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Housing is a right — Fight, fight, fight!

written by Stephen Millies
October 22, 2019



Housing activist Nathylin Flowers Adesegun. SLL photo: Stephen Millies

New York — Hundreds of people filled the auditorium of Manhattan's Washington Irving campus near Union Square on Oct. 16 to fight for housing for all.

After years of skyrocketing rents, the New York state Legislature finally passed several bills in June to strengthen rent control. These bills eliminated some of the loopholes that landlords use to jack up rents and evict tenants. Rent control was made permanent — no longer would tenants have to travel to the state capital of Albany to beg politicians to re-enact it.

None of this would have happened without years of struggle. Now, the fight is to get decent housing for all. New York City landlords and developers [keep nearly a quarter-million apartments empty](#) instead of making the rent affordable.

Housing activists are demanding a “New York Homes Guarantee.” This includes universal rent control; fully funded and resident-controlled public housing; 600,000 units of affordable “social” housing; ending homelessness; and eliminating toxins like lead and mold from all housing.

Solving the housing crisis will take at least \$10 billion more annually in New York state’s housing budget. Taxing the billionaires and developers can pay for it.

‘That ain’t right!’

Speakers at the rally spoke in Spanish, Chinese and English. They spoke in front of a banner attacking New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s housing crisis. Andy’s daddy—former Gov. Mario Cuomo—stole \$8 billion that was supposed to be used for affordable housing and built prisons with it instead.

Seventy-three-year-old Nathylin Flowers Adesegun spoke of being homeless after the rent on her Brooklyn apartment was tripled by a greedy landlord. When she confronted New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio last year at his gym about the housing crisis, DeBlasio replied: “I’m in the middle of doing my workout. Sorry, you can’t do this now.”

People in the audience yelled out, “That ain’t right!” Other speakers told their own

bitter stories.

A moment of silence was held for the four homeless men who were beaten to death recently in Manhattan's Chinatown.

A speaker from the Queensbridge Houses spoke in Chinese about how ovens would have to be turned on in order to heat apartments in the winter. An estimated \$31 billion is needed to repair public housing for 500,000 people in the Big Apple.

The main organizer of the impressive rally was the Metropolitan Council on Housing, which has been fighting for tenants for 60 years. Many other community-based organizations helped to build it as well and taped their colorful banners to the auditorium's balcony. They included Churches United for Fair Housing; CAAAV, originally called the Coalition Against Anti-Asian Violence; the Court Square Committee; Make the Road While Walking; the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition; and Woodside on the Move. Members of the Democratic Socialists of America came and worked to make the event a success.

