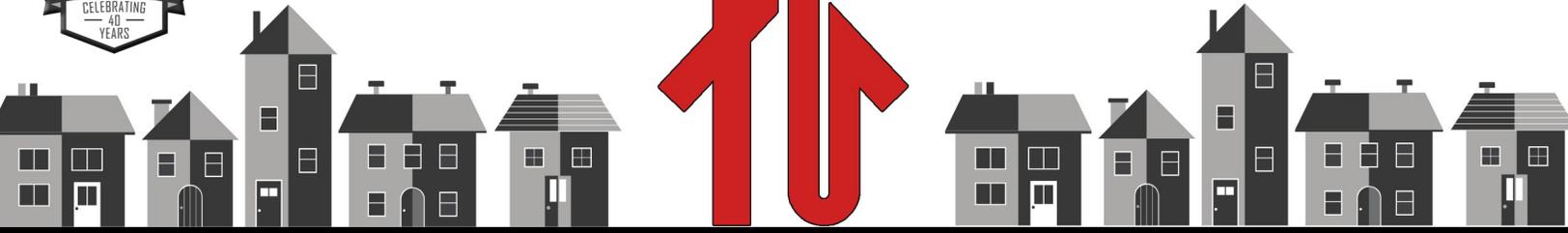


TENANT SOLIDARITY

News & information from the Tenants Union of Washington



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The Tenants Union's 40th Anniversary!

By: Violet Lavatai

This year the Tenants Union is celebrating 40 years of fighting for housing justice. Throughout the years we have seen many victories through empowering people, educating tenants of their rights, and fighting for safe and healthy homes. To all of members and friends who have worked alongside us in fighting for affordable housing, we would like to extend an invitation to our 40th anniversary celebration!

The event is to take place in mid September, details are still to be determined. Stay tuned to our social media, website, and/or the newsletter for more information.



March 2017



Director's Corner—**Welcoming our new Executive Director!**



Jessa Lewis comes to us with first hand experience of housing insecurity having experienced homelessness with a young daughter a decade ago, and an unlawful eviction last year. After being elected as a National Delegate in 2016 for Bernie Sanders and serving as the grassroots communications director at the DNC, she left her startup job to join the resistance at Standing Rock in North Dakota. There seeing the power of the grassroots and overwhelming need to help people claim their power she decided to use her education and experience in a setting where she could do the most good.

Since being hired as Executive Director Jessa has tackled the job of plotting the course the TU will take going forward head on. She is building a more resilient funding structure and new organizing models to take the TU truly statewide. In addition to changes in how the TU will run, volunteers and staff have also taken on remodeling the offices to make room for more people and to better serve the community.

"The TU is needed now more than ever to support communities in our state in determining their own futures. We have power when we come together, but to do that we first must be exposed to what is possible and what our rights are. Housing, as it is such a basic need, is an ideal starting point for people to find their voices and learn the organizing skills that can be applied elsewhere."

Jessa has an MBA in Sustainable Systems from Presidio Graduate School, and a BA in Resource Management and Policy from The Evergreen State College. She is proud of her working class Eastern Washington roots, and loves taking road trips with her teenage daughter and her Springer Spaniel.



Jessa wasted no time making sure everyone was toeing the line!



Jessa at the Democratic National Convention



Jessa's daughter kindly helped out to renovate our office

Community Spotlight

By: **Kate Dunphy**

The TU team has been reflecting on the importance of supporting intersecting movements. At a time when those in power are working so hard to divide us, to create wedges they can use to separate us and diminish our power – we feel it is important to resist by celebrating other groups and organizations who are working hard to create desperately needed change.

This quarter we want to shout out all the members of [Got Green](#) who are organizing for environmental, racial, and economic justice. Their Food Access, Young Leaders, and Climate Justice committees are building power and creating change in South Seattle.

[Got Green's annual Green-A-Thon is coming up on Saturday, April 22.](#) Individuals and groups can now form or sponsor Green-a-Thon teams to demonstrate a commitment to environmental justice rooted in working-class communities of color. Teams will fundraise within their networks before coming together for an awesome day of door-knocking to build collective power!

More details on Got Green's awesome organizing and how to volunteer or make donations is at <http://www.gotgreenseattle.org>. Much love and power to everyone with Got Green!



Image courtesy of <http://gotgreenseattle.org>

View from Spokane

By **Terri Anderson:**

The Spokane office is busy fighting away the winter blues by organizing tenants to gear up for the implementation phase of the city's Task Force on Affordable and Quality Housing. Tenants were able to include just cause eviction, anti-discrimination of source of income, rental registry and inspection, rental relocation, and non-discrimination of criminal backgrounds on the list of recommendations submitted to the mayor in October. The second phase of implementing the recommendations will begin in March with the formation of a steering committee. Terri, our Spokane Organizer, has been named to the seven member steering committee.

Even with over 80 consecutive days of snow on the ground, Amber continues to serve tenants at the three walk in tenant clinics in Spokane. Cold weather and high heating bills have been a serious problem for tenants this winter so Amber's education and counseling has been welcome service to keep families together, secure, and warm.



Continued on the next page...

View from Spokane...continued

Tenants marched at the Martin Luther King Jr. Rally and March at the Convention in January. U.S. Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers unexpectedly joined the rally where her speech was met with calls to save Obamacare and negative reaction by many in attendance. Imagine our surprise when the 5th District Congresswoman joined our tenants and friends for a photo opportunity (see photo). It was below 10 degrees that day, so anything to stay warm was welcome and HUD tenants reminded her that her support for affordable and decent housing is more important now than ever before given the severe shortage of rental housing in Spokane.

The Spokane office of the Tenants Union of Washington State continues to address the needs of tenants in the Spokane and eastern Washington. While the weather is cold the climate for change is warming up to finally address our aging, deteriorating rental housing stock, historic lows in rental housing vacancies, and tenants who deserve decent and affordable housing in a changing dynamic demographic that is transforming traditionally conservative Spokane into a diverse hopeful community.



Rep Cathy McMorris posed with Spokane Organizers & tenants

Advocacy Day in Olympia

By: [Steven Le](#)

February 2nd, 2017 marked my first Housing and Homelessness Advocacy Day. For those who don't know, Advocacy Day allows for housing justice advocates to gather and discuss past, present and pending legislation meant to preserve affordable housing and curtail homelessness. Hana, our South King County organizer, presented a workshop on Source of Income Discrimination (SOID) and described the work she did with members of the Renton Woods community. Through her and many allies' tireless efforts, Renton was able to pass a bill to prevent tenants from being discriminated based on where they receive their income to pay rent. Later that day, attendees were split up according to their legislative districts (mine was the 37th) to have a conversation with their legislators. The conversation we had with Rep. Erik Pettigrew was cordial yet frank. He was receptive to our idea of building on Renton Woods' momentum and to introduce SOID protections throughout WA State. At the same time, he acknowledged the hurdles we would need to overcome to accomplish this given the political climate. After a few other advocates put forth their ideas for change and voiced their concerns, the conversation with Rep. Pettigrew concluded.

Advocacy Day was a great opportunity to speak directly to policy makers and have our voices heard. I was surprised by the level of access we had to the decision makers, and I appreciated the time they made to listen to our concerns. However, the event should not make us complacent in our battles to further housing justice. I have no doubt we had our voices heard, but we can make this same voice heard in the work we do every day. Let's not forget SOID and the Carl Haglund Law was realized due to grassroots efforts and not the divine intervention of legislators. Until next year, Advocacy Day!

Source of Income Discrimination in Kent

By: Dinah Braccio

In January the Kent City council, with support from the Tenants Union, the Washington Low-income Housing Alliance, and the South King Housing Homelessness Partnership, passed a comprehensive Source of Income Discrimination bill! That means that if you pay your rent with a Section 8 or VASH Voucher, Social Security disbursements, or any other legal non-work income landlord may not refuse your payments and must take into account your subsidies when calculating your income to rent ratio. This is great news for the residents of Kent and another important step on the road to housing justice! A similar piece of legislation is working its way through the Washington State legislature, House Bill 1633. If you want to see these renter protections extended throughout the state, and I know that you do, call your Representatives and tell them you support HB 1633!

The Firs Mobile Home Community

By: Mónica Mendoza-Castrejón

The fight against displacement at the Firs Mobile Home Community has been huge. Since the TU first started getting involved back in July 2016, there has been a leadership committee emerged, a legal and political strategy, and immense coalition building from community leaders, educators, politicians, lawyers, and non-profits alike. This is a huge battle with many layers to it. Out of 72 families, approximately 68 are Latino, and mixed citizenship households in a location affected by gentrification. This is the first time many have gotten involved in the political process, too. But the fight has just begun, and after numerous media showings, protests, testimonies in City Hall and in the King County Council, the families from the Firs Homeowners Association, developed from the Firs Mobile Home Community, had the opportunity to meet with legislators and testify in Olympia. Here are some pictures from the visit to testify in support of HB 1514, a bill that if passed, would entail an extension of mobile home park closures from one year to three years.



TU & General Events Calendar

March & April 2017

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
19	20 Seattle Women's Commission 5:30-7:30pm	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29 Renter Nation Series: Build a Rebel City	30	31 Transgender Day of Visibility	1 April
2	3	4	5	6 Seattle Immigrant & Refugee Commission 6-8pm	7 World Health Day	8
9	10	11	12	13 TU General Membership Mtg Tenants Rights Workshop 6-8pm	14	15
16	17 Seattle Women's Commission 5:30-7:30pm	18	19	20 Renter Nation Series: Black Liberation & Racial Justice	21	22 Rainier Beach Back2School Planning Mtg

Call for Submissions

Do you love housing and the written word? Are you looking for an audience for your social justice oriented artwork? Well, look no further! The Tenants Union continuously receives and publishes works from those in the housing community. Out of state submissions welcome!

To submit your work to the Tenants Union Tenant Solidarity newsletter, please email info@tenantsunion.org. You may also send your work to our physical address at:

Tenant Solidarity Newsletter Team
Tenants Union of Washington State
5425 Rainier Ave S., Ste. B
Seattle, WA 98118

Terms for submission: All written works must be sent in .doc, .docx, .rtf format. Please, limit your submissions to 750 words or less. Please understand that we may resize any artwork to fit within the allotted space within the newsletter.