

THE BOGGLIE BREAD DOWN

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100 Years Later, Families Still Face Crowded, Dangerous Housing

By Ericka Martinez

The empty hallway is decorated with disintegrating wallpaper, old wooden floor creaks as people walk by. Narrow and unstable stairs lead to the other apartments of this building. The stairs are so narrow that a middle-aged man needs to give way to his wife as he follows behind her. At the top of the stairs a young woman greets visitors with a welcoming smile. She introduces herself as Victoria Confino, a fourteen-year-old, who immigrated from Turkey in 1913 and is now living in a tenement house. Victoria is one of the many tenants who lived in a NYC tenement home in the early 1900s. Her story is told at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in Manhattan.

In Turkey, her family may have been able to own a mansion, with a maid, luxurious rooms, and bathrooms, but due to a war in her home country, she had to flee. New to the United States, with barely any money, her family moved into a tenement house at 97 Orchard St on the Lower East Side. It cost \$15 a month.

Victoria's nightmare of a journey to New York wasn't the last mistreatment she and her family experienced. Confino was Jewish and spoke Ladino but, she quickly had to learn to speak English to communicate with her neighbors to help her learn how to live in a tenement house. The apartment was small, one bedroom.

Her family, six brothers and cousins, along with her parents divided it into two bedrooms. Victoria slept on a carpet in the kitchen. Being the only teenage girl among her nine family members, Victoria's daily routine consisted of doing chores, going to school and working at a sweatshop that her papa owned.

She had to share the restroom with her neighbors. The very cold winter weather was approaching. The coal from her stove led many of her brothers to get sick. There was an outbreak of polio, and the misfortune of having to go to a bathhouse and pay to take a shower with others once a week. Taking care of babies made tenement homes stink of dirty diapers because they had to reuse diapers and the high amount of pests in homes was another factor of the unpleasant smells.

Victoria's landlord was Russian and lived in Brooklyn. In 1901 tenants of NYC were tired of the mistreatment of their landlord, so some tenants took their landlord to court and their case was taken to the U.S Supreme Court. This case established the movement for New Yorkers to fight for their tenant rights. Now the landlords had to install restrooms on each floor. But if Victoria's toilet broke, the landlord wouldn't care. He left it unfixed for months. Her family's future plans were

to move to Harlem where they could have a bigger home and better treatment; however, they had to raise a lot of money to afford electricity and other appliances that landlords don't offer.

105 years later, people are still struggling. In the Bronx, severe crowding is a common problem. Genevieve Adjei Sr, a high school student, deals with severe crowding in her family's two bedroom apartment. Ten years ago, she moved from

Ghana to the Bronx to be with her mother and her siblings for a brighter future. Her family decided to move near the Grand Concourse where she lives with her two young brothers, her twin sister, her grandmother, mother, and father. She quickly had to learn English and learn her way through the city.

Genevieve lacks privacy because she shares a room with her twin sister on a bunk bed. Her brothers also sleep on a full



*A family of seven living in a crowded New York City tenement home in the late 1800s.
Photo credit: Jacob Riis*

size bed, and her grandma on a twin size bed. They all sleep in one room. Her parents share the other room. At times she wishes she had a room for herself or to share with just her sister. Also, she finds herself having a hard time using the single bathroom in her apartment since it's always being used. Because her grandmother is home all the time, she gets time to focus on school, more than caring for her younger brothers.

This summer, her landlord is replacing her rugged bedroom floors with wooden floors. She doesn't have any complaints of her landlord. Even though at times he lacks at being attentive of the tenants housing problems.

"You can barely find time, there's always something going on," she said.

Much as the Confino family divided their apartment to make a bedroom, many Bronx families put up walls to divide rooms. Esther Sanchez, a high school student, lives in three-bedroom apartment on the Grand Concourse. She lives with her younger brother, mother and step-father. Last year, her mother decided to destroy the living room wall to have more space and build another wall elsewhere in the apartment. This process took two months to complete and their landlord wasn't aware of this construction until he found trash bags of pavement and cement buckets.

"Super didn't know at first. He went to do inspection, saw it and let it be like that," she said. As he did his yearly

check-up of each apartment, he noticed the change in the Esther's home. As he questioned the change, he didn't sound angry about the construction. He let the apartment stay as it was.

The Fire Department of New York says such makeshift walls are dangerous because they create fire traps and put fire fighters and tenants at risk.

According to the Furman Center at NYU's State of New York City's Housing and Neighborhoods in 2017 report, the neighborhood of Morrisania is one of the top four most severely crowded districts in the Bronx. There were 165,480 tenants living with crowded households in 2016 compare to 2010 were 155,500. There are 111,660 tenants with a rent burden since of 2016. Another crowded district in the Bronx is Highbridge. There are 138,332 tenants living in a crowded household compared to 2010 where there were only 137,827. There are 91,100 tenants struggling with paying their rent.

The Fire Department of New York says many of the fires starting in the Bronx are due to apartments being a 100 years old. Patrick and John, two firefighters from FDNY Engine Company 50, Ladder 19 in Morrisania, know the dangers of these apartments. The electrical demands of 2018 are no match for 100 years old buildings wired for a simple time. Many tenants now use a lot of electricity to charge their phones, computers, and have smart tvs. Therefore, many buildings are now catching on fire due to the electrical wiring

overload and delayed maintenance in buildings not being taken care of.

“Black Sunday” is one of the many cases where electrical issues put firefighters in danger. On a chilly Sunday morning in late January of 2005, a fire started after a blizzard drowned the whole city with snow the day before. A call came early that day to different fire departments around the district that a fire has started at a tenement home on East 178th Street near the Grand Concourse. The cause was from an electrical issue. Engine 42 was the first FDNY to get there. They had their men taking the houses and getting into the building. Then Ladder 33 arrived and their men were sent to the third floor where the fire began. Ladder 27 and Rescue 3 were the last to come. Their men were sent to the fourth floor to keep the fire from spreading upwards. There were six men on the 4th floor searching for any civilians in danger. Two met their deaths that day.

“Black Sunday” was an event caused by two major issues, that New York tenants still deal with. One of them was electrical issues which started the event. But what ended the lives of two firefighters was subdivision in apartments. Once the four firefighters enter apartment 4L, one of them who was new to the area, was confused at the sight of padlocks on the room doors, that weren't supposed to be there. A further problem was that all the hydrants were frozen, there was no water. Suddenly, the firefighters noticed that the fire had gone through the wooden floors

and started to reach up to where they were. They got a chance to look at the window and noticed that the fire escape was two windows down, but it was too far for them to jump to. As the fire came closer, the firefighters lost one another through the flames and black smoke. There were a group of 3 and of 2 in two different places of the apartment. The sixth man got lost. As they pleaded for help through their walkie talkies, they had no option but to jump out of the windows. One by one they jumped out of a window and fell 50 feet to the pavement. Two firefighters died on impact. The other 4 survived with several serious injuries.

As firefighters, both Patrick and John were impacted by “Black Sunday”. They said that many buildings in the Bronx aren't up to code. It puts them and the tenants at risk. Also, by working around the Bronx for many years they found out that many landlords are extremely cheap. Many of them don't have money to properly maintain their buildings. The ones that do, still decide not to install sprinklers. The lack of maintenance has caused there to be an increase of rats and other pests in the buildings. When asked, “Do you think that the government should be more aware of these issues?” John's eyebrow rose and with a meaner tone he asked, “It's the landlord responsibility. Why should it be the government's?”

They are conditions Victoria Confino would recognize.

Conditions Still Bad at Buildings of Worst Bronx Landlords

By Gabriella Amanini

Twenty-five of New York City's worst landlords are in the Bronx. Between them, they own 67 buildings, according to the Public Advocate's 100 Worst Landlords in New York City list. The Landlords Watchlist is a list of the 100 worst building owners who severely neglect tenants and their apartments. The tenants in these buildings constantly complain about a variety of things wrong in these buildings. Often, things don't get fixed. This list is created based on how many HPD

(Department of Housing Preservation and Development) violations there are on each property a landlord owns.

Rawle Isaacs is a Bronx landlord who earned the second spot on the 100 Worst Landlords list in 2017. Isaac owns a total of four buildings: three buildings on Morris Avenue, and one on Walton Avenue. At 1892 Morris Avenue there were 485 open violations in November 2017. Today there are 234. Some open



*The entrance to Rawle Isaacs's building, located at 1892 Morris Avenue.
Photo credit: Gabriella Amanini*

The building is so unsafe, Rivera says, that his wife was almost sexually assaulted there. It wouldn't have happened he argues, if there were security cameras.

violations at 1892 Morris Avenue are water leaks, and lack of heat and hot water.

William Rivera, a tenant at 1892 Morris Avenue described the bad conditions. He doesn't keep up with the building, all he cares about is money. That's it."

Rivera said there are rat, mice, and roach infestations, leaks, building is dirty, and the elevator frequently breaks down. The building is so unsafe, Rivera says, that his wife was almost sexually assaulted there. It wouldn't have happened he argues, if there were security cameras.

Rivera says the building—especially its elderly tenants—need a new elevator. He described the landlord as a “deadbeat father” who does nothing for the tenants and building. He and other tenants have attempted to make a change in their apartments and building by contacting 311 numerous times. They have attended tenant meetings, called News 12 The Bronx and been the subject of newspaper articles. The super tries to keep up with the building, but he is so overwhelmed with all the violations and needs help. All this work is too much for one person to possibly

handle, Rivera said. The landlord treats his workers badly, Rivera says. “A happy employee equals a happy tenant,” he says.

Thomas Steiner is also a Bronx landlord who has claimed the third spot on the 100 Worst Landlord list. Steiner owns a total of four buildings. He has two on Stratford Avenue, one on Newbold Avenue and one on Castle Hill Avenue. Steiner currently has a total of 837 open housing code violations across his four buildings. These violations include a variety of different levels of seriousness, all violations mentioned in this article are level C - the most dangerous. Some of the violations at Stein buildings include lead paint usage throughout all his



The stairs at 1892 Morris Avenue, which is indicative of the dirty environment tenants face living in the building. Photo credit: Gabriella Amanini

buildings. The paint used tested positive for lead content and is on a deteriorated subsurface or peeling. Numerous people filed complaints surrounding this issue from 2009 through 2010. According to HPD records, his buildings have many defective and missing window guards which is severely dangerous for residents with young children. The tenants had no access to heat. There are defective locks and fire escapes, and there are leaks and splintering wood floors. These serious violations seem to occur throughout all his buildings based on the HPD data on open housing code violations.

Gil Broitman is another Bronx landlord who owns a total of two buildings. In his building on 900 East 213 St there are four open violations. Three are the most serious: lack of hot water in the apartments, and an insufficient supply of gas and electric service. His other building at 1807 Phelan Place has a total of 341 violations. Throughout the residents' apartments there is mold, leaks, defective surfaces, and no access to heat.

Stephen Tobia is another Bronx landlord who made the list in spot 76. He owns one building: 2356 Lorillard Place which has a total of 19 open violations. Haille, a tenant in the building who declined to give her last name, described the worst problem in her apartment as rodents. Rodent infestations aren't listed in the open violations data but appears to be a problem she manages. Haille claims when there is a problem the super comes to fix

the issue and she likes where she lives despite the minor things occurring in her apartment. Although there are problems Haille considers minor, there are a few dangerous violations for other residents in the building. Some class C violations include missing or defective window guards, and a lead based paint hazard- paint that tested positive for lead content and that is on a deteriorated subsurface or peeling. Multiple people have complained about these issues which started in 2012 and went on into 2013. The most recent being in 2018. Although there are few violations for Tobia's building, all the residents need to live in a safe environment. The 2017 rankings is based on the violations the building has over a twelve month period. Landlords can get off the Worst Landlords list when they fix the violations.



The chipped paint on the doors at 1892 Morris Avenue make the building unappealing for the tenants and their visitors.

Photo credit: Gabriella Amanini

Tenants Continue to Suffer Under One of NYC's Worst Landlords

By Emily Rosa

In 2015, he was ranked number one. In 2016, he dropped to number five. Then in 2017, he completely disappeared from the list. Some of his buildings have over 400 violations and tenants brought numerous lawsuits against him. Ved Parkash is one of New York City's worst landlords, but he's no longer on the Worst Landlords list posted each November by the Public Advocate's Office.

"Este landlord es el peor," exclaims one of his tenants at 2454 Tiebout Ave in the Fordham section of the Bronx.



*The entrance to Parkash's 750 Grand Concourse.
Photo credit: Emily Rosa*

Jaime Steinberg has been living in his apartment for more than 40 years, and he is certain that 2454 Tiebout Ave has not been the same since Parkash bought the building. There are rats all over the building. A friend of Jaime's, another tenant at this building, has killed about 1,200 rats, three to four a day. Jaime's radiators were destroyed, his walls were covered with mold, and only after months of going back and forth with Parkash's workers, did they agree to repair his radiators and paint over his walls. For the past three years, Jaime tells us that his apartment smells of paint and rats. No matter what he does, the smell remains in the air. It sticks to his clothes and anything he has in his home. He doesn't buy furniture, because he's afraid it will smell of rats. During the day, his only luck is the fresh air that comes from the outside through the windows. But at night he closes them and the smell covers him entirely. After Jaime threatened to call the housing services to come smell his apartment, Parkash sent him fans and air purifiers, none of which rid the smell.

Currently, 2454 Tiebout Ave has 21 open housing code violations including a trip hazard in the kitchen located in a basement apartment, a water leak from the ceiling and all the kitchen walls in another



*A frequently dysfunctional elevator is surprisingly working at 750 Grand Concourse, a building owned by Parkash.
Photo credit: Emily Rosa*

basement apartment, and a carbon monoxide detecting device missing in a sixth floor apartment. The most recent complaint is from July 23rd, 2018. A tenant on the fifth floor complains that the gas has been shut off in their entire apartment.

According to the methodology on the website, the annual 100 Worst Landlord list is created by adding up violations for each building and dividing it by twelve (the total number of months) and then it is divided by the number of units in the building. The Public Advocate's office says that Parkash's violations must have

decreased because he fixed them or he must have sold buildings, which would result in a decrease in his total violations. However, tenants are still having problems and numerous complaints.

Another tenant of Parkash's, Marcia, has been living at 751 Gerard Ave for 27 years. For six years, she and some other tenants have fought Parkash to fix the boiler. For six winters, the tenants had no consistent source of heat. Another major issue in this building is the elevator. It breaks down so frequently that tenants have discovered the trick to keep it up and running. They spread the word that only five people should go inside at once, that way they don't have to suffer taking the stairs when it breaks down and the landlord won't fix it. They built a sense of community and communication with one another in order to solve their problems. Ray, a locksmith from across the street of 751 Gerard Ave, blatantly says that the super doesn't do anything for the building and that tenants call him up to their apartments to do work for them all the time.

But the super at 751 Gerard Ave, Luis, says that the problem isn't the owner, but the people who work for him. He says that before he came to the building, it wasn't in good shape. According to the HPD website, there are still 17 open violations including missing cement and ceramic floor tiles in the bathroom of a first floor apartment.

At 750 Grand Concourse, the

building with the most lawsuits filed against Parkash, not many tenants were willing to speak. Beulah Ingram, from an apartment on the first floor, tells us that her building is one of Parkash's best buildings. The walls are freshly painted and the lobby has a nice architectural design.

Beulah Ingram has been living in her apartment for 20 years. Most of her blame goes to the city and the tenants who are afraid to speak up. "No meeting will work with 110 tenants and only have six show up," she stated angrily with her arms crossed and her brows furrowed. About eight years ago, Parkash tried to kick her out her building by saying that he needed her apartment for his manager. He took her to court but with a lawyer from Fifth Avenue, she was able to win the case and keep her apartment. Parkash had already tried this tactic of tenant harassment with another apartment, and Beulah's lawyer quickly found his trick. Ms. Ingram has experienced many other issues with her apartment and she's fought vigorously to restore them. Some of the complaints that she has filed for her building include broken windows in common areas, exposed wires on the third floor, and pests nuisances. An overall theme shared by the tenants is the fact that people are scared to speak up. But Marcia, Jaime, and Beulah urge them to raise their voices and take action.

Another building of Parkash's, 2899 Kingsbridge Terrace, has 19 open HPD violations. Most violations come

from apartments on the B side of the building, including a loose door knob on a fifth floor apartment and defective plastered surfaces on a fourth floor apartment.

Parkash is off the Worst Landlords List, but he's still in the forefront of his tenants' minds. When reached by phone and asked to comment on the conditions of the buildings he owns, Ved Parkash cut off the question. "No comment," he said. "No thank you."



*5th floor hallway of 2899 Kingsbridge Terrace.
Photo credit: Emily Rosa*

Organizations Assist Tenants in Their Fight Against MCIs

By Jada Rivera
and Emelina Delvalle

All over the Bronx, people are suffering from high rents and poor housing conditions. There are daily tragedies in communities where people are on fixed incomes and can't afford their homes. According to ProPublica, there were “more than 450,000 New York City eviction cases filed between January 2013 and June 2015.” While 27,039 Bronx apartments are under state rent regulation, according to the New York City Guidelines Board, landlords still find a way to hike up the rent, activists say. One method many landlords follow are MCIs, also known as major capital improvements. Landlords are allowed to raise the rent after making significant repairs, meaning they make a major restoration that benefits the whole building. These charges are called Major Capital Improvement increases, in which tenants end up paying higher rent long after

the renovation is completed.

However, there are organizations like CASA and NWBCCC that provide hope. Community Action for Safe Apartments (CASA) is driven by tenant organizing projects for neighborhoods in the southwest Bronx. Their mission is to protect and maintain affordable and safe housing for their community. The lead tenant is organizer Pablo Estupinan. His staff assists tenant members in forming associations that organizes to get repairs, fight landlord harassment, and stop displacement. The CASA staff conducts skill workshops that educate tenants on their basic rights. CASA hosts weekly tenants meetings in which anyone with a housing or landlord related issue can come for advice.



Tenants supported by a NWBCCC protest.
Photo credit: NWBCCC



Tenants from different buildings hold a meeting at CASA to talk about their situations.
Photo credit: CASA

The Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition (NWBCCC), is a member-led organization fighting for racial and economic justice for the community. They say their mission is to empower people to take action toward issues that affect subjects, such as safe and affordable housing. They work to form tenant associations that take action to end landlord

harassment and win repairs. In addition, they recruit teenagers for outreach and help organize data for potential buildings that they can organize.

ANHD coordinates with 18 housing organizations in the Bronx to make their voice stronger. A project of theirs, The Displacement Alert Project (DAP) Map is a building-by-building interactive map that shows where residential tenants could be facing significant displacement pressures and where affordable apartments are most threatened by it.

These teams make it their priority to fight against what they believe to be unjust. Tenants facing terrible conditions are joining these groups, where they feel they can make a difference to improve their current problems and possibly prevent other people from going through the same thing.



Tenants hold press conference outside during a protest.
Photo credit: NWBCCC

NYC Ensures Representation to Low-Income Tenants

By Hadiatou Jalloh

On Friday, August 11th, 2017, Mayor Bill de Blasio signed into law an act that guarantees legal representation for any low-income resident who is facing eviction. The new law that is protecting low income tenants is the first of its kind in the world. Activists and organizers fought for a law that established the right to counsel in housing cases, arguing that tenants needed legal representation if they were going to get a fair shot at justice in housing court.

The Right to Counsel NYC Coalition sought and won greater funding for legal representation for tenants. Legal representation is promised to any tenant who is facing eviction and has an income

that is 200% of the federal poverty level or less. This is about \$23,000 for a single person and about \$49,000 for a family of four. The lawyers are being funded by the city to work for the tenants. Right to Counsel is being developed in various zip codes and will occur over the course of five years. These zip codes are chosen from several factors, including the number of evictions, shelter entries, and rent stabilized units. Representing the neighborhoods 10457, 10467, and 10468, which are the first to get represented. These neighborhoods are Williamsbridge, East Tremont, and Kingsbridge Heights, all located in the Bronx. All three of these



Tenants, attorneys, and activists celebrate the establishment of a law providing lawyers for tenants in housing court. Photo credit: Edwin J. Torres

neighborhoods have large population densities and the percentage of families with children eligible for shelter due to eviction is 37.2- 41.4. This data is from the year 2012 through the first half of 2015.

By 2022, 100 percent of tenants in housing court will have access to either full representation or advice from a lawyer. Unfortunately, by 2022, tenants with high income cannot be represented, meaning they will have to find their own lawyers. About 97 percent of the cases of housing court are provoked by the landlords, and a vast majority of the landlords have lawyers while the tenants are left defenseless. “That's when the lawyers that are being funded by the city represents the tenants and raise defenses,” says Jack from the Boom! Health Legal Services.

The New York City Council funded \$155 million over the five years to fulfil the Right to Counsel NYC Coalition. City government hired a cadre of housing attorneys to represent poor clients that are posted to existing legal service organizations. Many people worry about their immigration status affecting them in getting an attorney. However, the law does not discriminate based on immigration status. Everyone who meets the income is eligible. During the five-year phase, the Right to Counsel will not be the only source where tenants can access a free lawyer. There are also free legal service programs outside of the zip codes where tenants may be able to access a free attorney. “The right to an attorney starts

when the case is filed. If you are being sued for nonpayment, you have to go to court and file an answer. If you are being sued in a holdover proceeding, the first time you go to court is your first court date” states Right to Counsel Coalition on its website. When a tenant goes to court they will be scheduled on a special Right to Counsel day and/or in a special Right to Counsel courtroom. Tenant attorneys from non-profit legal service providers will call out the tenants’ name and offer legal representation. The lawyers just don’t go to court to represent the tenants. For instance, some tenants cannot stay in their apartment, however, the lawyer can get the eviction off their records. Therefore, the lawyers can find them another place to stay in the meantime.

With this new law, there are many benefits with it besides the fact that low income residents are getting representation. Fewer illegal evictions will lead to fewer families becoming homeless, which is a huge crisis in America that is increasing. “Too often eviction and displacement is the cause of poverty and the unraveling of our communities,” states Adriene Holder, head of civil practice at the Legal Aid Society. Even in cases where eviction is a guarantee, legal representation can make the process less painful and interruptive.

Last year, 28,849 New York families were evicted and many of these evictions wouldn't have occurred if the tenants had legal representation.

New York City Subsidized Housing Erodes

By Daniella Amanini
and Elaine de la Concha

Tenants of the Bronx are losing rent stabilized apartments. In New York City, there were 1,042,397 rent stabilized apartments in 2002, yet only 986,840 units in 2011. The loss of stabilized apartments in the Bronx is a problem. In many Bronx neighborhoods tenants pay more than 50% of their income on rent, a situation housing experts call being severely rent burdened. University Heights, Highbridge, and Kingsbridge are among the most severely rent burdened neighborhoods in the city. In 2016, 42% of severely rent burdened, low-income households paid more than half their income on rent. Between 2002 and 2014, the number of rent-stabilized units

that were considered affordable to low-income households fell 27%—a net loss of 233,931 units citywide. Between 2011 and 2014, the number of unregulated and rent-stabilized units affordable to low-income renters continued to decline in New York City, according to the NYU Furman Center’s Annual State of NYC Neighborhood Report. Rent stabilization sets maximum rates for annual rent increases and entitles tenants to receive required services from their landlords. These tenants also have the opportunity to have their leases renewed under rent stabilization. There are 27,000 rent stabilized units in The Bronx, according to the NYC Rent Guidelines Board. That number is eroding as units exit the stabilization program. In the Bronx, the neighborhoods seeing this the most include areas from the Cross Bronx Expressway all



The map identifies buildings that have had a significant decrease in stabilized units between 2007 and 2016. Each blue marker displays a specific address. Photo credit: Elaine de la Concha

Between 2002 and 2014, the number of rent-stabilized units that were considered affordable to low-income households fell 27%—a net loss of 233,931 units citywide.

the way up to Bedford Park Boulevard, according to Jim Buckley, executive director of the University Neighborhood Housing Program, whose mission is to create, preserve, and improve affordable housing and bring needed resources to the Bronx.

Lucy Block, an expert from an organization called Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development, explained that while rents are regulated by state law, landlords find ways to get around the regulations. “There are different mechanisms that landlords can use to destabilize those apartments,” Block said.

Block explained that the destabilization of apartments happens when “someone leaves the apartment.” When there’s a maximum legal rent on a unit and someone leaves the apartment, the rent can be increased by 20%. Additionally, the landlord can raise the rent based on repairs or renovations. The legal threshold is at \$2,700, and once the landlord increases the rent above the threshold, the landlord can deregulate the apartment. Another loophole relates to regulatory programs that are supposed to protect rent stabilized apartments. “There are time limits on them, so the program might last for thirty years and at the end of the thirty years, all the apartments that were rent stabilized are no longer rent stabilized,” Block said.

Landlords use multiple tactics to try to destabilize apartments. If landlords want to increase the rent by 20%, they might try to evict their tenants. Landlords might also

When there’s a maximum legal rent on a unit and someone leaves the apartment, the rent can be increased by 20%.

worsen living conditions for their tenants, forcing them to leave the horrible conditions that overtake their homes. Emmanuel Pardilla, an organizer for a non-profit organization called the Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition, explained that landlords use these tactics to try to “spend the least amount of money and maximize profit in that process.” There could also be a situation where a landlord tries to conduct a buyout, offering the tenant money if they leave the apartment.

Buckley cautions while there is a problem, it might not be as stark as some other data suggests. “We are starting to lose rent stabilized units,” he said. However, he added he isn’t sure that the issue is “as dramatic as some of the data indicates.” Buckley believes this issue is not as concerning as it seems because of the data presented by a resource provided by Association for Neighborhood Housing Development. The DAP map is a tool ANHD uses to locate buildings that can be at risk for tenant displacement. “We have issues sometimes with the ANHD site because the data is not one hundred percent accurate”, said Buckley. He believes that a solution for this issue would be “getting the law changed and changing the way stabilized laws are done.”

Infamous Landlord's Buildings Are Lacking in Safety

By Gabriel Cruz

David David goes by many names: David David, David Green, and David Kleiner. But among certain city officials, tenants, and activists, he is known in one way: as one of the most notorious landlords in the Bronx. Mr. David has been featured on Public Advocate for the City of New York's 100 Worst Landlords list multiple times under his different aliases. In 2016, he was on the list twice as David David at #13 and David Green at #72.

124 E 176th Street has 148 open violations listed by the Housing Preservation and Development Department (HPD). One of the violations filed in July of 2018 states there is still lead based paint in the building. Other violations refer to mold and pests in some apartments. During a fairly busy afternoon on July 30th, 124 East 176th Street looks like many other buildings in the Bronx. Upon entering the building, however, one is immediately struck by the acrid, pungent smell of the main lobby of mold and dirt. Two women were chatting outside an apartment. The lobby is unfurnished despite being quite large and open, with a small nook where chairs could be. The floor looks grimy and stained with dark patches of dirt. On the fourth floor, there is a sink along the wall, discarded in the hallway. In the stairwell between the sixth floor and the roof, there are dog droppings. Near the door to the

roof, there is a shopping cart and some plastic bags seemingly placed haphazardly. Paint chips litter the staircase. There is an alarm that goes off when someone gets too close to the door to the roof, yet there are no signs on the door nor in the stairwell that indicate that. In May of 2018, a rally and press conference were held by the tenants of 124 E 176th Street, one of the buildings that Mr. David manages. The rally was in response to Mr. David's neglect of the building and harassment of the tenants. One of the tenant association leaders who took part in the rally, Corine Ombongo-Golden, told the Bronx Times that Mr. David has taken her to court a few times per year, for non-payment of rent, despite her claims that she pays her rent



*Dog droppings are left in the stairwell between the 6th floor and the door to the roof in 124 East 176th Street, a building owned by David David.
Photo credit: Gabriel Cruz*

regularly and on time. She said this has been happening since 2011. The organization that spearheaded this rally is the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition. A member of the NBCCC, Emmanuel Pardilla, has worked with tenants on East 124th Street. He provided information about additional buildings managed by David David. According to Pardilla, 2155 Grand Ave has many issues such as no gas, and 1855 Monroe Ave has problems on the 6th floor regarding leaks and ceiling caving in. Additionally, some claim major harassment has occurred within this very building, but refused to clarify the extent of said harassment.

There are 60 open violations at 2155 Grand Ave. The violations are varied, some regarding pests such as rats and mice, while others are about a lack of maintenance and repairs. One tenant of 2155 Grand Ave, who asked to be called Bell, said the building is doing about as well as many other similar buildings in the Bronx. “The thing with the buildings here



A kitchen sink obstructs the fourth floor hallway, leading to a stairwell in 124 E 176th, a building owned by David David.

Photo credit: Gabriel Cruz

is that they’re old so the piping and the ceilings aren’t in the best shape.” He considers his landlord to be “Amazing, he’s just and fair,” He said that while the landlord is behind on repairs, he does care about the building. Bell said Mr. David is not the landlord and that he had never heard the name before. According to the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, 2155 Monroe Ave is currently owned by Moshe Lieb and the building was sold in October of 2015. However, the mortgage documents are linked with David Kleiner. With regards to the lack of gas, as mentioned by Emmanuel Pardilla, Bell said that Con Edison has been slow in repairing and returning gas to the buildings.

At 1855 Monroe Ave, there are 21 open violations. Many of them put tenants at risk such as faulty or obstructed fire escapes. For example, in July of 2017, a tenant complained about household items obstructing the 3rd, 4th, and 5th story fire escapes. In November of 2015, another tenant complained about difficulty in sliding the drop-ladder into the guide rods at the front of the building. In addition to the complaints regarding the fire escapes, in February and March of 2018, tenants reported the presence of mold on the second and first floor, respectively. These reports, as well as an open bottle of what could be urine in the stairwell, demonstrate potential health risks on account of poor sanitation and a lack of much needed upkeep.

Tenants Repair Their Building One Lawsuit at a Time

By Carolyn Martinez

Golden embellishments in the lobby, shiny mirrored walls, clean halls, and a working elevator isn't exactly what comes to mind when discussing the worst building of the city's worst landlord. 750 Grand Concourse is one of Ved Parkash's worst buildings in the Bronx, with more than 20 open and unresolved HPD violations in total and more than 50 open tenant complaints. This degree of negligence prompted 38 tenants to take legal action against Ved Parkash back in April 2016, according to the New York State Unified Court System databases. Since then, tenants have demanded better conditions and significant improvements have been made.

Ved Parkash is a New York City landlord with 67 properties in the Bronx, Queens, and Brooklyn. Up until 2017, he was on the 100 Worst Landlords in NYC list compiled by Public Advocate for the City of New York, Letitia James. According to a representative for Letitia James, Parkash has been removed due to the decline of violations in his buildings, the only factor that determines a landlord's place on the list.

Beulah Ingram, 66, a tenant at 750 Grand Concourse living with her daughter and grandson, has taken legal action against Parkash numerous times for reasons ranging from failure to repair the

radiator and the windows in her apartment to even fighting back his attempt to remove her from the building in 2009. At the time, Mrs. Ingram was an active member of the tenants' association in her building, vigorously pushing for reforms in her building. She believes this may have helped her win the case.

Beulah has lived in her first-floor apartment at 750 for almost twenty years, and for just as long she's been demanding safe and healthy living conditions. As of now, she has fought, not only for her apartment's needs, but for her neighbors as well. With a strong sense of leadership and will to fight for what's right, she has fought to restore the main entrance door, fix broken windows on various halls, repair exposed wires, and demand vermin extermination in common areas. Her persistent fight for her neighbor's causes has exhausted her, as she claims, "I'm not going to keep doing things for these 20, 30-year-olds, I'm 66. I'm tired." Nevertheless, the work of the tenants has significantly improved the condition of the building and their apartments. On their ongoing battle against the health and safety hazards, Mrs. Ingram warns her successor, "If he [Parkash] finds he can harass he will," she reveals as she looks down solemnly, shaking her head, recalling the battle she,

alone, fought against Parkash as her fearful neighbors hid behind her.

Two blocks down at 751 Gerard Ave, tenants have had a different experience with Parkash. “I’ve been to his house, I know his two sons. The youngest one is so handsome,” says a tenant on the fifth floor. She claims that her only issue has been with the elevator, which always breaks down, but the superintendent is quick to fix it. The NYC Housing Preservation and Development violations database begs to differ, noting 17 open violations in the building: exposed electrical wires, broken windows, cracked tiles on the hallway floors, broken fire escape doors, and pests all over the building. Although two outspoken tenants agree that “the landlord is a piece of s***,” they’ve never taken legal action against Parkash for negligence.

There are ten lawsuits pending against Ved Parkash in the Bronx County Civil Court. Six were brought on by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, three from the Consolidated Edison Company of NY Inc., and one from a tenant.



*The lobby of 750 Grand Concourse, despite being owned by one of the worst landlords in NYC, is delicately embellished with gold and mirror details.
Photo credit: Carolyn Martinez*

Despite those allegations, Luis, the superintendent at 751 Gerard Ave., claims he’s never had any personal issues with Parkash. He’s aware that Parkash is named one of the worst landlords in NYC but he’s experienced something different; “He’s a very attentive landlord. Whenever there’s some maintenance that requires fixing, he provides.” In addition, several tenants at 751 Gerard Ave. revealed that Parkash is a considerate landlord, that when made aware of an issue regarding his buildings or apartments, he is quick to remedy it. Despite the tenants’ allegations, the building continues to have an open complaint of heavily flowing water in an apartment on the sixth floor on July 17th as well as 17 open violations; broken apartment floors, defective windows, caving ceilings, and chipping walls continue to plague the building.

Parkash is due in court on August 2nd against the Department of Housing Preservation and Development for three different cases all filed for failing to respond to tenant complaints and resolve open violations. Mrs. Ingram currently has 16 open complaints in the housing court for exposed wires in the third-floor hall, broken doors and windows throughout the building as well as defective fire alarms throughout the building. She is making her final moves to reform the conditions in her building, handing the torch to the next tenant willing to take on the strenuous fight against her landlord's negligence and disregard for health and safety standards.

The Story Behind the 100 Worst Landlords of the Bronx

By Nathaniel Paulino

Of the landlords on the Public Advocates 100 Worst Landlords list, a quarter of them own Bronx residential buildings that are on the watchlist for violations. According to 2017 open average violations, these 25 landlords have a total of 11,108 violations between them. The lowest amount of violations was a landlord with 272, and the highest had a whopping 969 violations. Several months have passed since the 2017 version of the 100 Worst Landlords list was published, and it is still unclear whether these violations have been addressed and the quality of these buildings improved, or if they were ignored, leading to an increase in the disrepair of the apartments within. The list will not be updated until 2019 and is no longer entirely accurate. It may not have been entirely accurate by the date it was published either, as the man that was previously titled the worst landlord in NYC for several years in a row vanished from the list without any discernable changes in the quality of his apartments.

According to the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), Thomas Steiner, who is titled the second worst Bronx landlord on the 100 Worst Landlord list, owns four Bronx buildings, two of which currently have fewer open violations than in 2017, and two that currently have more. 1381 Castle

Hill Avenue went from 205 violations to 87. Similarly, 1255 Stratford went from 175 to 170 violations. However, Steiner's other two properties, 2001 Newbold Avenue and 1245 Stratford, approximately doubled in the few months since the list was published. Thomas Steiner's open violations have fluctuated from building to building, although the overall number of building violations has gone up since the list's publishing.

Jason Green, the tenth worst Bronx landlord, owns only one building in the Bronx, 2110 Arthur Avenue, which totaled 149 open violations in 2017. Recently, the number dropped to 141 open violations in the past seven months. Benjamin Adegbite, the twenty-fifth worst Bronx landlord who also owns a single Bronx building, had the opposite result. Adegbite's building, 645 East 228 St., had 272 open violations in 2017, and has increased by 84 violations in the same time span, totaling 356 violations for one building.

According to 2017 open average violations, these 25 landlords have a total of 11,108 violations between them.

Ari Friedman, the seventh worst Bronx landlord, owns 10 buildings in the Bronx, the most of any Bronx landlord on the Public Advocate’s list. In 2017, none of his buildings had over 100 open violations, the most being 97 from 454 East 134th Street and the least being 9 from 1019 East Gun Hill Road. Exactly half of Friedman’s Bronx buildings have decreased in the number of open violations while the other half have increased. 289 Bonner Place currently has the most violations at 124, while 918 Gerard Ave now has the lowest number of violations at 8. The building with the least amount of violations in 2017, 1019 East Gun Hill Road, has now more than doubled to total 22 violations.

These mixed results are consistent with the other 21 Bronx landlords on the list, which are all slightly negative. Any buildings that have seen improvement in the past seven months have only seen a slight decrease in their number of open violations, while those that have only grown into a greater state of disrepair have had significant increases in their open violations. Even Benjamin Adegbite has gained 84 open violations in less than a year despite the Public Advocate’s office placing him on the lower end of the full 100 Worst Landlord list, now at number 99. These results are not indicative of any improvement in the buildings owned by these Bronx landlords, nor do the current open violations and quality of the buildings serve to change the status of the landlords on the list.

1	Rawle Isaacs	2038 Morris Ave, 10453	108
2	Rawle Isaacs	2042 Morris Avenue, 10453	164
3	Rawle Isaacs	1982 Morris Ave, 10453	485
4	Rawle Isaacs	2185 Walton Ave, 10453	212
5	Thomas Steiner	1381 Castlehill Ave, 10462	205
6	Thomas Steiner	2001 Newbold Ave, 10472	294
7	Thomas Steiner	1245 Stratford, 10472	169
8	Thomas Steiner	1255 Stratford, 10472	175
9	Adam Stryker	2372 Arther Ave, 10458	47
10	Adam Stryker	2450 Beaumont, 10458	33
11	Adam Stryker	643 Coster Street, 10457	29
12	Adam Stryker	2550 Creston Ave, 10460	67
13	Adam Stryker	616 East 187 Street, 10458	62
14	Adam Stryker	150 West 197 street, 10468	92
15	Robert Kaszovitz	1872 Monroe Ave, 10457	118
16	Robert Kaszovitz	1165 Gerald avenue, 10452	97
17	Robert Kaszovitz	1183 Gerard ave 10452	148
18	Robert Kaszovitz	2000 Prospect ave 10457	234
19	Seth Miller	919 Prospect ave 10459	293
20	Iskyo Aronov	41 Bruckner Boulevard 10454	31
21	Ari Friedman	614 Beech Terrace 10454	42
22	Ari Friedman	610 Breech Terrace, 10454	
23	Ari Friedman	289 Bonner Place, 10456	
24	Ari Friedman	931 East 213 Street, 10469	
25	Ari Friedman	454 East 134th Street, 10454	97
26	Ari Friedman	1019 East Gunhill Rd. 10469	9
27	Ari Friedman	918 Gerard Ave 10452	30
28	Ari Friedman	3756 Olinville 10467	74
29	Ari Friedman	910 Gerard Ave, 10452	
30	Ari Friedman	928 Gerad Ave, 10452	
31	Robert Kaydanian	359 east 146 street 10451	27
32	Zev Salomon	797 East 142 Street, 10454	74
33	Zev Salomon	1255 Longfellow Ave, 10459	
34	Zev Salomon	371 east 165 st 10456	111
35	Zev Salomon	2048 mapes ave 10460	57
36	Zev Salomon	2342 ryer ave 10458	155
37	Jason Green	2110 Arthur Ave 10457	149
38	Eli Maor	813 chestnut st 10467	14
39	Eli Maor	944 Rev. James Polite Ave, 10459	15
40	Eli Maor	946 Rev. James Polite Ave, 10459	24
41	Gerald Ziering	109 east 153 10451	179
42	Gerald Ziering	770 East 221 Street, 10467	114
43	Gil Broitman	900 East 213 st 10469	38
44	Gil Broitman	1807 Phelan Place, 10453	342
45	Michael Khodadadian	2153 Belmont Ave, 10457	57
46	Michael Khodadadian	1757 Seward Ave, 10473	89
47	Michael Khodadadian	553 Soundview Ave, 10473	28
48	Jay Miller	2535 Grand Concourse, 10468	120
49	David Green	2414 East Tremont Ave, 10461	117
50	David Green	1701 Eastburn Ave, 10457	122
51	Felix Gomez	115 McClellan St, 10452	114
52	Yon Kim	1541 Westchester Ave, 10472	341
53	Narsinh Desai	234 East Gun Hill Road, 10467	204
54	Narsinh Desai	3414 Knox Place, 10467	118
55	Esther Rogers	3929 Carpenter Ave, 10466	186
56	Esther Rogers	4026 Carpenter Ave, 10466	135
57	Esther Rogers	Holland Ave, 10467	315
58	Stephen Tobia	2356 Lorillard Place, 10458	313
59	Shlomo Denti	1324 Clay Ave, 10456	95
60	Shlomo Denti	766 Jackson Ave, 10456	97

These Bronx landlords are among the 100 worst in the city, carrying scores of housing code violations in their buildings, even eight months after being called out by the city.

Created by: Nathaniel Paulino

College Now Students Learn About Housing Issues in the Bronx

By Kawsara Danjuma

Before this summer, Hansel Figueroa did not know about rent stabilized housing, a tenant's right to counsel, or even the crisis of affordable housing in the Bronx. "I know now what it's like to see deplorable living conditions and know that it's low on your landlord's list of priorities," Figueroa said. Hansel Figueroa is an eighteen-year-old who goes to school in lower Manhattan and is a participant of the College Now Program at Hostos Community College.

Figueroa is a part of the Bronx Civic Scholars Institute, a program at Hostos Community College that has been around for thirteen years. This program enrolls high school students in an American Government course that also studies Bronx history while participating in internships engaged in public policy. He is one of seven teens spending their summer as an intern at CASA, a community-based organization that advocates for safe and affordable housing in the Bronx. They go to class in the morning every Monday through Wednesday, but in the afternoon, they engage in internships at community-based organizations. This is where they connect what they're learning in their government class to what they're actively engaging in at their internship.

Osvaldo Velasquez, Alexander Reyes, and Melissa Perez are also some of

the B.C.S.I. scholars interning at CASA this summer. They help set up meetings and help the CASA leaders before going to speak to tenants about housing and informing them of their rights.

Whether it's going out to meet tenants or talking to them at one of CASA's tenant meetings, these teenagers are learning about housing issues in the Bronx and helping their fellow Bronx residents fight that crisis.

As part of their internship, they first must prepare for a meeting with Jordan, the community organizer at CASA, to discuss the planning for an upcoming tenant meeting. Everyone volunteers for the job they want. Jobs vary from helping set up the meeting, making announcements during the meeting, being an interpreter, taking pictures during the meeting, making copies of flyers, or even getting people to sign in when they get to the meeting. After discussing the plans, they start printing flyers for CASA before they leave to go on outreach. The interns leave for outreach around 3:30 p.m., sometimes earlier, before returning at 5. During outreach, they visit the homes of tenants and speak to them about what's going on in their homes. The tenants tell them about the problems they have with their landlord, and the interns explain CASA in order for them to be

informed on help they can receive. “Our job is to let tenants know that they have rights, that they have some control,” says Perez. They make sure to keep in contact, to invite tenants to meetings where they can learn more about their rights, and to get to speak with attorneys.

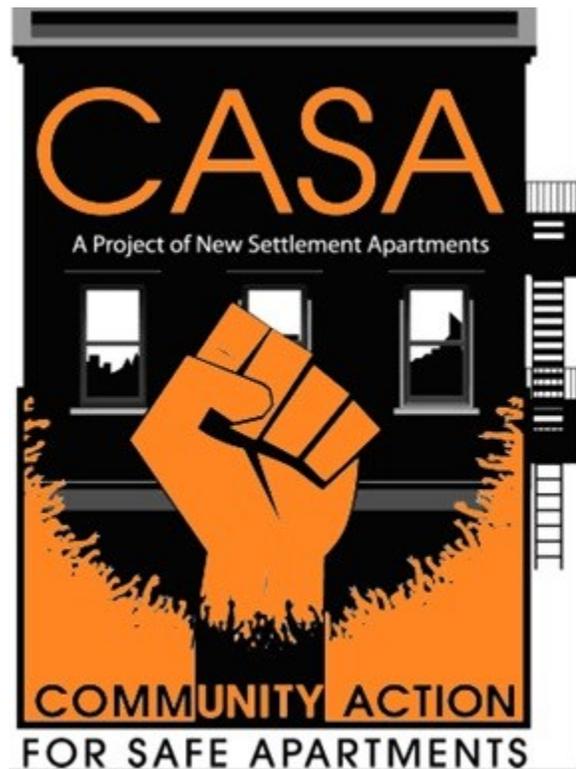
“This is essential to my future career,” says Alexander Reyes, who’s interested in politics. Alexander spoke passionately about how pathetically tenants are living, how terrible their conditions are. He spoke of a woman who lived with her son in an apartment with rats. It was hard for him to imagine living in those conditions, let alone see for himself that this is how some people are living.

According to Elizabeth Wilson, the director of School-College Partners at Hostos Community College, some of the previous scholars of the institute have gone on to secure full-time positions at the organization they interned at during their time at B.C.S.I. The program was started to encourage civic engagement among high school students. The goal is for the students to be able to see how government affects their daily lives, and to see how community organizations are part of the functioning of a democracy.

These teenagers have lived or are currently living quite similarly to the tenants they are trying to help. They travel to homes of tenants for outreach where they see these bad living conditions, with one example being a woman’s floor being unstable. They also talk to the tenants who

come to their meetings, where they hear about rats running around the apartment or tenants living with a leaking roof.

Alexander has learned that landlord harassment is a major problem. Tenants are frequently either being forced to leave their homes or to live in a broken one. CASA helps tenants maintain safe and affordable housing, according to Velasquez. CASA works with tenants to rally against landlords who are harassing them or failing to maintain their properties. These interns are learning from CASA, but they are also able to bring their own experiences to the table as they relate to the tenants they are working with.



College Now students spent the summer interning with CASA, Community Action for Safe Apartments, a group that helps tenants fight for their rights.

Photo credit: CASA

Living in the Housing Crisis of New York

By Jason Smith
and Marangelis Uben

Sitting in Housing Court is an unique experience that unfortunately a large population is familiar with. Upon arrival at housing court, everybody must go through security procedures and enter through a metal detector. On a recent day, a woman is sitting with her toddler, fiddling with a phone as an attempt to engage her child. The mother complains that she's been there for hours. Another couple to the immediate right is with their two children, who are standing in a line fifteen people deep, waiting. People are shifting from line to line; some are waiting for a translator/ Some are paying off a bill. A young Latina woman who is just being directed from line to line. She is clearly lost and has no idea where to go. There are no indicators or signs pointing where tenants, clients, supplicants are to go.

The entire area building is kept at a very cold temperature. There's a large

Clients aren't entitled to an attorney and their court date will differ based on the severity of the case. Based on the kind of case and proceeding the client goes through, cases can take months or years to resolve.

amount of movement all throughout the place as security officers are directing people to where they need to go. The place has a slight similarity to that of a sprawling metropolitan transit hub- everyone is getting off at one "stop" and moving right to another one. The commotion and chatter occurring between judges, lawyers and their families is a constant low din.

Yet even though housing court serves tenants and their families, there are many people who don't know their rights as tenants. Most don't even know where to start as it's a very long and extensive process to attempt to improve a tenant's living condition or campaign against unlawful behavior from their landlords. An average day for someone at housing court is from 9am to 1pm.

The median income for households in the South Bronx is \$30,000 or less. It is the poorest area of NYC, with many people living below the poverty line. It is the poorest area in all of NYC. People across the city are in search of affordable housing, but in neighborhoods of the South Bronx median asking rent is \$1,500 a month and more, according to the State of New York City Neighborhoods, 2017, a publication of the Furman Center for Real Estate at NYU. More than a third of Bronx residents, and 42% of low income Bronx households, pay



*Tenants presenting their case to clerks at Bronx Housing Court. These are the lines on a good day.
Photo credit: Marangelis Uben*

more than half their income in rent.

Low incomes. High rents. The equation leads to this place on 166th Street and the Grand Concourse. Housing Court, waiting in these lines.

People of European descent have established businesses and driven up rents in neighborhoods across the city - not realizing or failing to see they are causing the displacement of lower income families. When tenants enter housing court many times the conflict is not resolved.

Ray Sacks, the client supervisor of Bronx Housing Court, says that clients aren't entitled to an attorney and their court date will differ based on the severity of the case. Based on the kind of case and

proceeding the client goes through, cases can take months or years to resolve. Usually the tenants are the defendants, brought to court by their landlords for failure to pay rent. But sometimes the tenants are the plaintiffs, bringing their landlord to court over unsafe conditions, or because he is harassing them, trying to get them out of their apartments and get higher paying tenants in.

Rather than spend time in housing court tenants will accept buyouts from their landlords, housing justice advocates say. The buyout is essentially a paid bribe for them to leave their place of residence. However, it's often too late before the tenant realizes the amount they have settled

for is not enough to find another apartment in New York City and isn't enough to support their family.

Jose Antonio, an elderly man, walked into housing court on a recent afternoon. He was there to sue his landlord, hoping to keep his apartment, he said. "You have all this time in an apartment and you miss one day and they want to kick you out. If you don't have money then you're done. It's ridiculous and unfair. If you don't have money in this country then you're done!"

Nora Kenty is a young lawyer who works for tenants like Antonio. She's seen cases involving tenant buyouts, harassment, terrible living conditions.

"I have clients whose kids are sleeping in bed with roaches crawling all over them and bed bugs and holes in the ceiling. I mean it's really terrible," she said.

She was outraged and disgusted that her clients have to live like this, that anyone has to live under these conditions. She sees a cycle of minorities being taken advantage by their landlords.

Nonprofit organizations are the only ones that are really helping these people, working one on one with them and trying to solve their problems. Organizations such as the Cooper Square Committee and the Housing Conservation Coordinators.

Liam Riley, who works at the Cooper Square Committee and Jonathan Furlong, directing organizer at the Housing Conservation Coordinators, said tenant

buyouts are a ploy for landlords to remove rent stabilized units from the market. With few rent stabilized apartments available, it is even harder for people to live in New York City.

"It's great in the moment but it's not a lasting source of income," Riley said of the amount sometimes desperate tenants are offered by landlords hoping to displace them. Tenants end up running out of the little money they were given in a heartbeat.

"We're in the middle of a housing crisis. People are really, really struggling. People are not making anymore (income) than they were 15 years ago, yet everything, food, clothing, housing, healthcare and everything is getting more expensive," said Furlong.



The area right past the metal detectors at Bronx Housing Court.

Photo credit: Marangelis Uben

Jaime Steinberg: More Than Just a Tenant

By Jose Perez

In the vast sea of concrete and cement known as the Bronx, stands a relatively inconspicuous building: 2454 Tiebout Avenue. In that building, lives an eighty-year-old man named Jaime Steinberg.

Jaime has gone through a lot of trouble trying to simply live in his home. He joined an organization known as the NorthWest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition to combat the harsh conditions and harassment he has faced at the hands of his landlord: Ved Parkash. He has endured unbearable smells, infestations of rats, mold-filled walls, winters with no heat, and ceilings pouring water into his home. He has tried to communicate with fellow tenants and form a tenants' association. Jaime helped call out Ved Parkash on his shortcomings as a landlord, eventually getting the president of Signature Bank, which holds the mortgage on the building to visit Tiebout Avenue and terminate future money-lending operations between the bank and Parkash.

Despite going to great lengths to stimulate change, Jaime feels he is alone in this fight. He senses a strange lack of advocacy among the poor. He cannot fathom the idea of U.S citizens allowing themselves to be treated unfairly, or "like worthless pieces of junk," as Jaime sees it. This feeling of alienation does not seem to

discourage him though. He has had several opportunities to leave 2454 Tiebout Avenue, but he remained. He could've stopped fighting for his rights as a tenant a while ago, but he continues. Jaime refuses to witness people being taken advantage of. He refuses to let the rich win, despite believing the laws in the U.S are made solely to benefit the wealthy.

As a young man in his native Bolivia, Jaime fought against a similarly unjust system. Bolivia, as Jaime describes it, is a country rich in resources, culture, and beauty. Despite its beautiful, Bolivia has a history of bloodshed and corruption, exposing Jaime at an early age to adversity and suffering.

As a student, Jaime participated in various demonstrations, protesting against the Bolivian government. His memory lingers on the several friends who lost their lives during those demonstrations, shot by the government.

"It was the students who were

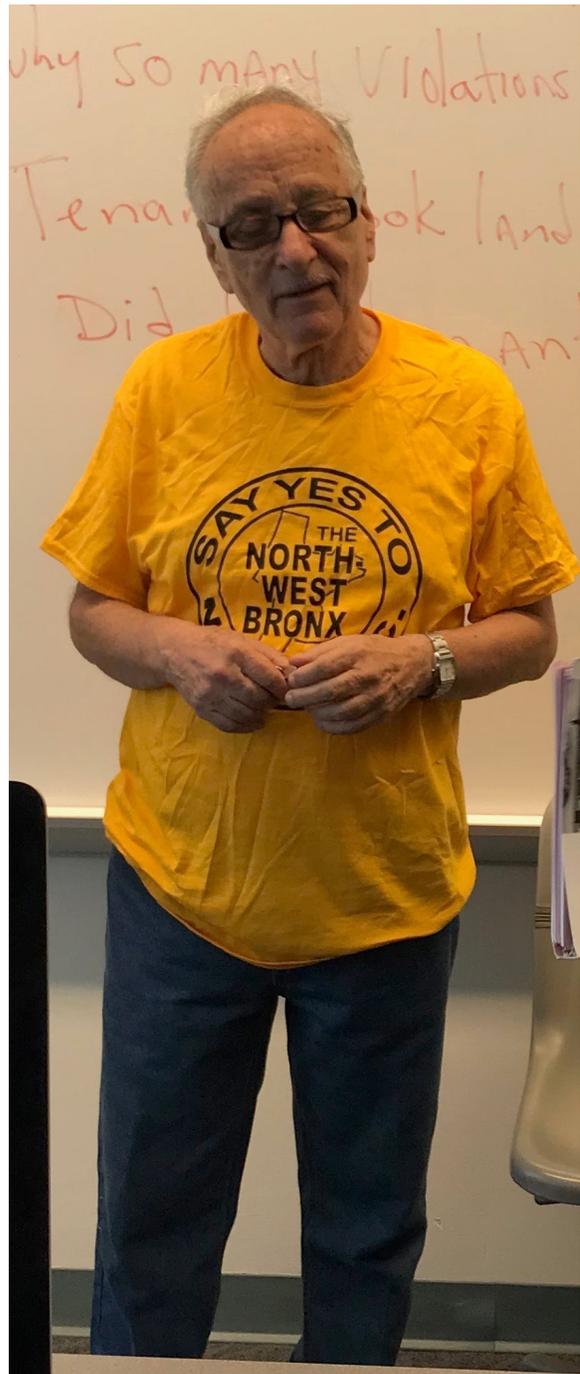
He has endured unbearable smells, infestations of rats, mold-filled walls, winters with no heat, and ceilings pouring water into his home.

Jaime is afraid the Bronx will eventually fall victim to complete destabilization of housing units. He expects the Bronx to be heavily gentrified within the next five to ten years. According to Jaime, apartments will be unaffordable to the current Bronxites, forcing them to move out and allowing a more affluent population to move in.

responsible for overthrowing all the corrupt governments of Bolivia,” he says. Jaime’s past experiences protesting injustice help reveal how his passion for justice came to be.

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“It happened to Brooklyn! It happened to Manhattan! It happened to Queens! It happened to Staten Island! In ten years, we’re not going to be living here,” Jaime emphasizes as disappointment fills his face.



*At 80 years old, Jaime Steinberg remains an active member in the fight against corrupt housing policies.
Photo credit: Shanik Vasquez*

This building on Tiebout Avenue has been his home for more than forty-four years. It is his home away from home, for he has not returned to Bolivia since his departure in 1964. He says he hasn't gone back because he has no family to go visit there.

He worked as a jeweler on 5th Avenue. He'd been on his own for a long time. At the age of eleven, he had lost his father to war. Jaime's father would only exist in memories Jaime has of things he would say. His dad, a European Jew, once told Jaime he would grow up and find the faith that best suits him.

Jaime found Christianity. He accepted Jesus Christ in his heart. Only with the companionship of Christ would his soul be saved, believes Jaime. He reminisces about the many occasions where he has managed to somehow be protected from death.

One night, an adolescent Jaime was hanging around a deep river behind a cemetery with one other friend. He remembers falling into the rushing water and desperately trying to pull himself out. Suddenly, he was yanked from out of the water, unsure of who it was that saved him.

When asked how he manages to continue moving forward, he simply credits his lord, passionately claiming Jesus Christ lifts his spirit.

He retells the story over sixty years later sitting on a stool in the Bronx with a face of disbelief.

His faith is what keeps him going. He currently lives alone in his apartment. He had a wife and a son, but he recently lost them both in the same year. When asked how he manages to continue moving forward, he simply credits his lord, passionately claiming Jesus Christ lifts his spirit. He even believes he is given strength by his lord because he is able to climb the six flights of stairs to his apartment without tiring, despite his age. Jaime is confident his lord has a plan for him, so he doesn't allow his thoughts to consume him when he's feeling down.

His relatively high-spirited personality allows Jaime to be a crowd pleaser. He genuinely enjoys making people laugh and smile. Whatever personal suffering he may face, Jaime would much rather deal with it himself than let it affect the happiness of others.

Looking back on his life, Jaime has no regrets and is truly satisfied. "That is, more or less, the story of my life," he says as the conversation comes to a close.

Jaime Steinberg is an educated and charismatic man who will not stop fighting injustice. He has taken initiative and feels others should do the same to get their common humanity recognized. Jaime believes there is great power in journalism as long as journalists dedicate themselves to telling the complete truth.

Real Estate Interests Lead Campaign Donors

By Brandon Velazquez

When he was campaigning to be re-elected as state senator in 2014, Jeffrey Klein received \$10,000 from Hutch Metro Center. The co-owners of Hutch Metro Center are Michael Contillo and Joseph Deglomini. During the 1990s both were convicted of tax evasion. Three years later, between July 2017 and March 2018, Jeffrey Klein received \$48,000 from Hutch Metro Center and other entities that shares the real estate development's address and ownership.

Landlords are among the main contributors to political campaigns in New York, wielding tremendous influence in state policy, good government groups argue. Even Public Advocate Letitia James, author of the city's 100 Worst Landlord watchlist, collected real estate industry donations in her current campaign for attorney general. The industry gave her a total \$213,655.

Michael McKee is the treasurer of Tenants Pac, a lobbying group dedicated to advancing tenants' interests in Albany. But he says tenants are outgunned. Regarding the donations that Klein received, McKee said, "He doesn't care where it comes from."

McKee explained that the tenants will never match the financial power of the real estate industry.

Simone Development, Inc, which is

the corporate behind Hutch Metro Center, develops hotels like the 125-room Marriott Residence Inn. Simone Development isn't the only housing business donating to Klein. In April 2017, he received \$1,000 from Syracuse Property Partners LLC. MacQuesten Development LLC paid \$5,000 in June 2017 and LRC Construction LLC paid \$9,000 that July. Syracuse Property Partners is a real estate entity that has sought tax credits from New York State for economic development in upstate New York. MacQuesten Development LLC builds apartments in New York City, Yonkers and Mount Vernon, some of which benefit from state subsidies. LRC Construction LLC makes luxury hotels and luxury houses. Both Klein and his communications director did not respond to multiple request for comment.



Jeffrey Klein's biggest donations came from Hutchinson Metro Center, which donated \$11,750. Klein's district office is located at 1250 Waters Place.

Photo credit: Brandon Velazquez

HDFC: From the Past to the Present

By Raphael Brown

Greywolf Richards, a 60-year-old Native American Managing Agent for the Housing Development Fund Corporation, or HDFC, had spoken about the sorry state of his building, located on 161 Street near Melrose Avenue in the Bronx, in the 1980s. Tenants urinated and excessively used drugs in the hallways, desecrated the walls, and refused to pay the rent. Drug usage in the building's hallways became so bad that Greywolf said, "One guy died of an overdose."

The city's department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) — which enforces housing codes and intervenes when conditions in rental housing are particularly egregious—was the institution that took over Greywolf's building. Before HPD took over, Greywolf said the building was in "immaculate conditions" when he moved there in October of 1981. However, when the previous owner fell behind on his taxes, HPD was forced to take ownership of the building three years after Greywolf's arrival. In contrast to the previous management, Greywolf said, "The building was in deplorable shape after they (HPD) took over the building. There seemed to be no oversight." These severe violations of the building policies under HPD supervision stem from two main problems. The first reason as to why there were so

many issues in the building was due to the lack of supervision from HPD. At the time, HPD was in possession of many buildings after landlords abandoned their properties. HPD had to care for thousands of buildings across the city, and the staff at Greywolf building quickly became overwhelmed with the scale problems. The second reason for these violations comes from the fact that some tenants refused to pay their rent. Greywolf said: "The tenants in the building believed that they had their welfare to fall back on. I don't think they could comprehend actually owning an apartment."

These circumstances were not unusual at the time. With so many landlords refusing to pay their taxes, a large number of buildings fell into the hands of HPD in the 1980s and 90s. However, after acquiring so many buildings, the city did not have an efficient plan to manage them all. As a result, many buildings were left in poor shape, with

"The building was in deplorable shape after they (HPD) took over the building. There seemed to be no oversight."

problems such as pipe leaks being left unrepaired. Facing increased pressure from tenants, HPD decided to offer them the chance to collectively buy the building as a Housing Development Fund Corporation, also known as an HDFC or Co-op.

The issues in Greywolf building began to be resolved in July of 2001, when a handful of tenants, including Greywolf, joined the Tenant Interim Lease Program. Shortly before this, one tenant in Greywolf's building became fed up with the current conditions of the building. The tenant, whose name is Charles Font, held a meeting with the other tenants in the building. Greywolf stated that Font said, "If the building is run successfully with no misappropriations for five years, HPD will then renovate the building, and sell it to the tenants."

While results of forming a Co-op are mixed, they do give tenants a say in how the building can be better managed, which are proven to be more successful than buildings traditionally owned by a landlord. On the other hand, the financial issues HDFC can face are difficult to manage. For instance, with the increase in water and sewer taxes that occurred in the 2000s, it has been harder for tenants in an HDFC to agree to pay for bigger repairs. Margaret Groarke, an associate professor in Political Science at Manhattan College said, "As the buildings get older, major investments must be made. Major rehabilitation needs to be done."

Now that the building was turned

Facing increased pressure from tenants, HPD decided to offer them the chance to collectively buy the building as a Housing Development Fund Corporation.

into an HDFC, newly elected officers have been appointed by the tenants. Greywolf has said, "Things are changing to a more exacting standard. We felt along with HPD that if tenants were problematic before the transition, they would be problematic after the transition." It was because of this reasoning that seven tenants were evicted from the building within a five-year period. After going through the necessary paperwork, Greywolf and his associates successfully bought the building from HPD on July 1st, 2007. Now, Greywolf is a managing agent at his HDFC office in his fourteen-unit building. As the building's managing agent, he is in charge of collecting reimbursements and disbursements for the building, taking care of any necessary paperwork and making sure that all the building's utilities and assessments are paid for. Despite his previous experiences with HPD, Greywolf said that he has seen improvement within the agency. "I think that because of staff changes, they are much more responsive to complaints. So even if they are still overwhelmed, I think things are getting better with HPD."

Keeping a Roof Over Our Heads

By Jose Perez

The sun lit the dry cement we walked on. Although it was early in the morning, about 9 o'clock, I could feel the sun's rays warming my skin. My father and I were on our way to a place we went too frequently: housing court.

Being two months behind on rent, we were ordered to come to court because our landlord wanted his money. Luckily, we were prepared to pay the money that was owed. As we entered the building, we had to remove anything metal from our pockets and place it into a bin. We were then required to walk through a metal detector before being allowed to fully enter. There were loads of people already there before us. We made our way to the fifth floor where our case hearing would be.

Upon arrival, my father and I searched for his name on the list of everyone being sued. There were fifty people in total. Forty-seven of them were

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being sued for not paying their rent on time.

Once we found my father's name and the number which corresponded to it, we made our way to a side of the wall to wait because our hearing wasn't until 9:30 AM. As we waited, I observed the people who were there. Several were sweating profusely, but I was unsure if it was because of the heat outside or utter anxiety. No one was smiling. No one was laughing. No one seemed content. I could feel the sense of worry fill the atmosphere of the fifth floor.

The lawyers present were the only ones conversing and chuckling. Were they unaware of the situations people were in? My father was curious about who would be representing our landlord in court today. I'm pretty sure I've never seen my landlord in court. We came across a lawyer who represented the owner of our building the last time we were sent to court.

My father and I approached her with hopes of finding answers. "Are you here for Jose Perez?" my father asked in his broken English. I could see the look of disgust on the lawyer's face as she continued walking without saying a word. My father and I exchanged glances. It turns out she wasn't there to represent our landlord.

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When 9:30 arrived, a white court officer with short brown hair announced the commencement of court hearings. He stated several rules about volume and cellphone usage in the courtroom. Once his short speech ended, the crowd of people made their way into the courtroom silently. They sat on wooden benches which were aligned in rows. The benches faced the front of the courtroom where the judge would take her seat. The words “In God We Trust” were emblazoned above the judge’s seat. I wondered who that “We” meant.

We were the first ones called to settle our case. We didn’t even speak to the judge. It was only the interpreter, my father, the landlord’s lawyer, and me. My father proceeded to explain to the interpreter the many repairs that are needed in our apartment, but the interpreter and the landlord's lawyer first wanted to discuss the

money. We presented the money orders for a total of two thousand two hundred eighty dollars with eighty-six cents and the burden was lifted off our shoulders. The landlord’s lawyer, a large man in a blue t-shirt and jeans, continued to propose dates where repairs would take place. My experience at housing court on Tuesday, July 31 was lighthearted compared to what other people may have been facing that day. Some people may have been demanded to pay several months of rent over the span of just thirty days. Some people may have been given a deadline to pack up and leave. My dad tells me this is how the housing court looks Monday through Friday: filled with people trying to keep a roof over their heads.



*Metal detectors at the entrance of the Bronx County Housing Court.
Photo credit: Marangelis Uben*



Photo credit (top): CASA

Photo credit (middle & bottom): NWBCCC

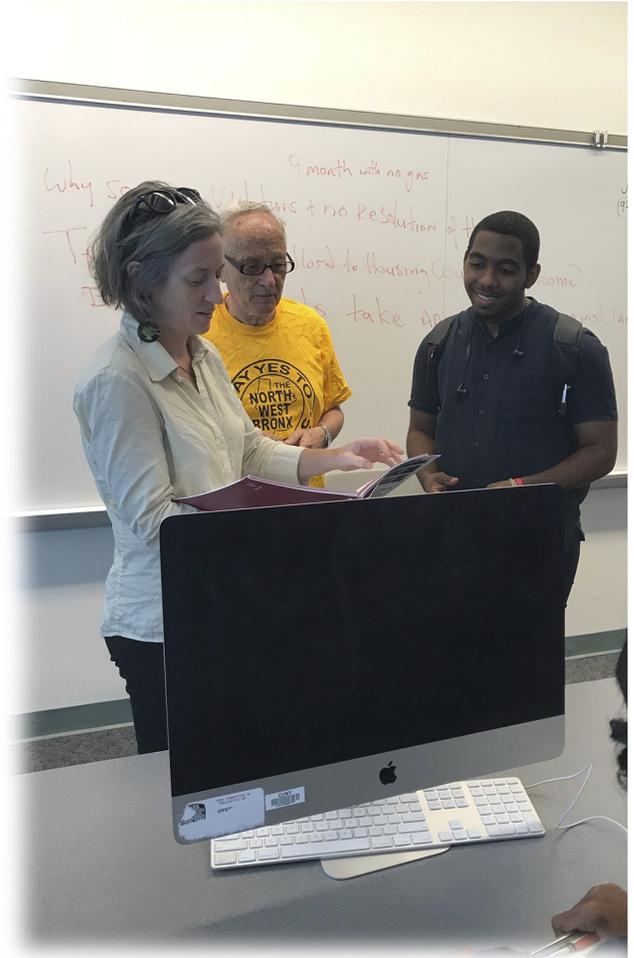
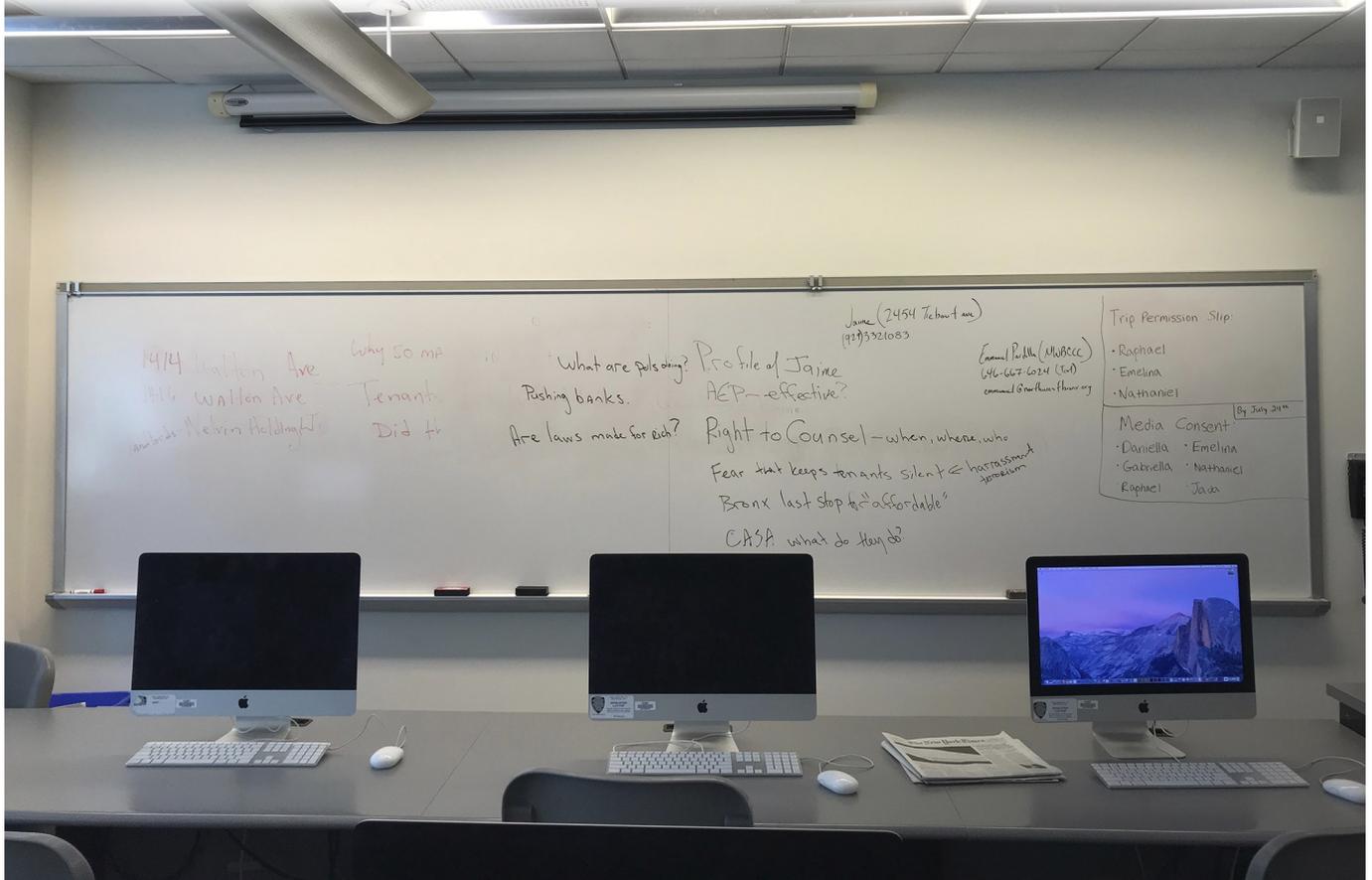
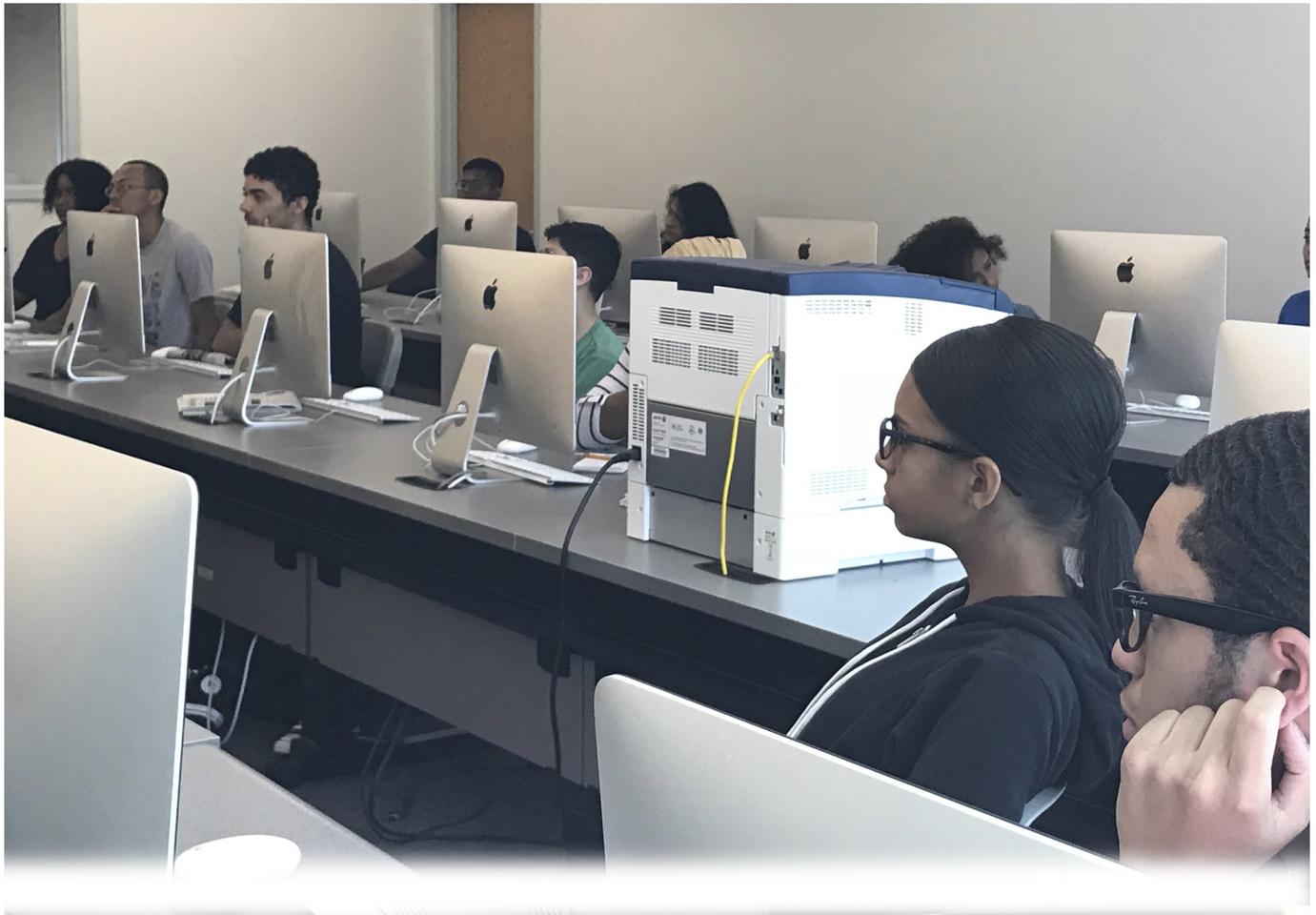


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