

WE KEEP US SAFE WE KEEP US **VOL 2**

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**WE KEEP US SAFE:** WE KEEP US SAFE

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**THE NEIGHBORHOOD IS WATCHING**



WE KEEP US SAFE WE KEEP US SAFE

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## EVICTION X DEPORTATION

### *DEPORTATION IS A FORM OF EVICTION*

When a landlord reports his tenant to ICE because he can't evict them normally or, when in the process of violently enforcing an eviction, a marshall or sheriff contacts ICE to collaborate in an act of displacement that is suddenly transnational in scope, or when a fellow tenant buzzes in ICE agents into the building knowing the agents are looking for a neighbor, or when a landlord threatens to call ICE on her tenant in order to coerce more (extralegal) rent: these are instances wherein the violent forces of deportation and eviction—twin gestures that are systemic and infrastructural but also so deeply interpersonal—weave into a single suffocating fabric.

### *ICEWATCH IS A FORM OF EVICTION DEFENSE*

In recognizing eviction and deportation to be twin acts of capital-colonial violence, we similarly recognize eviction defense and ICEWATCH as twin (and thus collaborative, cooperative, communal) forms of resistance.

As such these instances of resistance—though differing in tactics and nuance—both exist because of and through collectivity: it is as a neighborhood that we can stop an eviction just as it is as a community that we can stop an ICE raid. Both evictions and deportations are characterized not only by traumatic acts of violence—raids, furniture tossed on the street, handcuffs, houselessness—but by preceding bureaucratic machinations and aftermaths of suffering and isolation: this continuum of violence compels us, in resistance, to conceive of eviction defense and ICEWATCH as ongoing processes and more than just (though always also) flashes of confrontation.

If, as we know they are, ICE and NYPD and the landlord class collaborate to maintain their projects of oppression and accumulation, we must also be in active (and preemptive) collaboration: this means talking to neighbors; this means not calling the cops; this means not

## SIGNAL BOOST

(must download the app)

Text **"HELLO"** to **(718) 866 - 3391** to be notified immediately of any verified ICE activity

talking to landlords; this means signing up for ICEWATCH; this means showing up to eviction defenses; this means forming tenant unions; this means recognizing that cops and landlords are on the same fucking team; this means community solidarity; this means that confronting landlords and marshalls and ICE agents isn't a performance of charity but an expression of community and mutuality; this means that physically not allowing one of these violent agents of colonial-capital into our homes isn't just about self-preservation (though it always is) but is also an expression of neighborly love and camaraderie: **NEIGHBORS DON'T LET NEIGHBORS GET EVICTED. NEIGHBORS DON'T LET NEIGHBORS GET DEPORTED. NEIGHBORS DON'T LET NEIGHBORS GET KIDNAPPED BY PIGS.**

### *ICEWATCH AND EVICTION DEFENSE ARE EXPRESSION OF ABOLITIONIST POLITICS*

If deportation is a form of eviction—state and capital-sponsored acts of displacement—then so too must we think of arrests and imprisonment in the same tradition: and as such we recognize that resistance to evictions and resistance to ICE raids are expressions of an abolitionist politic and an abolitionist ethic. In this vein: **DEARRESTING IS A FORM OF EVICTION DEFENSE**: evictions and deportations and arrests are but three in a sea of near-infinite sites of contestation with the white supremacist settler-colonial project of the united states; as such they are unfortunately endless: we do not show up for eviction defenses with the thought that we might win and put an end to forced displacement; beyond the horizon of capitalism lies the extinction of evictions and prisons, lies the forgetting of borders and boundaries; but it is in service of this horizon, and in care of our communities, that we show up, every time.

## THE NEIGHBORHOOD IS WATCHING

An eviction defense can take any of many forms: sometimes it means physically confronting landlords and their hired muscle as they try to illegally and violently evict vulnerable tenants; this happens very quickly: this is **direct action**. A tenant, who perhaps the mobilized eviction defense group has been in contact with, reaches out—they're back, they might say; or it's a fresh call, first-contact, maybe someone slipped them a flyer; or maybe they are calling their tenant association, their neighbors who they've know for years, decades. Whether it's part of a formal organizational model or an informal localized network: the call goes out and the community shows up: the landlord and their paid forces are confronted and shown—explicitly, unmistakably—that they can't get away with their usual shit: *the neighborhood is watching*.

Sometimes this sort of action calls for a little on-the-spot locksmithing, as sneaky fucking landlords love to change locks when tenants are out getting groceries; this is why responsible and caring neighbors often have casual know-how in this particular field, maybe they even have a set of boltcutters. It is important to remember: if a landlord has illegally changed your locks or locked you out, it is fully within your right to get the fuck back into your home.

It is important, also, to never call the pigs; for if a fearful tenant, who is facing an illegal eviction calls the cops (as so many of us are so



conditioned to do), the pigs will take the side of the landlord. More likely than not, they will even assist the landlord in their violence. This is the case for two reasons: for one, cops typically do not actually understand and know laws; they will not recognize that the eviction attempt is illegal and will not intervene on the side of the tenant. Secondly, and most fundamental, is that pigs protect private property: this is what the institution of policing has always done and always will do. COPS ARE NOT OUR FRIENDS.



What follows: after the initial confrontation between the first community members to show up—and this first confrontation can be tense and traumatic; landlords and their muscle are fluent in languages of violence and displacement—more people arrive: and with more eyes comes deescalation: rarely do landlords and their paid agents commit brazen acts of violence while watched and filmed by so many. What also is considered and always centered is the safety and comfort of the tenants in question: eviction attempts (illegal or legal) can be deeply traumatic, as this is always an utter violation of home and safety. Supporting neighbors with care—through gestures, sentiments, meals, cigarettes, jokes; whatever the fuck it might be—is so very important: eviction defenses can be fast and disorienting and so it is crucial to always remember why we or you are doing this: because we love one another, even (and especially) fellow tenants who we've never met.

After this, and everything is always (always!) per the tenant's direction and consent, a **stoopwatch** might commence. As landlords like to show up unexpected and assert their bullshit under the shameful cover of obscurity and darkness, we've found it helpful to have a few neighbors hanging out on the stoop, or in front of the front door, on the sidewalk, through the next 24 or 48 hours; shifts can be organized, snacks and chairs and blankets provided; this can also be called a **vigil**. Depending on the level of risk sussed out, this can be done by relatively few people; other times it is more comfortable if a whole group camps out; this can be tense but also very beautiful and flush with camaraderie.

The landlord's noticeable shamefulness is also why we might show up at a particularly trash landlord's home and demonstrate: they do not like it when we know where they live and bring their violent baggage to their doorstep; they do not like, maybe most of all, for their neighbors, their community, to know how vile they are: and sometimes it's our obligation to expose them; this sort of action is also an eviction defense. This fear of exposure is also why, as part of a stoopwatch, the community might organize a **rally**, or a **speackout**: this is an organized event wherein members of the community (possibly local electeds, though we never rely on them) gather, the press is invited (we love especially to invite news sources we think the landlord might pay attention to) and stories are told: landlords are held accountable in a very public manner; if the landlord is then scared to show their face, we have done well. If other vulnerable tenants see this and feel emboldened to share their story, we have done well; if they learn about networks of tenants who are not scared to confront shitbag landlords, we have done well!

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Other times, an eviction defense happens before an eviction is attempted: this could mean that some particularly motivated tenant activists have mined city data and identified tenants who are soon-to-be-evicted: the activists then might do some gentle outreach and try to collaborate with tenants toward more security. More often, though, this sort of preemptive eviction defense is less specific: it is the relationships we slowly (and lovingly) establish with our neighbors; it is building tenant associations and realizing that our

safety must always be understood in collective terms: if your neighbor is unsafe, you are unsafe. We are in this together.

***And together we are safer, stronger and ever resilient.***



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# KNOW YOUR RIGHTS KNOW YOUR POWER



COVID-19 has thrown an already confusing housing court system into chaos. While the best protection from eviction is a strong network of neighbors, a clear understanding of the latest laws and guidance can go a long way. The following is a breakdown of the housing court landscape as of October 31, 2020

## *What's going on with the eviction moratorium?*

**Currently, there is no comprehensive eviction moratorium.**

Despite what Governor Cuomo claimed in a recent executive order, his "extension" of the moratorium through December 31st is full of holes and puts many tenants at risk.

As of September 29th, the **Safe Harbor Act** has been expanded to cover tenants who had cases for non-payment of rent or any warrants from before March 7, 2020. These tenants must be able to show a judge that they suffered financial hardship during the pandemic in order to be protected from eviction. **This protection evaporates on January 1, 2021 and does not stop the court for ordering an eviction to be carried out later.**

While the **Safe Harbor Act** provides some rent relief, tenants must demonstrate their inability to pay rent is a result of financial hardship. What qualifies as financial hardship, however, is an open question that will be decided by the courts. Attorneys plan to argue that a tenant should be able to claim financial hardship if they are unable to pay rent due to lost income, or if they can demonstrate unavoidable COVID-related expenses.

It gets worse. Tenants protected by this "financial hardship" ruling can still be held responsible for rent debt, or a "**money judgment.**" So, even though this debt is not tied to a tenant's right to stay in their home, it can be devastating to folks already struggling to make ends meet.

This debt—accrued during a global pandemic—allows landlords to continue exploiting their tenants long after COVID passes.

Finally, it is unclear whether **Safe Harbor Act** protects tenants from **holdover evictions**—evictions which the landlord claims do not have to do with nonpayment of rent. These can include tenants who stay past the date of an expired lease, month-to-month tenants who are terminated for no reason, and tenants who have violated their lease.

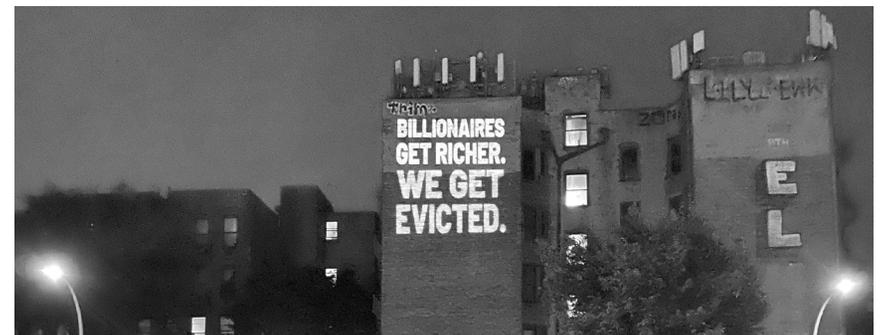
There is also the "Temporary Halt" on evictions issued by **Centers for Disease Control (CDC)**, which is in effect through December 31st. This guidance is misleading and dangerous. Any tenants who take advantage of this moratorium must submit a sworn declaration to their landlord stating they will pay **as much as they can** on rent (instead of food, medicine, or other necessities). All tenants should get legal advice **before** submitting this declaration.

## **Are Courts Open?**

Housing court is just now starting to process the 14,500 cases for New Yorkers who received judgments before the pandemic. It is also just beginning to assign court dates for the 200,000 New Yorkers who were in eviction proceedings when Housing Court closed on March 16. The court will hear those cases before any that were opened after March 17.

If a tenant's court date was scheduled after March 17 **or** the case was filed after March 17, they should call 311 (M-F, 9am-5pm) and ask for the Housing Helpline to talk to a lawyer, and possibly be referred to representation.

It's important to get in touch with attorneys as soon as possible—no one should be working through this alone.





## **IF YOU ARE IN DANGER FROM YOUR LANDLORD OR THEIR EMPLOYEES, CALL BROOKLYN EVICTION DEFENSE**

A network of tenant unions and neighbors in Brooklyn have come together to do what the NYPD won't do—physically show up to keep you safe in your home. Check the back cover for contact info.

## **CALL THE NYC HOUSING HELPLINE**

You can call 311 or email [civiljustice@hra.nyc.gov](mailto:civiljustice@hra.nyc.gov) for free legal advice and counsel about tenancy, eviction, or landlord-tenant disputes, regardless of immigration status.

## **START OR JOIN A TENANTS ASSOCIATION**

Landlords are most powerful when they're targeting tenants individually. But tenants can fight back—*there's power in numbers*. Talk to your neighbors! They could be having similar troubles, and no one should be going through them alone. Your local tenant union can help you organize. Check [brooklynevictiondefense.org/resources](http://brooklynevictiondefense.org/resources) for a map of orgs.

## **SUPPORT THE HOUSING JUSTICE MOVEMENT**

There are three bills in the New York State Legislature that would provide comprehensive support for New Yorkers facing eviction right now.

The first is the **Emergency Housing Stability and Displacement Prevention Act**, (Myrie S8667/Reyes A10827) which would provide comprehensive protection for renters (commercial and residential) from filings and evictions. This true moratorium would last for the duration of the crisis, plus a year.

This bill alone is not enough. New York must also **cancel rent and mortgage payments for the duration of the crisis** (Salazar S08802/Niou A10826) and pass the **Housing Access Voucher Program** (Kavanagh S7628A/Cymbrowitz A9657A) to help our houseless comrades get out of shelters and into safe, permanent housing.

# BROOKLYN EVICTION DEFENSE

Is your landlord harassing you?

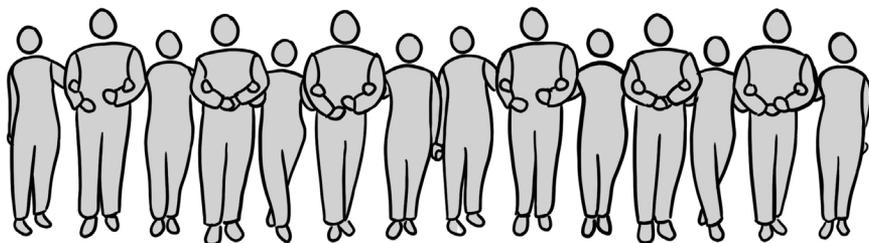
Is your landlord threatening you with eviction?

¿Tu propietario te está acosando?

¿Estás siendo amenazado con desalojo?

房东威胁要驱逐您吗？

房东在骚扰您不付租金吗？



**YOUR NEIGHBORS ARE HERE TO SUPPORT YOU!**

**¡TUS VECINOS ESTÁN AQUÍ PARA APOYARTE!**

您的邻居在这里支持您！

☎ (917) 982-2265

🖱 [brooklynevictiondefense.org](http://brooklynevictiondefense.org)

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