

Housing Justice League Newsletter

June 2020

Upcoming event: Monday June 22 6:30 pm online training on eviction defense and tenant organizing. See p. 6 for more information.

Housing Justice League stands in solidarity with the protesters in Minneapolis across the country and all around the world fighting for Black lives.

Housing Justice League stands in solidarity with the protesters in Minneapolis across the country fighting for Black lives. We know and understand the anger that spills over in moments like this and we fully support all of the people fighting for justice in the streets.

The billionaire class and the government loots and robs our communities every minute of every day. Protesters damaging property is not violence. Minimum wage jobs and a racist job market, regressive tax systems, underfunded schools, segregation, eviction, homelessness, and police surveillance of poor and immigrant communities is violence. In Atlanta, development projects like the Gulch, the redevelopment of Turner Field, and the BeltLine, and the Mercedes Benz Stadium, which rob tax money from poor communities and lead to their displacement for the benefit of billionaires is violence.

Police repression of protests is violence. The City of Atlanta's response to the justified anger and outrage was to call in the National Guard and impose a curfew to further repress the people demanding change. Once again, the Black elite of Atlanta show how they only know how to respond to Black pain, suffering, and the violence of poverty with state force and further repression to protect business as usual.

Policing and incarceration is how the government tries to manage economic and social issues to prevent rebellion in

poor communities. Police and prisons do not protect us or keep us safe. They kill us, both with guns and with poverty. If we took all the money invested in mass incarceration, policing, and the military, and invested it in housing, education, health care, and other human needs instead, we would see a lot more safety, justice, and peace. **Donate to the Atlanta Solidarity Fund to bail our community out:** <https://atlsolidarity.org/>

This month Housing Justice League recognizes:

Pride Month - It is important that HJL be an organization that uplifts and stands with LBGQT+ communities and supports all people in the movement that are seeking to dismantle injustices in the community. Not only do we stand with the LBGQT+ community, we fully affirm our commitment to dismantling the oppression of LGBTQ+ communities by joining in coalitions that are led by these communities, and committing to direct outreach to better engage, show up, and be present.

Junetenth - As we think of BIPOC people, we must also not forget that we are still chained by a system of oppression. Many of us in this organization will be celebrating Junetenth. If you are unfamiliar with this, it would be wise to do some research.



Reflections from an HJL Member

by Alison Johnson

My experience living in America as a black woman raising black boys is a traumatized, hyper exclusive that is filled with anxiety daily. Every single black child, boy, and man in my family at some point in their life has had an interaction with the police (there are 16 of them under the age of 30) and has served a sentence, both short and long. Most of my anxiety that I have today comes from sitting in a courtroom praying to God that the judge can see that this child is a good boy, and simply needs the right resources to help him navigate this challenging system that doesn't give a damn about him. My stomach has many air bubbles from me holding my breathe in the courtroom because the person before him is white and arrested for the same charge and is supported with a high power attorney who can articulate the judges language of why his client must have a sentencing of drug rehabilitation and his record wiped cleaned when the 90 day sentence is served and his voting rights are restored because he's not a convicted felon. When my family faces the judge, the tension is thick but the cut is deep and swift.

We can't afford an attorney, we can't make bail. There's no attorney, just a public pretender that works with the state. My stomach and heart are knotted like a yeast roll when the judge gives his sentencing 10 years with 5 to serve in prison and the rest on parole. My heart is about to explode. He looks back at me as he's handcuffed and forced to sign the deal of his life to a prison. Then he's ushered off as I mouth to him "I love you always" and the next case is called. Going into the restroom and weeping uncontrollably and feeling such a profound sense of innocent loss and knowing he'll never be the same if he can make it out of this life altering experience.

I lay awake for many nights wondering how did I fail him? We had done all we could to be sure he had a fighting chance. What happened? One mistake and this is his fate.

Why? We have always been advocates of the community for investment in our children because we know that we are being ignored and underserved. These outcomes are far too normalized, but this is what our communities get when we don't have the essential resources for schools, housing, cultural learning, health access, mental health, clean air, good jobs -- all the concentrated conditions we are burdened to take on and city leaders that are more concerned about profit, while our black boys are still being objectified because of the way this society sees them. I'm outraged and disappointed in this continuum predicated system and in black leadership citywide. Our black children matter. We don't have the privilege to wait for justice, we have to demand it now!

#GeorgeFloyd #TonyMcDade #BreonnaTaylor
#AmaudArbery #SayTheirNames #BlackLivesMatter
#DefundThePolice #CancelRent





Ok folx. A few things:

by Karimah Dillard

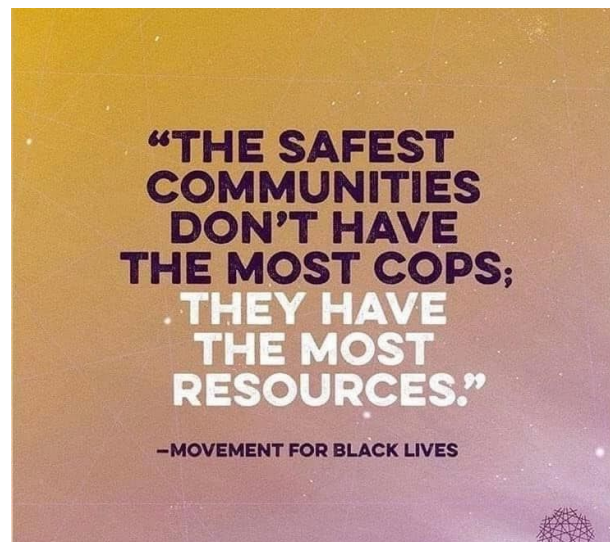
- 1. Harriet wasn't out to reform slavery.** We are done trying to reform police departments. Tried it. Didn't work.
- 2. Defunding the police also means redistributing those funds to resource communities.**
- 3. Defunding police also means that the community must take care of each other. We must stand in the gap.** We have to know each other, care for each other and as Mary Hooks would say- **be about our brother's and sister's business.**
- 4. Our young people have been ready. Have been organizing.** And the organizing I have seen from them this week in particular has been AMAZING. We must support them.
- 5. Please know that LGBTQI+ BIPOC have been leading the charge since day 1.** And if you don't know what those acronyms stand for please do some research.
- 6. Power concedes nothing without demand.** So pontificating about the utility of peaceful protests vs riots is a true waste of energy. This is a rebellion. Don't think for a moment that MLK did not carry the threat of a riot in his back pocket as leverage when negotiating freedom. AND let's not forget - the Fair Housing Act was passed with the swiftness only about 6 days after his assassination. Why? Because people were "rioting"! When enslaved Haitians revolted, they won their freedom. When the US went to war with itself US slavery was abolished. The list goes on. I am sure we would all rather not risk our lives, and I also know when we fight we win. Change is happening right now across this country because we are making it happen.
- 7. On the topic of violence- consider the violence that is homelessness, poverty, lack of access to affordable housing and food security.** How about pay people a living wage of at least \$15/hr? Every employer should have to give their employees paid sick time and we should all have access to universal Healthcare.
- 8. This fight did not just begin when George Floyd was murdered.** We have had boots on the ground for decades. And we need everybody in this fight. We need healers, spiritualists, organizers, introverts, visual artists, writers, dancers, actors, facilitators, allies, and people willing to put their bodies on the line. Link up with an organization doing anti-racist work and give of your time, talent or tithe.

9. When we talk about defunding the police and redistributing resources to communities, folx get scared. And that is completely understandable. We have never known a world without police. But we do know Law and Order, Criminal Minds, Bluebloods, etc. And many of us know first hand what it has felt like to be a victim. That cannot be understated. Many of us know firsthand what it feels like to be a victim. So when we talk about abolition we have to be ready for that kind of responsibility.

What is being called for is a deep shift. A true revolution. A move away from complete reliance on the government to do what it says it is going to do. Instead, this is an invitation to really flex those imaginative muscles and manifest the real beloved community. One that looks like mutual aid and community control. Yes, resources would be great. But this is about community stepping in to care for itself. Every village needs its warriors, mothers, fathers, elders, healers, teachers, etc. When someone causes harm we pull them in close rather than push them out. This is the kind of world I want to live in. And I will add that this is not a completely revolutionary idea. In the days before integration when black lawyers, doctors, teachers, janitors all lived together- in some of these neighborhoods you could not get a police officer to respond to a domestic dispute. We had to handle it ourselves. And most recently, during the "riots", when folx called the cops and the cops refused to come, the people said, "WE got this". They armed themselves and protected their communities. So, this is not impossible for us to do, but it will take collective imagination and it will take UJIMA- collective work and responsibility.

Again, as the genius [Mary Hooks](#) would say:

ARE WE WILLING TO BE TRANSFORMED IN THE SERVICE OF THE WORK?





Housing Justice League welcomes Latresa Chaney and Josue Acosta to HJL's staff!

Latresa will be assisting with Housing Justice League's tenant organizing work. Latresa is the oldest of four children, a mother of 5, and a grandmother. She was raised in the Pittsburgh Community in Atlanta, GA where she attended Gideons Elementary, Parks Middle, and graduated from Carver High School. Latresa came to live in what is currently called Forest Cove Apartments in August 2013 after a two-year homeless status. In March 2018 Latresa joined Housing Justice League and learned how to become a tenant leader and organizer at Forest Cove. In May 2018 Latresa traveled with HJL to attend the Homes for All South Regional Convening in Nashville, TN. She has also helped to lead information sessions on tenant organizing through HJL's monthly tenant organizing trainings and with Metro Atlanta DSA.

Latresa knows from experience what it means to be displaced from housing because it wasn't safe, decent, nor affordable for her and her family. She believes we must organize until there is more safe, affordable, and decent housing for all families, and no more displacement of low-income families. We are thrilled to have Latresa on board in her new position. Please give her a warm welcome!

Hello folks, My name is Josue (hosway), and I will be working as a tenant organizer and helping branch out to Latinx communities. I am a Latinx DACA recipient that currently attends Oglethorpe university, and is pursuing a bachelor's degree in Political Science while minoring in African American studies. I've been given the privilege to work with Latinx organization that centers on organizing and inspiring people to come together and fight for a common cause. In high school, I worked with HoPe, Hispanic Organization Promoting Education that focused on educating the importance of life after high school. As a group leader, I helped latinx students to understand the college process and offered scholarship information,

community service, and college exams information. Most recently I worked with Los Vecinos de Buford Highway, where I canvassed along the Brookhaven area to inform people of color the importance of voting in local elections and getting the word out about the census. Also, my desire for social justice and assisting minorities on campus motivated me to be a fresh class senator and be a founder of Social Democrats at Oglethorpe University.

As a Daca-mented latinx person, I understand there is always misinformation and under information about essential rights. My goal is to inform other people and come together to fight against a biased injustice capitalist system.

Upcoming event: Monday June 22 6:30 pm online training on eviction defense and tenant organizing.

Join us for an Eviction Defense & Tenant Organizing Training. If you did not receive an email invite, email Natalie at natalie@housingjusticeleague.org. We will cover the legal process of eviction, legal opportunities for tenant defense leading up to and during your court hearing, as well as how collective resistance can build community power to protect us from eviction. We will also share information on how and when metro Atlanta courts will reopen.

The Fulton County Magistrate Court has said it will start approving writs of possession and evicting tenants who have been laid off during COVID19 on July 6. Over the coming months, more courts will reopen across Georgia and the CARES Act eviction moratorium for federally-backed housing will expire.

Housing Justice League stands against the violence of eviction always, and especially during a public health and economic crisis. Eviction is a product of the economic oppression and criminalization of Black communities, upheld by a legal system that protects property owners' right to extraction.