

For Immediate Release: May 3, 2021

TENANTS FROM ALL FIVE BOROUGHES RALLIED AT HARLEM RIVER HOUSES TO STOP RAD/ PRIVATIZATION CITYWIDE

Residents of Harlem River Houses and Fulton Houses were joined by neighbors from across the five boroughs on Saturday May 1st at Charles Young Triangle in East Harlem (153rd and Macombs Pl) for a rally and march, and to commence a rent-strike starting the same day.

The rent strike is an oppositional measure taken in the face of attempts by NYCHA and the City to convert their homes to Section 8 and private management through the RAD/PACT program. Lawyer Arthur Schwartz, with Advocates for Justice, was among the attendees and speakers, and was collecting checks to deposit into the escrow account, officially initiating the process.

After the rally, which included speakers from Harlem River and Fulton Houses, as well as Holmes Towers & residents on the front lines against RAD and privatization in Boston and Minneapolis, the group marched in Harlem River Houses demanding homes remain in service of people, not profit.

[Tenants then posted a petition on the doors of NYCHA's local management office at 152nd Street and Adam Clayton Powell Blvd and the management office of the new private company.](#)

[The petition, signed by nearly 200 households of the nearly 700 apartments in the complex makes their opposition to RAD clear and demands residents not be forced into signing leases that accede to the privatization of their housing:](#)

“The vast majority of Harlem River Tenants did not ask for RAD, did not approve RAD, and will fight back against this attempt to destabilize and displace working class families. We plan to unite with others facing RAD takeovers and similar schemes across the city and throughout the country. We will not be bullied into signing new leases designed to allow private companies to raise rents and make windfall profits.”

The event was co-sponsored by the [United Front Against Displacement \(UFAD\)](#) and the [Justice for All Coalition \(JFAC\)](#), and was attended by delegations from Committee for Independent Community Action (CICA), CAAV: Organizing Asian Communities, and the Holmes-Isaacs Coalition.

[In tandem, UFAD and JFAC are also hosting a “Truth Commission on RAD/PACT and the Privatization of Public Housing” which will be held via zoom on Tuesday May 4th from 7-9pm.](#)

Speakers will include residents living in RAD-converted developments in NYC (or those in process), as well as residents from Boston, Minneapolis, San Francisco and Oakland who are on the frontlines of the privatization of public housing.

For more information on the events of at Harlem River Houses, please contact nogonyc@riseup.net , 646-780-9657

For more information on the Truth Commission, please contact jfacoalition@gmail.com, 347 531- 8339

Some Quotations from the Rally at Harlem River Houses on Sat. May 1st;

Francisco Rodriguez, a resident of Harlem River Houses stated,

“The reason they are changing stuff is because we are not fighting. A lot of people are fighting for a lot of stuff and they come together and they win. Like the union, they come together and they fight and they win. But we are standing here today for that one reason, to fight against New York City Housing so they don't take you out.

Fight for your place where you live today, and don't let NYC Housing try to pull you out of something where you came out from to be where you are to be where you are now. I was five years homeless in the streets and I walked by 8th avenue and Frederick Douglas Blvd, and I walked by 2850 [Frederick Douglas where Harlem River Public Housing is located] and now I live in that same building that I passed by a couple of years back ... We got to come together. You can't be afraid.”

La Keesha Taylor of the Holmes-Isaacs Coalition said,

“They were gonna take all the air, all the sunlight away from me and all the people in my development, but we fought back, and you all have to fight back ... They think they're gonna take it from us and we're gonna lay down, but we're going to fight. We started a lawsuit, we knocked on those doors, we said stand up and fight with us, and we won.”

Arthur Schwartz, lawyer with Advocates for Justice, & candidate for City Council of the 3rd District stated,

“[Chuck Schumer] announced last week, he did a press conference ... He said We're gonna get NYCHA \$40 billion to meet all the capital needs that they have. Now I don't necessarily trust NYCHA to spend the \$40 billion properly. But once they get this money they don't need RAD, they don't need privatization. Because the excuse they've been giving is that the federal government never funds NYCHA enough to do the repairs we need. Now it's very likely that sometime in June, NYCHA is going to get \$40 billion to fix every last piece of these falling apart buildings that you live in ...

So, I wrote a letter to Greg Russ, it's on the table over there, and I said, Mr. Russ, I had written to him about Fulton ... Why are you forcing people—I heard about at Harlem River Houses—to sign these leases. The leases, I don't care what the Legal Aid Society Says [Legal Aid has a contract to work with RAD conversions] do not give people the rights they have as NYCHA tenants. Because the NYCHA lease says right in the leases you have rights under federal law and state law. And these RAD laws don't say that. They are private sector leases just like for people who reside in private buildings... So I wrote to him and said these leases take away rights from people, and you don't need the money from these private corporations that you're inviting to run NYCHA. He wrote me back in three days, and I said if you don't stop, stop forcing people at Harlem River Houses to sign leases and put RAD on hold until the federal government acts on this bill, I'm going to court to sue you.”

Ladan Yusuf, from Defend Glendale, a group that has fought privatization of public housing under the RAD program in Minneapolis for the past six years submitted a statement that was read out loud by a Harlem River resident:

“Sisters and Brothers of Harlem River and Fulton Public Housing. We are in Solidarity with You. Stand up against Greg Russ and his developers and the city officials who want to displace your homes and communities through RAD and privatization without your consent.

Continue to organize and fight to save your homes and communities. Continue to speak truth to power, and let the world know how Greg Russ deceives us, and through privatization, and gentrification is deceiving and misleading you ... Greg Russ came to lead our public housing from 2017 to 2019. He lied, he bullied, he intimidated - to silence residents into accepting RAD; he used non-profits, developers, banks, mainstream media elected officials to push his plan.”

Heywood Fennel Sr. from Grant Manor, a development undergoing privatization in Boston stated at the event:

“We should be unified. We can beat these people, we will beat these people, we must beat these people. We cannot let these people tell us how to live without dignity. We want dignity and the only way we're gonna get it is if we have to do it, we will fight for it. We will not let our houses become condominiums for rich people, and we will put our money into escrow.”