

ATUN Town Hall

Email: atuntenants@gmail.com

Dont (LA Tenants Union)

What is ATUN?

- Established about a year and a half ago, network of tenants unions
- Monthly meetings
- ATU [agenda doc](#)
- Register for more info here: bit.ly/ATUNintake
- Autonomous: operate independently of large foundation money and nonprofits (strings attached, particularly with supporting policies that harm tenants)
- Leadership is from the tenants
- Committed to base-building: while they are involved in policy, see those policies and fight for them as opportunity to build base
- Mutual aid = at center of what they do
- Also fight against gentrification: displacement/replacement of poor for profit (development without displacement not possible)
- Also committed to supporting new tenants unions

Mack (Sacramento)

Agenda Review

Why is it important to organize?

- Most people a paycheck or a few paychecks away from being unhoused
- Solutions presented by politicians not sufficient
- Having to choose between basic needs and keeping a roof over our head
- Crisis existed well before coronavirus pandemic, now just larger scale, all at the same time & in a different way
- At the end, will come down to: come up with the money, move, get evicted, or organize
- Stop mass evictions & foreclosure, collectively say no

Jade (Omaha)

Organizing Tactics

- Big demands → large majorities
- Can still start fighting before that

- (1) What are your networks
- (2) 5 people that will start group with you

- (3) Invite to set up a meeting
- (4) Contact ATUN (office hours)
- (5) Make a plan! (Today at 4:00 p.m.)

--Get in touch with more networks of people/tenants and hear about what renting is like for them

- (1) What are ways you can listen to the working class in your area?
- (2) What do you already know about tenants in your area?

--Ways to do these things:

- (1) Some networks start around KYR sessions
- (2) Small fights get practice/build confidence
- (3) Tenants town hall
- (4) Create some demands for local elected officials and spread through networks

--Housekeeping

- (1) Develop contact lists to connect with in an ongoing basis, for future actions
- (2) Ask people to specifically do something
- (3) Consistently follow up

ACTION

--Only tenants can win these rights, build power to get them

Reportbacks

(Southside) Tenants United, Chicago

- Experiencing growth in membership and people creating their own TUs, wanting to go on rent strike
- Connected with mutual aid networks
- Using eviction moratorium to support others nationally
- Growing anti-police sentiments, sense that we can't go back to "normal"
- No illegal evictions yet but preparing to mobilize against them

Rapid City, SD - West River Housing Coalition

- Organizing in mobile home parks
- Focusing on one slumlord in particular that many communities were dealing with
- Fraudulent late fees
- About to escalate but had to hold off because of pandemic
- Landlord doubled down, handing out more late fees and evicting people (before moratorium in place)
- Starting public shaming campaign - has worked in the past

Houston, TX

- 7 days of tenant power:
 - Phone blast with particular targets each day
 - Broad demands around evictions, late rent fees, etc.
 - Some media exposure
 - Membership growth
- Building relationships with new people coming around in order:
 - 1 on 1 meetings over internet
 - Building foundation for when crisis passes
- Wall of shame for worst landlords
- Building databases: tenant info
- KYR infographic, TU guides in both English and Spanish: [all docs here](#)
- Creating statewide strategy in TX

Omaha Tenants United

- Membership / interest increase, mainly people who want to rent strike or have to rent strike - providing KYR info for these people, encouraging them to get neighbors on board
- COVID-19 related eviction moratorium but not broadly
- Petition and survey on Facebook to find out if people are able to pay rent, who their landlords are, etc.
- Documents in paper form
 - Dropped off or printable to hand out to neighbors, with survey questions to help organize a whole building or neighbors
 - Provides an action item for new people: all questions laid out they should be having for 1-on-1 with their neighbors
- Some media exposure: “experts are recommending that you organize with your neighbors” - overall rent strike and organizing is starting to gain credibility - social media posts / propaganda helps
- Still within 5 day grace period to pay rent, but will start to see evictions that were already in motion

Q&A

- Worries about public organizing / repressive landlords
 - Need to do a lot of outreach to find tenants that are going to organize publicly.
 - Inoculate a lot.
 - Car protests
 - Lots of 1-on-1s over Zoom
 - Acknowledge peoples’ fears, turn to community for support - mutual aid pods can support for basic needs
- Outreach / building connections with other groups during pandemic
 - Social media
 - Flyering / postering with call number and meeting time

- Online petitions and survey with contact info, following up with everyone who signs up
 - Onboarding zoom calls, 1-on-1 talking with people, with asks to do something
- Tactics for shaming slumlords
 - Email and phone zaps have been successful
 - Social media
 - Flyer / poster neighborhood
 - Press releases
 - Finding landlord's neighborhood, sending pictures of black mold on postcards to landlord's neighbors
 - Embarrassing petition delivery at landlord's place of work
 - Poster on landlord's lawn every day
 - Letter stating intent to form Tenants' Union posted on door, like the eviction notices they put on people's doors
- Less dense urban housing, small time landlords, small number of tenants
 - Other buildings in support of small buildings
 - Neighborhood committees - networks - who build solidarity campaigns against a specific landlord
 - Build solidarity among tenants of same landlord in different neighborhoods
- Issues around lack of physical contact with neighbors: Whatsapp channels and other platforms helpful
- Lawsuits versus organizing for protections? And how to reconcile varying opinions.
 - Sub-groups within Tenant Unions:
 - Landlord research
 - Rent strikes
 - Outreach
 - People know that lawsuits are not particularly helpful right now
- Outreach and tactics for new tenant unions
 - Reach out to your friends, especially people who are going through these issues
 - Invite a neighbor over
 - Get creative - raves, potlucks, movie parties, etc., over the internet!
 - Door knocking was what was done before - now, need to rely on existing networks: coworkers, friends, faith community, etc.
 - Flyer / poster / have conversations along the way from point A to point B, including essential workers
 - Volunteer at food banks, drop off centers, put flyers in bags
 - One advantage: many people are in the same situation waiting to be organized - share your story
 - Hand make a sign, or notes under doors: "I'm having a hard time paying rent. Are you in the same situation? Text this number."
- Building already on rent strike but reluctant to start a union: make arguments that joining union is a way to attach a demand to what they're already doing
- Next steps

- ID 5 people you could start a group with, ask them to ID 5 people each
- Learn the laws and rights in your area
- Find out who tenants go to when repairs aren't being done, when lease is violated, etc.
- Listen to each other - collect peoples' stories - what are people experiencing, how do these stories overlap and create connections between people
- Establish dues:
 - Suggested: \$5 / month for employed people, \$1 / month if you're unemployed
 - Pay for printing
 - Rent meeting space
 - Interpretation equipment
 - Pay for Zoom line
 - Support each other
- Don't get hung up on legal status / nonprofit status
- Office hours on Zoom for several hours (zoom room 482-696-1152)
 - Monday 4/6 3-7 ET
 - Thursday 4/9 3-7 ET
- Regional meetings Saturday April 11th
- Next North American Town Hall Meeting: April 18th - next meeting, assessing for rent strike May 1st