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NYC Tenant Movement History

When we won Right to Counsel, we wanted to contextualize this win in the context of the history of the tenant movement, so that we could think strategically about how to use the new legislation to build the power of the tenant movement.

Thanks to the Global Action Project's Movement History Timeline Technology, we were able to create an online, interactive timeline of the NYC Tenant Movement. We also created curriculum to help you teach and facilitate a workshop or session on the history of the tenant movement!

Tenant Movement History Tools:

- [Online Interactive Movement History Timeline in English and Spanish](#)

- *If you would like to borrow laminated slides, please **email us** and we'll coordinate a time for you to pick it up from our office.*
- **Curriculum and Resource Packet in English and Spanish.**
 - *If you would like a printed and bound version of this, please **email us** and we'll coordinate a time for you to pick it up from our office.*
- **2-pager on the History of the Tenant Movement in English and Spanish**
- **2-pager on Direct Actions Highlights in the Tenant Movement in English and Spanish**

Lastly, if you want to host a house party, training, workshop on this history and want support, please sign up [here](#)! We will send you an event planning guide. We'd love to know how folks use it so [please stay in touch](#)!

Background, How to Use the Curriculum and Resource Packet, Acknowledgements, Disclaimers and Intentions:

Background:

When we won Right to Counsel, we wanted to contextualize the win in its time place and condition--to ground us in our mission of commitment of building tenant power and to understand this win in the larger context of a capitalist economy where housing is a commodity. We wanted to place the history of the coalition in the context of a larger history of the tenant movement---for all of the new tenant attorneys being hired, the new organizers and the new tenant leaders. What is the significance of this win in historical terms? This project began because I couldn't find any popular education materials on the history of the tenant movement. Coming out of tenant organizing in the Bronx, we

had materials on Bronx history, and other organizations had pieces of curriculum about the history of the tenant movement, but there wasn't anything centralized that I could find. While there were a few great books, there wasn't any curriculum, meant for every day folks, that you could use at a tenant meeting, that could be alive, and added to, honoring the experiences of tenant leaders in our movements. This is an attempt to correct that. The movement history timeline technology is adapting and can be added to---over the years, new organizers can add to the history and extend it. Neighborhood based organizers can take this timeline, copy it, edit it and make it specific to their neighborhoods. It is meant to be alive. It's also meant to look at larger forces--social, political and economic--that shape the world in which we organize, often determine our internal struggles and limit or expand our demands. So the timeline looks at the history of tenant organizing, but also the larger context in which that organizing was happening. It's meant to inspire and to help create a foundation from which we can learn, so that we don't limit ourselves. In my experience, the tenant movement leans conservative, often deciding not to challenge the basic premise of private property and profit, but that's certainly not our history. And it certainly doesn't have to be our future. Looking at our work, what will future generations say about the history we create?

How to Use this Curriculum and Resource Packet:

This curriculum is meant to offer many options when facilitating a workshop, meeting, study group, etc., on the history of the tenant movement, as you go through the Tenant Movement History Timeline. The timeline has 67 slides with lots of information, pictures and videos. You could go through that without using anything in this packet. However, this Curriculum and Resource Packet includes general

facilitation tips and principles (thanks to the Global Action Project), two different facilitation agendas, with small group and large group activities and guides to help digest the information, pull on the knowledge from the room as well as synthesize lessons learned. We also printed out each slide from the timeline, and laminated them, so that you could use the timeline in a place where you can't project as well as facilitate a journey through the timeline in small groups, rather than in one large group. If you're in NYC and part of the RTCNYC Coalition, you can borrow them! You can also print the slides yourselves. The film and reading list is meant to offer additional resources and tools. For example, you could use one or two of the slides, and some of the films listed and do an entire session on Redlining. Don't feel limited by the curriculum--use it as a starting point! Because this was created by the RTCNYC Coalition, the guide ends with an interactive activity about the history of the coalition and the RTCNYC campaign. It also offers an example of a history activity for any campaign. Lastly, if you create new curriculum or activities to facilitate learning about the tenant movement history, please share it with us!!

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work to copy edit, cull through all my notes to help create curriculum, creating the highlights sheets and in general for your awesomeness. Deep gratitude to Carlos Pareja and the folks at GAP for creating the movement history timeline technology, for all of your patience and supporting in teaching me how to use it, and for all of you facilitation magic, creativity and guidance. So much thanks to Carl E Petrosyan for your creative, powerful and simply fantastic design!

Disclaimers and Intentions:

This is not an academic work. All history is subjective. Many of the historical events are interpreted through a particular political lense--it might not be yours. That's OK. Also, in telling any history and attempting to make it a popular education tool, a lot is inevitably left out--that too is a subjective act. Many things are left out simply by not knowing about them! That is a testament to the breadth of the tenant movement in NYC! There could be a book about each moment in history--there are a few---but this isn't meant to be that. Also, how do you tell the history of the tenant movement without telling the history of homelessness and homeless organizing, the history of the immigration movement, the workers movement, etc.---yikes! So it's not an exhaustive or comprehensive history, though plenty of people have told me it's too long! But, it's meant to be an overview, to help us identify patterns and forces and to inspire us to ask questions to guide our current strategies and struggles. For more of an in depth history, please refer to the recommended readings and films. Lastly, we aren't trying to make any money from it so please don't sue us for anything in it. I tried to do citations and credit folks appropriately, but many of the notes I took while reading books, I took not knowing I would use them for this, so we had to backtrack to do that and citations are admittedly

not done properly. Please feel free to send edits and we'll try to make them where appropriate and based on our capacity. Lastly--make it yours! Use what you find useful, and leave the rest, accept it with the intention with which it was created---to remind us there is a vast and powerful history that should be accessible to all of us, to honor those who came before us, to inspire us to act and to hold us accountable to our future which is as bright as we make it.

-Susanna Blankley, Coalition Coordinator, Right to Counsel NYC Coalition

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