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People's Tribunal on Evictions in NYC puts landlords on trial

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Speaking out against the landlord's at the People's Tribunal. SLL photo: Stephen Millies

New York, Oct. 29 — Hundreds of people jammed a union meeting hall tonight at the AFSCME District 37 headquarters in lower Manhattan to demand a halt to evictions. The People's Tribunal on Evictions heard testimony from dozens of people speaking in Spanish, Haitian Creole, French and English.

People's judges heard testimony from tenants whose apartments were infested by rats, roaches and mice while their landlords did nothing. Some spoke about how landlords used the Major Capital Improvements scam to jack-up rents.

One speaker recalled how Joy Noel, an 85-year old grandmother was evicted from her Brooklyn apartment by Carnegie Management. Labeled as "worst evictors" were Steven Finkelstein, who sued 889 families, and Daniel Benedict, who sued 446.

Last year there were 18,018 evictions in New York City. Landlords threw tens of thousands of people and their belongings into the street.

That's one reason why 100,000 students in New York City's schools are homeless during at least part of the year. Meanwhile in socialist Cuba, despite the U.S. blockade, not a single child is homeless.

Making NYC eviction free

This impressive and moving tribunal was organized by the Right to Counsel NYC Coalition. It took this coalition three years of fighting until winning in 2017 the right for tenants facing eviction in housing court to have a lawyer.

Housing and community groups endorsing this new coalition include the Crown Heights Tenants Union, Flatbush Tenant Coalition and the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition. Volunteers worked during the tribunal to provide food, childcare and interpretation.

Twelve demands are being made of the city to stop evictions. Among them is a

moratorium on evictions during the winter, from Oct 1 to May 30. Another is to recognize housing as a human right. Expanding the right to legal counsel is the first demand.

An “eviction defense network orientation” will be held on Nov. 21 from 6 to 9 pm at 121 6th Avenue on the sixth floor. RSVP to: info@righttocounsel.org.

For more information: <https://www.righttocounselnyc.org/>

