

Housing Activists Make Plans to Fight Looming Mass Evictions

Center for Disease Control and Prevention issues moratorium on evictions amid burgeoning crisis

By [Abayomi Azikiwe](#)

Global Research, September 17, 2020

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Poverty & Social Inequality](#)

A recent moratorium issued by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has provided a window of relief to millions facing evictions due to payment arrears on their rents and mortgages.

Perhaps as an election ploy by the current administration, the question of public health is paramount when a country is experiencing the largest outbreak of an infectious disease in more than a century.

This measure comes amid one of the worst economic downturns since the Great Depression during 1929-1941.

Since the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, tens of millions have been thrown out of work in the United States. The administration of President Donald J. Trump is overseeing the most deadly spread of the pandemic internationally.

Trump continues to blame the People's Republic of China (PRC) for the failures of his oval office to take preventative and adequate mitigation efforts aimed at halting the spread of the disease. Since February, nearly 200,000 people have died due to COVID-19 while more than 6 million were infected with the highly contagious illness.

Housing activists across the U.S. are grappling with the significance of the CDC moratorium and what actions are needed to protect working and impoverished people from being thrown out of their homes irrespective of government policy. Many are concerned about what will happen after the moratorium expires and whether it will be extended by whichever candidate wins the November presidential election.

As part of the process of movement building and political coordination, a public meeting known as "Liberation Mondays" was held in the city of Detroit on September 14 which was hosted by the General Baker Institute (GBI). Additional sponsors of the gathering were the Moratorium NOW! Coalition, Detroit Will Breathe (DWB), the Democratic Socialist of America (DSA) in Detroit, the Black-Brown Alliance of DSA, among others.

Several of the leading organizations concerned and working on the housing crisis in Detroit were present. This event represented a perspective on housing that is in line with the current national and international struggles against police violence and institutional racism. DWB, which has led demonstrations in Detroit and the suburbs against police misconduct for over three months, were a key component in the meeting.

Those speaking from the panel assembled were Agnes Hitchcock of the Call Em out Coalition, a grouping which has existed for more than a decade geared towards holding public officials accountable to the people of Detroit. Also Monica Lewis-Patrick represented We the People of Detroit, an organization committed to ensuring clean running water for all residents of the city and Tristan Taylor, an organizer for DWB. The forum was chaired by the Black-Brown Alliance of DSA and Kenya Fentress of Black Lives Matter across 8 Mile.

The Detroit Eviction Defense (DED) coalition had two representatives who spoke to the escalating housing crisis in the city. Jim Dwight said during his comments that the majority of people coming to DED for assistance were African American women. Detroit is an overwhelming African American populated municipality which has undergone decades of underdeveloped and systematic oppression. Detroit was subjected to the illegal imposition of emergency management and bankruptcy from 2013-2014. Since then the corporate-oriented Mayor Mike Duggan has incessantly sought to transfer public resources to private capitalist interests that are dominating the economy of Detroit including Dan Gilbert, the Illitch family and the leading financial institutions, such as Chase Bank.

As a direct result of the pandemic, the “development” model of business office space availability, entertainment, sports, high-rent apartments, expensive condominiums and tourism has been in severe decline. The much championed casino hotels have reopened recently with monumental reductions in allowed capacity.



Photo is from the author

During the summer, the City administration placed through a 5-4 vote by the equally corporate compliant City Council, a bond initiative ostensibly designed for “blight removal” on the November ballot. A previous version went down in flames due to mass mobilizations by community activists in November. Already, the City of Detroit owes homeowners at least \$600 million in overpayments of property taxes in a municipality which is still ranked as the poorest major urban area in the U.S. After 2014, hundreds of millions of dollars were redirected from the Federal Hardest Hit Funds to demolition projects which created even more blight compounded by the subsequent environmental degradation left by the unscrupulous outside contractors.

During the GBI public meeting on September 14, a representative of the Moratorium NOW! Coalition said that we must move towards demanding rent relief, forgiveness and direct subsidies for housing. Moratorium NOW! Coalition was founded during the height of the economic crisis, popularly known as the “Great Recession” in 2008. Since then the organization has fought for a halt to all foreclosures and evictions along with militantly opposing the contrived emergency management and bankruptcy of 2013-2014. In recent years, Moratorium NOW! Coalition has sought a bailout for homeowners facing property tax foreclosure through the Government of Wayne County. Thousands have lost their homes as well due to over-assessed property taxes which are illegal even according to the laws of the State of Michigan.

Will the CDC Moratorium Resolve the Current Crisis?

Khalifa from DED spoke at the September 14 Detroit meeting on a document she drafted which explains the CDC moratorium. People are being evicted despite the declaration of this policy shift by the CDC which is ostensibly supported by the White House.

A recent report published on the situation in Texas in the city of Houston, where the pandemic has taken a devastating toll, it says that:

“Houston Public Media sent a reporter to four different courthouses last week to observe about 100 eviction cases and found that only one renter was able to use the CDC order to block eviction. So in 99% of those cases the order was having no effect at all. Legal aid attorneys in Houston also say it’s still too often business as usual at eviction hearings. The judges aren’t asking landlords if tenants sent them CDC declarations. Many tenants don’t show up. And among those that do, most don’t appear to even know about their rights under the CDC order. The judges don’t ask them about that. And in the vast majority of cases, the landlord is given the right to evict them. That’s despite the CDC order, in the middle of a pandemic.” (See [this](#))

If this is the situation in Texas which is an epicenter for the pandemic, it appears as if the same process is taking place in other regions of the U.S. Many judges are aligned with the landlords who often are wealthy corporations whose only interests are to maximize their profits from renters. The banks have proven time again that they have no consistent program to help homeowners remain in their houses. Many of the financial institutions culpable in the 2008 crisis violated their own rules as well as federal laws in order to repossess the homes of working families throughout the country. This same process holds true for property tax foreclosures which have been a major problem in the city of Detroit.

Reflecting the national dilemma facing the working class and the nationally oppressed, the New York Times published an article on September 16 noting:

“The order, a moratorium imposed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is meant to avoid mass evictions and contain the spread of the coronavirus. All a qualifying tenant must do is sign a declaration printed from the C.D.C. website and hand it over to his or her landlord. But it’s not as simple as it sounds: Landlords are still taking tenants to court, and what happens next varies around the country.” (See [this](#))

Housing is a Human Right: The Need for Another Social System

When the question of the need for fundamental social change in the U.S. was raised at the September 14 Liberation Monday public meeting all of those present agreed. Housing should be a guaranteed benefit for everyone living in modern day society.

Under capitalism in the U.S., housing is not a fundamental right for the workers and oppressed. Millions today are imperiled by the specter of homelessness. Water resources are denied to thousands in Detroit and millions across the U.S. Detroit has been a target for the termination of water services, and surprisingly enough, there are many municipalities which exceed the motor city as it relates the rates of shutoffs.

These issues require the transformation of the capitalist order into socialism. Under socialism all people are entitled to housing, water, utilities, education and environmental quality.

*

Note to readers: please click the share buttons above or below. Forward this article to your email lists. Crosspost on your blog site, internet forums. etc.

Abayomi Azikiwe is the editor of Pan-African News Wire. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

Featured image is from the author

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © [Abayomi Azikiwe](#), Global Research, 2020

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Abayomi Azikiwe](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca