changes, it's a best practice to discuss information about protest sites, dates and times, what the action itself will look like, and roles, without the presence of electronics and in space with the team you've built trust with. Some electronic communication tools to use outside of meeting spaces are: signal, whatsapp, and riseup.net emails.

All who are planning to risk arrest or might be arrested should write down the jail support peoples phone number and lawyers phone number on their arms with a sharpie if you're risking arrest. Memorize as well, if possible.

#### **5. Get in touch with legal support BEFORE your action**

We highly encourage you to be in touch with legal support before your action. There are many local attorney's who support non-violent civil disobedience and our struggles and we can connect you directly with attorneys too.

We want to make sure all participating groups, organizations and individuals have the tools they need to pull off successfully effective actions. If you are planning medium or high risk actions we can help connect you to legal resources and local attorneys who can provide:

In-person or over the phone trainings and consultations

Legal support and/or defense to arrested participants and their families

**To get connected with legal resources contact HFA Legal Committee Anchor Amy Willis at: [amywillis@gmail.com](mailto:amywillis@gmail.com) OR [Malcolm@RightToTheCity.org](mailto:Malcolm@RightToTheCity.org)**

You can find your local NLG chapter here: <https://www.nlg.org/chapters/>



Police at Occupy Oakland march, 2011, (cc) blackhour.com

## **INTERACTING WITH POLICE**

Identify A Police Liaison for Your Action. They will be the point person for engaging with the police and being aware of the people at your action (if you deem that it is necessary). People who are not police liaison should generally avoid speaking directly with police.

**CONSIDER AS A TEAM:** How you will respond if police begin to act aggressively or break protocol. It is critical that the team be aware and thoughtful about creating a plan that considers the safety of all participants. In particular black folks, trans & gender non-conforming folks and undocumented folks are at significantly higher risk in interactions with police. How will your team respond to police and support and protect the safety of participants?

In general it is best to remain calm around police forces and not make any sudden movements. If after asking police "Am I being detained?" police do not provide an affirmative response, you can walk away from the police calmly. If you're being detained, the only information you need to provide them is your legal name, and depending on your city perhaps your date of birth and/or address.

**REMEMBER:** In most states, before arrests are made at protests at least one warning is usually given, but that is not required of the police, and they can and often do break protocol easily.

### **Care Bags:**

Pack a care bag with you, for yourself and others. Having supplies on hand and caring for protestors should also be a role or roles in your action, but also make sure you have what you need and have communicated your needs to at least 1 other person.

Water

Fruits/Snacks/Nuts

Prescription Medicines w/ doctors note in case of arrest

Milk to wash eyes in case of pepper-spray

First Aid Materials

Throat Lozenges

Tampons/Pads

### **Post-Action Support & Processing**

Whether its the first time you've been arrested or seen arrests or not, interactions with police and arrests can be traumatic and deeply impactful for those involved in the action. Make sure to plan and create space for a post-action debrief, check-in with each other, create space for reflection healing and love, and continue to build your community.

## GETTING PRESS & TALKING TO THE MEDIA:

### 1. Build Your Press List

- Contact local organizations who work on similar issues and ask them if they can share media contacts they have
- Conduct an internet search of the given topic and look for existing articles on the issue or similar issues. Who are the reporters and media outlets covering that issue? Take down Name, Phone Number, E-Mail and Twitter Handles
- Contact local and regional news outlets and ask them who you submit press releases to. Most now have a news editor and press releases are submitted via e-mail.
- Contact the reporters from your search and ask for time to meet or a chance to email them your submission.
- Ask your friends and neighbors for room on their blogs to post your works.
- The blind sell: Send your op-ed and/or press release to as many media outlets as you can find. One might bite. This is a time intensive endeavor with varying success rates.



Press conference, 2016



Press Conference at Renters Day of Action 2016, Brooklyn.



Renters Day of Action 2016, Chicago.

## **2. Write Your Press Release or Advisory**

**We will have a sample national press release you can adapt by Friday August 25th 2017**

**Press releases provide direct, relevant information about your action to media outlets, can build excitement and frame the issues and solutions impacting renters. Here's the info it should include:**

"FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE" - [Date]

Contact names, e-mails, phone numbers

Engaging Headline

Date, Time, Location and Details of Events

Who is involved, names of your group taking action.

Facts about what happened/what is happening.

Why is this action important? Quotes from impacted folks and organizers are good!

What are we doing to help? / What have we done to help?

Can folks get involved? How?

Put "###" or "-- 30 --" at the bottom of your press release

***A media advisory should all fit on one page. The format for who, what, when, where, why is exactly like this, make sure it ends with contact details for your media contact.***

**Press Advisories are concise 1-page documents with just the essential information of the action. [Below is a sample layout]**

MEDIA ADVISORY - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
[DATE]

**What:** Local Renters to sit-in at Eviction Court as part of national Renter Week of Action

**Who:** Hundreds of directly impacted renters who are facing eviction in [neighborhood/city] , [organization/unions names], members of the national Homes For All Campaign ([www.homesforall.org](http://www.homesforall.org)), community members [you can specify well-known community leaders]

**When:** Thursday, Sept 22nd, 2016 12:00 pm

**Where:** Demonstration will convene at City Hall, Big Bank, Developer, Slumlord management office, 666 Monopoly Ave and Wall St, City State followed by a march.

**Why:** To demand urgent action at local, state federal levels to address the intensifying Renter State of Emergency and keep families in their homes.

National action demands:

Universal rent control, a living wage for all and a freeze on ALL unjust evictions.

An end to Wall Street giveaways and full funding for HUD to guarantee homes or all people.

Community control over land & housing in our communities.

The right of all tenants to organize and bargain collectively with landlords without fear of discrimination, retaliation or eviction.

**Contact:** For more information, contact Message Coordinator (name, email, phone number)

## INTERVIEWS WITH MEDIA

As we build the movement, requests for interviews and submissions to media outlets become necessary to get the word out and gather support for the Renter's Day of Action's causes and demands. Reporters are generally seeking details about local events, quotes and stories from affected tenants, and/or questions about the merits of the problem. All of this can be overwhelming, emotional, and even intimidating. So, here's a guide to navigate media requests with poise, knowledge, and confidence.

Storytelling is key to build support among our community and from those who would otherwise not know or care about housing and tenants. Storytelling can be easy, though emotional. The best stories are compelling, give specific examples, and end with an action step for readers. Readers may not know about the affordability crisis, so starting from the beginning is key. Provide examples of the issue, provide proof when asked, and make sure to respond and reply to the reporter with a professional nature.



Media Interview, (cc).

### ABOUT INTERVIEWS

#### DO

- Speak honestly about the issue
- Rebut and dispel myths and misunderstandings as they arise
- Provide specific examples of the crisis (like your story)
- Ask questions
- Offer to follow-up with proof or more information
- Get emotional when you feel emotion—you matter, tenants matter, and there's a lot of pain in this movement
- Offer to connect the reporter to other resources
- Respond to interview requests in a timely manner
- Find out the date your words will be made public
- Spread the word! Share the article far and wide to show that you're confident about the issue
- Send a thank you email, card, or call to the reporter

#### DON'T

- Allow misinformation to flourish
- Be afraid to argue your point or walk away if it seems that you will not be heard or accurately conveyed in the interview
- Allow reporters to record you without your permission
- Be afraid to say you don't know an answer to a question or need the question rephrased
- Fret over missing media requests - they understand we're busy promoting housing justice
- Forget to say thank you!

## Make it Local, Make it Proud

The following section has core messaging, talking points and sample sound bites that can help guide you in framing and representing the Renter Week of Action & Assemblies. The most powerful way to use talking points is to make them yours, make them local and make them personal.

If you've faced eviction or a rent increase, what did that feel like? How did it impact your family? If you live in public housing, what do the HUD cuts mean to you? What's your vision for your community? If you have stopped an unjust eviction, won rent control, turned around a cutback, built a land trust or organized a tenant union; talk about that with pride and power! As a spokesperson, you want to show the depth of the housing crisis, but also demonstrate how you are organizing to fight back and win.

## Overall narrative

Renters are taking direct action to confront the corporate landlords, politicians and developers who are destroying our communities and fueling the housing crisis.

The majority of all renters (51%) pay an unaffordable rent. Eviction, rising rents and gentrification are racial, gender and economic violence harming our people. Entire communities and cultures are being erased by aggressive development. We're occupying their offices, taking back our communities and escalating because this isn't a game. We're fighting for our lives, our communities and our futures.

The Renter Week of Action & Assemblies is a call for renters, low-income homeowners, homeless folk and communities everywhere to rise up, organize and build a movement to win dignified and affordable homes for all and community control over our neighborhoods.

Corporate landlords and big banks are stealing the hopes and dreams of renters and former homeowners who are struggling to keep a roof over their heads. Local and federal politicians write and rewrite the rules, passing regulatory loopholes, tax breaks and taxpayer giveaways to subsidize the profits of Wall Street banks and corporate developers. They tell our communities over and over that we just need to wait for the private market to build enough luxury homes to trickle down to poor and working class families who need housing now, while cutting billions of dollars from vital social programs.

## SAMPLE SOUNDBITES

“**Housing is a human right. All people must have a safe, affordable, and quality housing.**”

“**We're taking direct action and holding mass renters assemblies because we believe in the collective power of renters to create a more just economy.**”

“**We're fighting for our homes, our lives and our futures. We're fighting for control and power over our communities, because we know what we need to thrive.**”

To end the national housing crisis we need to reject the false solutions proposed by the people and institutions that have created it. Everyone has a right to stay in their home and live where they choose. We must stop the wave of unjust evictions, establish rent controls and demand that government at all levels put homes for people before profit for developers. It's time to organize in tenants unions and neighborhood groups to take back our buildings and our cities and win long-term community control over land and housing.

Trump and his corrupt corporate regime are escalating the super-rich's control of the entire political system, cutting resources for our communities and advancing an agenda of white supremacy and bigotry intent on breaking apart our communities and destroying our cultures. Fighting white supremacy requires throwing out the masters' rules. We are organizing to fight back against this administration's agenda, but also for a world where we have control over the resources in our communities and our neighborhoods homes are places where we can be full human beings—fertile ground to plant our roots for generations to come.

### **Renter State of Emergency**

- Millions of us are facing a housing crisis. We are in a "Renter State of Emergency." If you're facing a rent increase, an unjust eviction or fed up with gentrification and displacement - it's time to rise up and organize in every building, every block and every neighborhood! We are powerful beyond our wildest imagination - join us!
- We are organizing for RenterPower in cities, towns, and suburbs, in the heartland and on the coast to build the cross-class, multi-racial power required to transform our world. The Renter nation is rising and is a force to be reckoned with.

**“After taking bold action to pressure the powerful, we are holding renters assemblies to educate and train each other to organize. It's up to us to build the world we want.”**

**“Putting a roof over my children's head shouldn't depend on how much money I make, or force me to choose between the rent or food.”**

**“If parents throw kids out on the street in the wintertime, that's called child abuse. But if big banks and landlords kick my family and kids to the curb, it's called development. We need renters rights to build neighborhoods that meet our needs.”**

**“Renters bring vitality, industry, culture and connection to our neighborhoods. Let's defend and celebrate our communities.”**

## Racial and Gender Justice

- White supremacy is not just “white men in hoods”, it’s also the systematic disenfranchisement of people of color through economic means. It’s the fact that black and latino families are being forced to spend ~40% more on rent than white families. It’s the landlord who won’t take section 8 vouchers because they don’t want brown folk affecting their property values.
- Displacement and gentrification are rooted in racist, sexist and colonial practices from stolen indigenous lands, to the denial of reparations; from redlining of communities of color to predatory lending. US government policies have torn apart our communities, families and futures disproportionately impacting communities of color and women.

## Renters Rights

- Evictions & displacement cause trauma and cut tenants off from their communities, schools, doctors, services, places of worship—their homes. By controlling rents and evictions we strengthen the social and economic vitality of our communities.
- Skyrocketing rents suck economic life out of our communities and put the profits into ever larger corporate landlords, increasing inequality, wrecking our communities’ health and, trapping generations of families in poverty.
- Developers of market rate and luxury housing are increasing housing costs and driving displacement. This crisis is not just in big cities on the coasts. In many rural and inland areas, the cost of housing is out of reach for most residents, who often pay the majority of their income on rent and must chose between paying for rent and other basic necessities.

**“We can’t win housing justice without racial and gender justice.”**

**“Fighting white supremacy requires throwing out the masters’ rules.”**

**“Women of color continue bear the steepest burden of high rents, with over 60% of women of color-headed households spending more than 30% of their income on housing.”**

**“In Oakland last year the city council refused to act, so we changed the rules: We put stronger rent control and eviction protection to the ballot. Measure JJ won with a 75% landslide.”**

**HUD Cuts and Corporate Giveaways**

- HUD and the federal government have been failing our communities for decades. Instead of budget cuts, we need to fully fund HUD to guarantee that all people who need them have safe dignified and affordable homes.
- The housing crisis is being fueled by government policy makers who are using public funds to subsidize the profits of corporate landlords and developers.
- Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and other agencies are showering big landlords with loan guarantees so they can “securitize” their debt and create another speculative market this time using “rental backed” securities.

**Corporate Landlords**

- The business model of corporate landlords relies on s using public subsidies to buy properties when the market is down and then raising rents, evicting families and cutting maintenance. They force out low-income tenants and bring in high-paying renters, exploiting our communities and destroying our families to turn a profit.
- Corporate landlords aren’t invested in building communities but in making profits that weaken the vitality of our neighborhoods. They are unresponsive to tenants complaints about unsafe conditions and basic maintenance.

**“As the housing affordability crisis escalates across the country, the Trump corporate regime and Congress are proposing to slash housing programs. If we don’t stop these cuts people will die on the streets.”**

**“As Trump and Carson slash social spending, they are increasing the war budget and cutting taxes for the wealthy. They say its about reducing waste, but it’s actually about hurting everyday people, children, seniors and families to help the super-rich and their military.”**

**“Federal agencies should be strengthening community control of housing not shoveling subsidies into the pit of corporate ownership”**

**“Greedy landlords are breaking up families, pushing us to live farther from our jobs, and sterilizing our communities with soulless development.”**

## Sample Facts and Figures

Research data such as your community's rent increases, impact of HUD cuts and the "livability quotient" (media monthly rent/minimum wage at <http://nlihc.org/oor/>). Add a notable fact to your talking points. A quick Google search for reputable sources is all it takes. You can also use the following fact sheets and other resources at [www.homesforall.org/renter-week-of-action/resources](http://www.homesforall.org/renter-week-of-action/resources).

<h3>Hud Cuts Proposed In 2017</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Homeless Assistance Grants: \$133 million in cuts to homeless shelter, services and housing programs</li> <li>■ Public Housing: Public housing funding slashed by \$2 billion, or about 30 percent. Public housing currently requires more than \$30 billion in repairs and it is estimated 10,000 units a year are lost to maintenance issues.</li> <li>■ Housing Vouchers and Subsidies: 250,000 households will lose their rental assistance</li> </ul>	<h3>The Cities with the Fastest Growing Rents April 2017</h3> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>#</th> <th>City</th> <th>State</th> <th>Change Y-o-Y</th> <th>Average Rent</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>1</td><td>Stockton</td><td>CA</td><td>11.2%</td><td>\$1,029</td></tr> <tr><td>2</td><td>Lancaster</td><td>CA</td><td>10.9%</td><td>\$1,101</td></tr> <tr><td>3</td><td>Colorado Springs</td><td>CO</td><td>10.0%</td><td>\$1,037</td></tr> <tr><td>4</td><td>Tacoma</td><td>WA</td><td>9.5%</td><td>\$1,116</td></tr> <tr><td>5</td><td>Santa Rosa</td><td>CA</td><td>9.4%</td><td>\$1,775</td></tr> <tr><td>6</td><td>Modesto</td><td>CA</td><td>9.4%</td><td>\$1,083</td></tr> <tr><td>7</td><td>Buffalo</td><td>NY</td><td>9.3%</td><td>\$932</td></tr> <tr><td>8</td><td>Sacramento</td><td>CA</td><td>9.2%</td><td>\$1,212</td></tr> <tr><td>9</td><td>Reno</td><td>NV</td><td>8.7%</td><td>\$1,025</td></tr> <tr><td>10</td><td>Fairfield</td><td>CA</td><td>8.4%</td><td>\$1,601</td></tr> <tr><td>11</td><td>Salem</td><td>OR</td><td>8.1%</td><td>\$931</td></tr> <tr><td>12</td><td>El Cajon</td><td>CA</td><td>7.8%</td><td>\$1,387</td></tr> <tr><td>13</td><td>Salt Lake City</td><td>UT</td><td>7.7%</td><td>\$1,086</td></tr> <tr><td>14</td><td>Victorville</td><td>CA</td><td>7.6%</td><td>\$968</td></tr> <tr><td>15</td><td>Fontana</td><td>CA</td><td>7.5%</td><td>\$1,163</td></tr> <tr><td>16</td><td>Spokane</td><td>WA</td><td>7.3%</td><td>\$864</td></tr> <tr><td>17</td><td>Moreno Valley</td><td>CA</td><td>7.0%</td><td>\$1,343</td></tr> <tr><td>18</td><td>Pomona</td><td>CA</td><td>7.0%</td><td>\$1,441</td></tr> <tr><td>19</td><td>North Charleston</td><td>SC</td><td>6.7%</td><td>\$984</td></tr> <tr><td>20</td><td>Peoria</td><td>AZ</td><td>6.7%</td><td>\$986</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	#	City	State	Change Y-o-Y	Average Rent	1	Stockton	CA	11.2%	\$1,029	2	Lancaster	CA	10.9%	\$1,101	3	Colorado Springs	CO	10.0%	\$1,037	4	Tacoma	WA	9.5%	\$1,116	5	Santa Rosa	CA	9.4%	\$1,775	6	Modesto	CA	9.4%	\$1,083	7	Buffalo	NY	9.3%	\$932	8	Sacramento	CA	9.2%	\$1,212	9	Reno	NV	8.7%	\$1,025	10	Fairfield	CA	8.4%	\$1,601	11	Salem	OR	8.1%	\$931	12	El Cajon	CA	7.8%	\$1,387	13	Salt Lake City	UT	7.7%	\$1,086	14	Victorville	CA	7.6%	\$968	15	Fontana	CA	7.5%	\$1,163	16	Spokane	WA	7.3%	\$864	17	Moreno Valley	CA	7.0%	\$1,343	18	Pomona	CA	7.0%	\$1,441	19	North Charleston	SC	6.7%	\$984	20	Peoria	AZ	6.7%	\$986
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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS) by Tenants Together, CA

### Can't we just build our way out of the housing crisis?

We need more affordable rental housing, not just any housing. Co Star, a real estate research firm, reported that of 370,000 multi-family rental units completed from 2012 to 2014 in 54 metropolitan areas, 82% were considered "luxury." Luxury housing is the new "market-rate." Building housing for high-income people attracts more high income people, rather than lowering prices to levels affordable to low and moderate income people. According to the Urban Displacement Project of UC Berkeley and UCLA, building more may help in 30 years, but this has not been proven. There are tenants in their homes today that need protection from unlimited rent increases and unregulated evictions.

### **Will rent control lead to neglected properties or inhibit new construction?**

Rent control does not affect quality & quantity of housing. Urban Planner John Gilderbloom's research in 2007 shows that, counter to what many economists believe in theory, evidence shows that modern rent control laws in 100 U.S. cities has had no negative impact on the quality and quantity of rental units. Rent control actually motivated landlords to increase maintenance of rental housing because they cannot increase rents if their rental units are in bad condition. Additionally, rent control protection helps tenants feel secure in asking for repairs without fear of retaliatory rent increases. Many rent control programs allow landlords to pass along a fair portion of the cost of major renovations or utilities to tenants.

### **Does rent savings for tenants under rent control mean higher costs for others?**

Rent control does not raise rents for everyone else. Eric Fischer's recent analysis of rents in San Francisco since 1950 found that rent control does not increase rent overall, and does not distort the rental market. There is evidence that rent control keeps housing costs lower overall, not the other way around. In Boston, Prof. Chris Palmer study of Cambridge showed that when rent control was eliminated, costs of all housing -- formerly rent controlled and uncontrolled units -- rose dramatically. It's also important to know that data on current rents only pulls information from units listed for rent, and does not average data that includes currently occupied rent control units. Rents rise for many reasons--rent control is not one of them. Rent control helps tenants who are covered by rent control, and does not harm the overall market.

### **Rent Control & Just Cause Facts (From Tenants Together CA)**

- Families in predominantly black neighborhoods in Boston pay an average of 71% and of their income toward rent, but the rate in predominantly white communities is just 35%
- In Charlottesville, local organizers have been fighting for a reparations package that centers housing for and investment in the black community. Just before the 'Unite The Right' rally, they won \$2.5 million to invest in public housing redevelopment,
- African American and Latino households in California have been hit particularly hard; they are twice as likely to spend more than 50% of their income on housing than white households.
- Rent Control means that landlords cannot raise rents more than a small, reasonable percentage each year, based on a percentage of Consumer Price Index/inflation.
- Just Cause for Eviction protections require landlords to give a valid reason for evicting tenants. Cities can also require landlords pay relocation costs for reasons where the tenant is not at fault.
- Just Cause for Eviction and Rent Control ordinances have a proven track record in 19 California cities, including Los Angeles, Oakland, San Francisco and East Palo Alto, to protect countless low income tenants from displacement.

- Rent control can be adopted with little or no cost to cities. In fact, communities with rent control fund administrative costs through a small per unit fee paid by landlords.
- Rent Control is an essential policy to prevent the displacement of community members who live here now while we seek long-term solutions to build more affordable housing.
- Rent control promotes stability. Tenants stay in their homes longer and are more invested in their local neighborhoods and communities. Preserves diversity. Prevents homelessness.
- Rent control leaves tenants with more money to spend in the local economy.
- Just cause does not protect tenants who fail to pay the rent or violate their lease from eviction.
- Landlords do just fine under rent control. All rent control laws are required to allow landlords to earn a fair return on their investment. Landlords are allowed to raise the rent every year by a set percentage, pass through certain additional costs, and charge any amount at the start of a new tenancy

## When Renters Rise, Cities Thrive

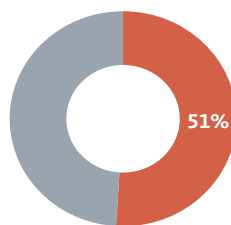
PolicyLink and Carson Watch are releasing a major new analysis of renters' role in the economy with city by city breakdowns of rent burdens and renters economic contributions. Download a fact sheet for your city at [www.homesforall.org/renter-week-of-action/resources](http://www.homesforall.org/renter-week-of-action/resources).

## When Renters Rise, Cities Thrive

The United States is increasingly a renter nation. After the foreclosure crisis, with 107 million renters nationwide, renters are contributing ever more to the economic, social, and cultural vitality of neighborhoods and cities. They could be contributing even more if it were not for skyrocketing rents and stagnant wages. When the rent is too high, little is left over for basics like food, transportation, and education. Millions of families are increasingly at risk of eviction and homelessness.

**Renters now are the majority in the largest 100 cities...**

■ Renter  
■ Owner



That's 31 million residents, an **increase of 16% since 2000**.

**...but they are burdened by rising rents and low wages.**

**53%**  
pay too much for housing\*

- Renters already contribute **\$466 billion** each year to these local economies.\*\*
- If rents were more affordable, renters and cities would be much better off.



## Acknowledgements

This toolkit was developed and prepared by members of the National Homes For All campaign. Much love goes to following people who threw down time, energy and brilliance to this toolkit: Rose Arrieta of Causa Justa/Just Cause (Bay Area, CA), SonyaMaria Martinez of Chainbreaker (Santa Fe, NM), Bang Nguyen of Recover The World (Seattle, WA), Liz Etta of Tenants Union of Washington State, Candejah Pink of Springfield No One Leaves (Springfield, MA), Felix Acuña Olivos of the Autonomous Tenants Union (Chicago, IL), Shatia Strother of FUREE, (Brooklyn NY), Pam Phan of Community Alliance of Tenants (Portland OR), Jess Clarke of Reimagine! (Oakland, CA), and Malcolm Torrejón Chu of the Right To The City Alliance.

We also took immense inspiration from the toolkit developed by the Blackout Collective in advance of the #FreedomNow actions led by the Movement For Black Lives. Their brilliance, love, power and clarity provided inspiration and framework for developing this toolkit. Check out the Movement For Black Lives at [www.MovementForBlackLives.org](http://www.MovementForBlackLives.org)

Lastly, we built off of the Bank Tenant Organizing Manual from City Life/Vida Urbana and the Springfield No One Leaves/Nadie Se Mude Action Toolkit

Design and layout by Reimagine! Movements Making Media [www.reimaginerpe.org](http://www.reimaginerpe.org)

# #RenterPower ACTION Toolkit

## September 18-24, 2017