



230 FIGHTBACK

THE FIGHT FOR HOUSING JUSTICE IN TORONTO GOES FORWARD

The Peoples' Assembly for Housing Justice, held in downtown Toronto, on April 25 and 26, was a major step forward in building a powerful fighting movement for housing. Some fourteen grassroots organizations from across the city worked to make the Assembly happen and it was a smashing success.

On the evening of the 25th, roughly a hundred and fifty people filled the meeting hall for the opening panel. Speakers from 230 Fightback, the York South-Weston Tenant Union, the Regent Park Neighbourhood Association and the Shelter Housing and Justice Network began the event by setting out the struggles they are engaged in, condemning the greed of those who trade in housing as a commodity and challenging the politicians who serve the interests of the developers and investors. The panel stressed the need to build a strong and united movement to ensure that housing is treated as a social need and a human right.

The all-day event that followed on the 26th brought out a hundred and eighty people. The communities from which people attended included Dundas and Sherbourne, Regent Park, Chinatown, Parkdale and South York-Western. In the first session, representatives of Climate Justice Toronto, the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change, No Demovictions, the Toronto Unhoused and Homeless Union, Friends of Chinatown, and the Parkdale Housing Justice Network discussed the importance of all those who are fighting for housing in this city working together in solidarity.

In the afternoon, workshops were held that discussed the kind of united action that could be taken up to challenge the developers and their political enablers. Each table that participants in the workshops were sitting at came up with slogans to be used in this struggle and they were taken up enthusiastically by the entire gathering.

A proposal was put forward for a united march on June 14, to go from the empty property at 214-230 that 230 Fightback is demanding be turned into social housing and to march into the financial district to confront and challenge some of the developers and corporate landlords that we are fighting against. The proposal was readily accepted by the entire gathering. Fittingly, the Assembly even included an impromptu direct action. A meeting was taking place in a nearby community centre, hosted by Metro Link. This body had promised that the project it was discussing would provide jobs for local people from the low-income community. Following an appeal from the floor, about fifty of those attending the Assembly crashed the meeting to press the demand for jobs.

The struggle for housing justice in Toronto will be long and hard fought but a movement is emerging that can take the fight forward and unleash the power that lies in our communities. The developers, the landlords, the speculators and the politicians are going to face a major challenge.



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