

July 20, 2018



Star Tribune Will Publish a Spin Piece About MPHA's Director, Greg Russ, and His Plans to Destroy Public Housing in Minneapolis.

Dear Allies:

We have found out that the Star Tribune will soon publish a PR piece about MPHA's executive director Greg Russ and his privatization plans to dismantle and displace Minneapolis Public Housing through RAD (Rental Assistance Demonstration) a tool that allows public housing agencies to privatize public housing, once they have approval from HUD and the City. For the record, MPHA has not shared their RAD applications with the public, or notified residents of public housing and the greater public about specific RAD applications for each property. These applications require community meetings, public comments and hearings at MPHA and at City Council. The only thing MPHA has shared with the City Council (and not with residents) is the "Strategic Vision and Capital Plan." This is a report, not an actual RAD application to dismantle each building, property by property. <https://www.dgphc.org/2018/07/11/mpha-strategic-vision-analysis/>

Greg Russ and MPHA are concerned about the increasing national attention the Defend Glendale & Public Housing Coalition campaign is receiving. This includes a letter of solidarity from the National Public Housing Museum, which is based in Chicago. This letter is especially concerning for Greg Russ because their letter specifically calls out the Chicago Housing Authority's failed "Plan for Transformation" as an example of the kind of dangerous privatization plan Greg Russ is now promoting here to dismantle public housing.

Greg Russ has reason to fear the Chicago connection, because as the Director of Policy at Chicago Housing Authority, (CHA) Greg Russ negotiated the Plan for Transformation. This plan dismantled, demolished, and privatized public housing, displacing tens of thousands of people in the process. Greg Russ bears personal responsibility for this tragedy. Will Minneapolis let him replicate it here?

This new Star Tribune piece is a part of MPHA's extensive PR campaign, led by the Star Tribune's new reporter Mukhtar Ibrahim. Mr. Ibrahim contacted DG&PHC yesterday, Thursday, July 19th, after he had an extensive face to face interview with Greg Russ. According to Mr. Ibrahim, Greg Russ told him about MPHA's plans to use RAD to privatize public housing, while also saying: "What DG&PHC are saying about Greg Russ and MPHA privatizing and displacing thousands of residents is a lie."

As a result, DG&PHC requested to be interviewed by Mr. Ibrahim to present real evidence and MPHA's own reports that show MPHA's privatization and displacement plans. In other words, to be given the same opportunity and time Greg Russ received.

Mr. Ibrahim said he did not want to meet us. "He said, I have no time to meet with residents, and this story is not about residents, it is about Russ."

Later that day, two resident leaders called Mr. Ibrahim and requested again that he meet with residents anytime Friday, July 20th, or later to make sure the voice of residents who are at the

front lines to save their homes from the destruction of Greg Russ are interviewed. Mr. Ibrahim again said: "No, the story is about Russ."

Even though Russ spoke about DG&PHC on record to Mr. Ibrahim, Mr. Ibrahim did not want to meet us to present Greg Russ's own privation plans. A resident leader said: "Mukhtar you can do a fair, objective and comprehensive story on Greg Russ and his history and plans, or you can write a biased story." In addition, when we asked Mr. Ibrahim if has he seen the actual RAD applications, Mr. Ibrahim said: "No".

As the phone conversation progressed to trying to convince Mr. Ibrahim to do a fair story, we realized that Mr. Ibrahim had not done the necessary research, and was only relying on Russ's spin. Mr. Ibrahim did not know the history of 2015, and how residents of Glendale stopped the RAD vote at City Council, and that HUD did not take the application. It is premature to do a RAD story when a RAD application has not been prepared, or presented to residents, or the City of Minneapolis. We say no to RAD applications.

The decision by the Star Tribune and their reporter Mukhtar Ibrahim to publish this piece without speaking to residents of public housing who have been fighting Greg Russ since his appointment is part of a pattern of behavior at the Star Tribune that gives priority to the voices of white elites, while ignoring and marginalizing POC, East Africans, and poor communities of Minneapolis. The Star Tribune does not care about the facts or the truth. They want to help MPHA push their plans by trying to save Greg Russ's image.

We say, let Greg Russ's record speak for itself. Let the tens of thousands of people who lost their homes in Chicago speak for themselves. Let the transfer of hundreds of millions of dollars to private hands that has taken place under his watch in Chicago, Philadelphia, and Cambridge speak for itself. For years, Greg Russ has escaped scrutiny by moving from city to city. He comes in, dismantles, and moves on to the next city to destroy public housing. But now, his record has caught up with him. Instead of owning this record, Greg Russ is now smearing public housing residents in an attempt to distract the public.

DG&PHC has nothing to hide. We report only facts, based on MPHA's own documents. As this story gains national coverage, the local media such as Star Tribune who push MPHA's plans will be exposed for their complicity and racism in this scandal. The fact that the Star Tribune chose a Somali reporter, Mukhtar Ibrahim, does not change their culture of bias and systemic oppression. For the record, Star Tribune published lies about our campaign the same time last year in 2017. After our statement here, we will see how the Star Tribune will try to spin our truth and their hostile treatment towards our campaign, struggle and movement, as they are planning on publishing Russ's spin piece by Sunday, July 22, 2018.

#SaynotoRAD #ShameonStarTribune

Defend Glendale & Public Housing Coalition

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