

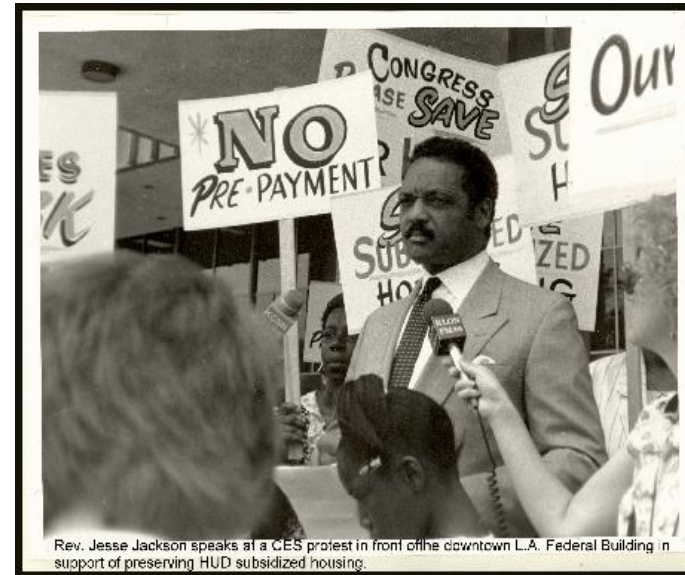
# Combating Slumlords Through Grassroots Organizing

Carlos Aguilar, Director of Organizing  
Coalition for Economic Survival (CES)



# Background

- CES, founded in 1973, is a non-profit tenant's rights community based organization dedicated to educating & organizing tenants in Los Angeles bringing positive change to their building and city.



# Community Organizing: Tenant Empowerment

CES' mission is to organize low-income tenants to not only bring positive change in their building, but also to defend and advocate for new housing policies that will advance tenant's rights in Los Angeles for future generations of renters.



# The City of Los Angeles

114  
Neighborhoods



Over 60% of  
Angelinos  
are Renters

# Los Angeles' Housing Crisis

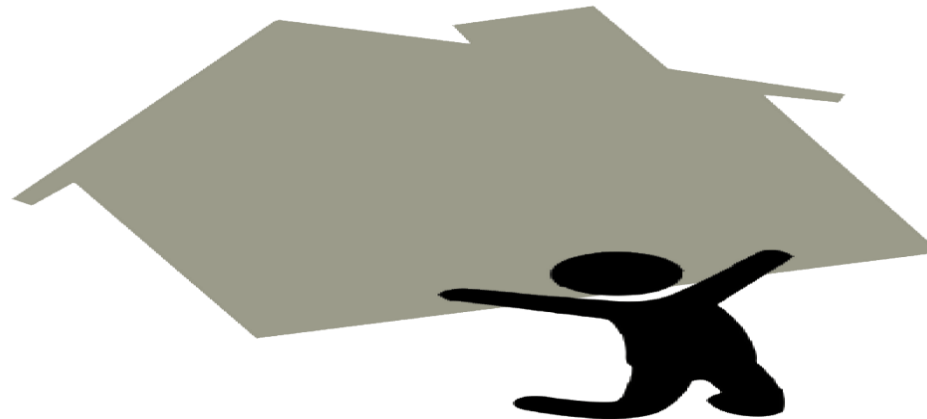
- Most Overcrowded Housing in Nation
  - 7 out of 10 Most Overcrowded Zip Codes in LA
- Homeless Capital of Nation
- Highest Poverty Rate at 26% -
  - 1 in 4 Households in Poverty
- Over 500,000 New Affordable Housing Units Needed in LA County





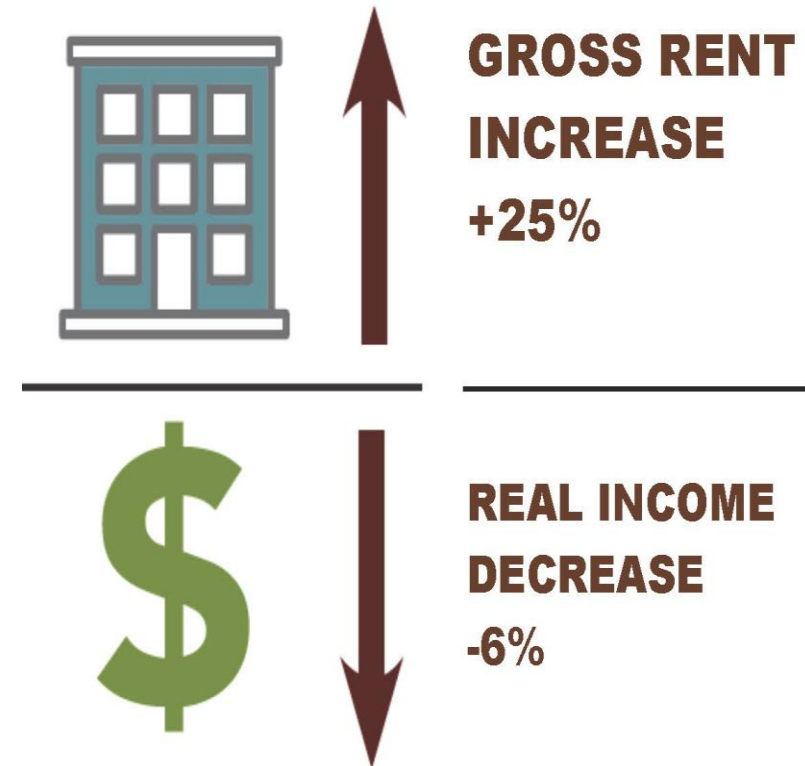
# Los Angeles Tenants Are Severely Rent Burdened

- LA, the Nation's Most Unaffordable City
- Over 60% of LA Renters are Paying Unaffordable Rents
- Many of Those Renters are Paying Upwards of 50% or More of their Income to Rent



# LA Rents Rise, While Wages Plunge

- Between 2000 & 2015, rents in L.A. grew 25% while real income, adjusted for inflation, decreased 6%.
- It would take [\\$109,543 in annual income](#) to secure an "average" (\$2,556 per month) two-bedroom apartment in Los Angeles.



# What Do These Conditions Promote?

- Tenants willing to accept living in units below basic habitability standards
- Tenants worried that they are one paycheck from eviction
- Tenants not wanting to bring attention to themselves
- Owners having economic incentive to get vacancy decontrol



## How Can We Push Back?

- Slumlords/Repeat violators need to be held accountable!

# Rent Stabilization Ordinance (RSO)

- The RSO regulates approximately **631,000 units** in 118,000 properties mostly built before 1979, representing about 85% of L.A.'s rental housing stock throughout the City of Los Angeles that fall under this ordinance, including apartments, condos, co-ops, rooming houses, and hotels and motels. Mobilehomes in mobilehome parks are also covered by the RSO.

# RSO Strengths

- Covers a large segment of households in LA
  - 2/3 of all renter households
  - 40% of total households in the City
- Protects long-term tenants against rapid rent increases during periods of housing inflation
- Protects tenants against arbitrary evictions (Allows for only 14 Legal Reasons to Evict)

# RSO Limitations

- RSO cannot address the acute scarcity of affordable housing
- RSO renters that remain in units <5 years may receive little rent savings from the ordinance
- Indications that the program may create financial disincentives for owners to invest in maintenance and capital improvements

# RSO Enforcement Tools



RSO gives power to HCIDLA to:



- Implement and manage the Systematic Code Enforcement Program (SCEP)
- Implement and Manage Rent Escrow Account Program (REAP)
- Continue managing Housing Code Complaint program

# Other Enforcement Tools

- Health Department & other Government Agency Inspections
- “Constituent Services”-Local representatives
- Public Interest Law Firms
- Media Attention
- Direct Actions



Burns Ave Apts.	James M. Woods Apts.
New Owner	New Owner
Harassment and Intimidation	Harassment and Intimidation
Violations of Tenancy Rights: Quiet Enjoyment, Attempted Illegal Evictions, Work without THP	Violations of Tenancy Rights: Quiet Enjoyment, Attempted Illegal Evictions, Work without THP
 CES Intervention	 CES Intervention
Tenant Empowerment: Complaints, Hearings, Workshops, Trainings, Delegations	Tenant Empowerment: Complaints, Workshops, Trainings, Hearings
<b>Issues Resolved:</b> Evictions rescinded, owner filed THP, Code Violations cleared	Violations Directly Endangering Health & Safety
	CES Collaboration with Public Interest Law Organization
	<b>Issue Resolve:</b> Evictions rescinded, Stop work order issued, owner filed THP

Woodlake Manor	Park Norton Apts.
New Owner	New Owner
Harassment, & Threat of Eviction	Harassment and Intimidation
Violations of Tenancy Rights: Quiet Enjoyment, Attempted Illegal Evictions, Change of Terms-online payments	Violations of Tenancy Rights: Quiet Enjoyment, Bed bug infestation, Habitability problems
 CES Intervention	 CES Intervention
Tenant Empowerment: Complaints, Workshops, Trainings, Delegations, Policy Work	Tenant Empowerment: Complaints, Petitions, Workshops, Trainings, Delegations
<b>Issues Resolved:</b> State Senator Ted Lieu (D-Torrance) responded by producing SB 1055 prohibiting landlords from only accepting rent through online-payment	<b>Issue Resolved:</b> Councilmember Wesson Office intervened, resulting enough pressure to force owner to do building-wide treatment

# Slumlords/Repeat Violators Challenges

- Code enforcement timeline (14 day notice)
- Temporary repairs
- Harassment
- Complaint response time (72hr required; 89% in 2011 but 70% in 2017)
- Owner cooperation (defects abatement, pre-inspection meeting, lead-safe work practices)
- Penalties not enough Deterrent (REAP is voluntary for tenants)
- Need More Data
- Buy-Outs (Cash4Keys)
- Evictions
- Ellis
- Airbnb
- Affirmative entry\*

# Slumlord/Repeat Violators

## What has Worked

- Monthly Meetings-troubleshooting partnership
- SCEP/REAP
- Involving CBO's in outreach-Eliminate Duplication of Services, Greater Flexibility, strategic deployment
- Work with Community to investigate & document Home Hazards & Effects on Health and Education
- Inside/Outside Strategy
- CBO Capacity Building
  - HUD Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes: Healthy Homes Rating System
  - EPA Renovate, Repair and Painting (RRP) protocol
  - Community Health Promoter
- Tenant Education and Empowerment
  - Learn to be their own advocate for justice
  - Direct constituent accountability of policymakers/implementers (transparency)
  - Increase community solidarity & support

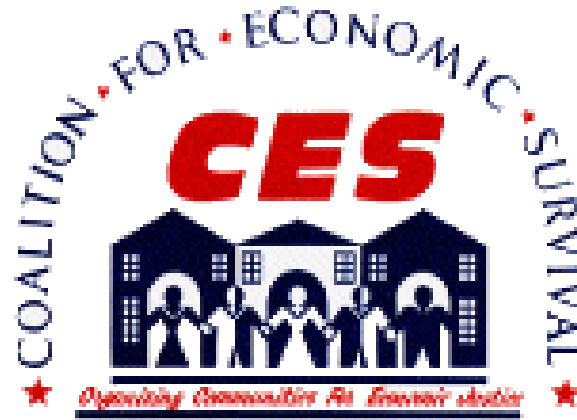
# Slumlord/Repeat Violators Systems Change

- Easier Complaint Filing Process \* (Discussing Now)
- Individual Inspection Notification\* (Discussing Now)
- Systems Communication between HCIDLA and B&S\* (Discussing Now)
- Verify Complaint in Person before Owner Notice Prepared (In Progress)
- 2-Tier Inspection Process (In Progress)
- Mandatory pre-Inspection (In Progress)
- Right-to-Counsel (Upcoming)
- Anti-Harassment Ordinance (Upcoming)
- *Airbnb Limits-except RSO units (Upcoming)*

# Coalition for Economic Survival (CES)







# Coalition for economic survival

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