



From: Defend Glendale Campaign

To: MPHA Board of Commissioners, Chairman F. Clayton Tyler, Council Member Lisa Goodman, Executive Director of MPHA Cora McCorvey, incoming Executive Director Gregory P. Russ, and Policy Director Bob Boyd

Date: December 20, 2016

Subject: Open Letter: Stop Targeting East African Residents of Glendale Townhomes & fix the heat issue

1. Sending out letters to opt out of living in Glendale Townhomes

Since October 2016, residents of Glendale Townhomes have been receiving letters from MPHA and their private partners to opt out of living in Glendale, to move out of Glendale Townhomes, and all together out of Minneapolis. Letters urge residents to move to faraway places such as Maple Grove. Throughout the recent years and specifically after the Trump election, these areas have increased incidents of racist crimes, hate crimes, and islamophobia. <http://minnesota.cbslocal.com/2016/11/09/racist-pro-trump-graffiti-maple-grove/>.

Residents that received letters from MPHA were told that they can move to the Lake Shore Townhomes, located in Maple Grove. These Townhomes are privately owned and managed by CommonBond Housing. <http://tinyurl.com/Lett-to-displace-residents>

The residents who received these letters are East African Muslims that are vocal members and leaders of Defend Glendale. This suggests that MPHA is directly targeting Defend Glendale members for relocation. To be clear, these residents did not ask to be moved out of MPHA public system that gives them more protection as residents than the privately owned Section 8 project based system in Maple Grove. These residents did not ask to be displaced from Glendale and Prospect Park where they are members of a community that supports them, from their families, close ties, and nearby schools. Moreover, these residents have no interest to live in Maple Grove where they face hate crimes and Islamophobia, have no access to the Green line light rail, buses, schools or hospitals, or the downtown services they heavily rely on. This is a definition of displacement and retaliation against residents that oppose the systemic gentrification of Minneapolis and the pushing out of low-income East African Muslim residents and residents of color from the city.

2. Retaliation tactics by Property Managers

MPHA's tactic is clear: it is to continue to target vocal residents who are fighting to protect their homes, their rights under the Fair Housing Act and the community they have worked hard to build for decades in Glendale Townhomes. MPHA wants everyone to move out through offers or pressure so Sherman Associates can demolish, take over, and profit. MPHA is violating

Glendale resident's freedom of speech to fight for their homes. MPHA is retaliating against residents who are exercising their right to organize. MPHA's tactics also include preying on weak and vulnerable residents, intimidation, and retaliation against vocal residents, divide and conquer the residential community, and spreading rumors that everyone is moving to Sherman properties.

We have witnessed how this retaliation takes place. It is mainly through constant pressure from property managers of Glendale. Here property managers target key East African residents through classic oppression model of profiling such as repeated write ups under lease violation codes during inspection. These include a resident forgetting to change a light bulb, or toddler writing with markers on the wall, or having storage materials in the basement. In addition, property managers conduct numerous inspections on East Africans they target in order to catch residents doing something wrong and writing up cases that are too complicated for residents to understand; sending out letters without translations of code violations or allegations. MPHA does not hire professional unbiased interpreters. MPHA asks their bilingual staff to interpret which results in biased interpretation that favors MPHA and not the rights of residents.

3. Spreading rumors

One rumor is that MPHA will not do wear and tear repairs no matter how desperate residents are because they want residents to suffer so they get frustrated and move out. Another rumor is the false information that residents should look for other places because these homes will be demolished and residents will end up moving to the Cedar Riverside Neighborhood. MPHA is doing nothing to correct this misinformation and ease resident fears.

When George Sherman spoke to the MPHA Board for the approval of the Sherman Report in June of 2016, he stated, "We can move residents to Sherman properties Riverside Plaza Apartments in Cedar- Riverside Neighborhood." Majority of the residents in Riverside Plaza are East African Somalis and there have been protest at Riverside Plaza for lack of repairs. Sherman Associates is private development that receives tax credits and HUD funds to operate the apartments.

MPHA says they have no plans now to demolish Glendale and the Sherman report was just a report with no action by the MPHA Board. If that is so, then MPHA must to take steps to send out letters to all Glendale residents clearing these rumors: showing their commitment to providing wear and tear repairs, and assuring residents that they have no plans to move them to Sherman Properties. So far, MPHA has failed to clear these rumors. Maybe they are hoping it will scare some residents to move out. This is not the kind of behavior we ought to expect from a Public Housing Authority, which has a mandate to protect and serve low-income, working class residents, vulnerable seniors, and disabled residents.

4. MPHA is committing health and safety code violations

While property managers target East African Muslim residents that are vocal members of Defend Glendale and others to evict them or displace them to places such as Maple Grove, MPHA continues to violate the HUD and the City housing codes. These violations include but are not limited to the lack of insulations of the homes, and refusal to turn over the heat and

thermostat to residents so residents can control their own heat as they have since 1952 so they don't freeze.

MPHA took over the heat about 5 years ago and homes are currently below the required temperature. This was exposed last winter; this winter, despite the below zero temperatures MPHA is still not fixing the heat issue, turning over the heat to residents, or insulating the homes. As a result, elders and children developed health problems. Children are getting sick because of the cold and have to be taken to doctors.

From the 6,000 properties MPHA owns, Glendale is the only one suffering from low heat. Why? Because MPHA wants to make life so difficult for residents that, they give up and move out so MPHA can demolish, gentrify the area, and profit from Glendale. In 2014, Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, (MHFA) yearly budget for public housing funds was \$20 million. This is through a program called POHP, Publically Owned Housing Program, where Public Housing Authorities and Agencies (PHA) all over Minnesota can apply to fund their wear, tear, rehab and repairs needs for their properties. PHA's use these funds to rehabilitate and preserve public housing. Depending on the need of the PHA properties, funding range from \$60,000 to \$2 million per PHA per year. Defend Glendale Campaign found out that MPHA applied for these grants to repair other properties in previous funding cycles, but never applied to fix and repair Glendale. MPHA claims that Glendale is in such disrepair, if that is the case, then why didn't they apply for Glendale? Yet, the money is there to make repairs and rehab in sections only if MPHA actually applied for it.

5. MPHA still eager to demolish Glendale and displace residents

Since MPHA says they have no plans now to demolish Glendale and displace residents, then why are they retaliating against residents, scaring, neglecting, abusing, and displacing East African residents, and vocal members of Defend Glendale? MPHA must send out letters to residents, councilmembers, Sherman Associates, and anyone looking to profit from the demolition of Glendale, that they have no plans to demolish Glendale, no one is moving to Cedar, that they are committed to fixing all wear and tear issues, insulating homes, and turning over the heat to residents so they don't freeze. MPHA must show residents of Minneapolis that they are committed to their mission to serve and protect residents of MPHA.

If MPHA fails to do that, then it is clear that MPHA has not given up on their plans to displace residents, gentrify, and demolish Glendale for private profit, and violate their mission.

Furthermore, it is clear to us residents that by hiring Mr. Gregory P. Russ as the next Executive Director of MPHA, MPHA plans to do more damage to Glendale, and to other public housing units in the city. Council Member Lisa Goodman, and MPHA Board Commissioners F. Clayton Tyler and Chuck Lutz took part in a year-long process to recruit Gregory P. Russ from Massachusetts. Where there no qualified people in Minneapolis to fill this position? Mr. Russ has no knowledge about the MPHA population; but he is the national expert on privatizing public housing.

The intention of MPHA is very clear: neglect, privatize, displace, demolish, and gentrify.

Therefore, we ask that Council Member Lisa Goodman, the Board of Commissioners of MPHA, and Chairman of the Board F. Clayton Tyler, Executive Director Cora McCorvey, New Director Gregory P. Russ, and Director of Policy Bob Boyd to write letters to Glendale residents to state the facts and explain your position on following items:

1. Neither MPHA nor the City of Minneapolis, or HUD have approved or voted to demolish Glendale, and no one will be forced to move out of their homes.
2. MPHA property managers will stop targeting East African Muslim residents.
3. MPHA will not use bilingual staff to spread biased information that violates resident rights, and instead will hire certified independent translators/interpreters.
4. MPHA will fix the heat problem in Glendale by improving the insulation and turning over heat control to the residents. MPHA has ignored the problem since last winter and that is causing serious health and safety repercussions.

We ask that MPHA write letters to all Glendale residents to clear these issues by January 30, 2017 as residents will continue to speak up of abuses, protect their homes and their rights.

Sincerely,
Defend Glendale Campaign

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