

June 22, 2021

For Immediate Release: C&C Management pressuring Harlem River Houses residents away from independent legal council

This weekend, Harlem River Houses residents with the UFAD distributed [fliers with info about tenants' rights to legal representation](#) and to be named on [the class action lawsuit tenants have filed against NYCHA](#) demanding they not be forced to sign new section 8 leases with private management company C&C. The fliers included a legal retainer for tenants wishing to attain legal representation as well as an escrow form tenants wishing to join the Harlem River rent strike to oppose privatization.

[Today, C&C responded by distributing misleading fliers to every apartment](#), directing tenants to free “independent” legal services offered by the Legal Aid Society.

The Legal Aid Society is working with NYCHA to privatize public housing and is in no way independent when it comes to RAD. Legal Aid co-authored the [“Resident Handbook”](#) used widely to promote privatization as the only option for public housing.

[A recent article by Amir Khafagy in the American Prospect](#) demonstrates NYCHA’s use of the Legal Aid Society to smooth over privatization, including justifying evictions, such as those which took place after RAD conversion of Ocean Bay Houses:

[“Rochel Leah Goldblatt, NYCHA’s deputy press secretary, insists that none of Ocean Bay’s eviction cases were due to tenants losing their rights. They claim that the Legal Aid Society reviewed all the cases and found that none of the evictions that took place were avoidable.”](#)

But in a virtual town hall with Harlem River Preservation, the consortium privatizing Harlem River Houses, NYCHA’s Vice President of Transactions, Marissa Schaffer, said some evictions at Ocean Bay were for families that “refused to sign leases”. Will Legal Aid instruct tenants at Harlem River Houses that eviction will be “unavoidable” if they refuse to sign leases with C&C management, a real estate company with [the second-highest eviction rate in NYC?](#) For NYCHA to dangle the threat of eviction to pressure public housing residents into signing private leases with this eviction-happy predatory management company is beyond unethical. We believe it’s illegal.

Legal Aid’s role as buffer for predatory developers compromises their status as a non-profit legal services provider. In fact, Legal Aid Society is run by some of the very interests who pursue the displacement of poor, working class, and homeless people. For example, when Legal Aid represented homeless residents of Upper West Side hotel shelters, the vice-chair of their board, Randy Mastro [sued to remove those homeless residents- in the middle of the pandemic](#). Much like [Settlement Housing Fund at Harlem River](#) and many non-profits in the affordable housing business, Legal Aid Society claims to provide services for those in need, but often provides cover for real estate interests seeking to raise rents and property values in order to make millions of dollars through gentrification.

We demand that NYCHA and C&C immediately stop trying to mislead tenants into forgoing their legal right to independent counsel offered by Advocates for Justice Attorney Arthur Schwartz; ripping down our fliers/ grabbing them from tenants’ doors, and replacing them with fliers for the Legal Aid Society. We remind the Legal Aid Society that tenants of Harlem River Houses have filed a class action suit against NYCHA to stop RAD; as co-architect and active proponent of RAD/PACT, we believe it is a conflict of interest for Legal Aid Society to advise tenants of Harlem River Houses regarding RAD leases.

ATTN: C&C Management CEO Richard Doetsch, L&M Development CEO Ron Moelis, Settlement Housing Fund Director Alexa Sewell, West Harlem Group Director Donald Notice, NYCHA Chairman Greg Russ, Legal Aid Society Attorney Lucy Newman



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