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NY tenants say 'Keep public housing public!'

written by Anne Pruden

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Dozens of tenants of New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) apartments held a militant rally on Feb. 10 on the steps of City Hall. They chanted, "Keep public housing public!" In spite of freezing temperatures, they came out on this raw day to protest Mayor Bill de Blasio's proposal to sell off one-third of NYCHA homes.

These 62,000 apartments are to be sold to private real estate developers. The mayor and his team claim their plan will "save NYCHA." Meanwhile, thousands of the 400,000 NYCHA tenants, including children, have suffered for months without heat and hot water at the coldest time of the year.

Jazz, a resident of the Jacob Riis Housing Project who spoke at the rally, exposed how the lack of services has also led to thousands of children being poisoned by lead paint.

Local, state and federal politicians stall and make excuses for the lack of funds to repair NYCHA buildings. But tenants and supporters, like rally sponsor Progress New York, have presented alternative plans to pay for NYCHA repairs and improvement, such as increasing taxes on big businesses, or by redirecting \$3 billion in subsidies offered to Amazon.com to build its new headquarters in New York and \$10 billion planned to build new jails.

Another part of de Blasio's plan calls for selling vacant lots owned by NYCHA to realtors to build more upscale apartments. But low-cost housing is what is desperately needed by the many working-class residents being driven out of their neighborhoods by gentrification.

The bill owed to the mostly Black and Latinx tenants of New York public housing is due. The tenants raised their voices loud and clear to demand "Fight for NYCHA!"

Photos by Anne Pruden

