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SENIOR/DISABLED RESIDENTS SPEAKOUT ON SAN ANTONIO HOUSING AUTHORITY'S NEGLIGENCE & VIOLATION OF HUD REGULATIONS

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“The ache for home lives in all of us. The safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned.” —Maya Angelou

By Pancho Valdez,
Interim President Resident Council

On April 14th several residents of the Lofts of Marie McGuire, fed up with being ignored by the SAHA bureaucracy, we spoke to a reporter from KWEX TV and the San Antonio Express-News about how our rights under federal Housing, Urban & Development regulations were being ignored and violated by the local housing authority.

While SAHA has a protocol for addressing grievances/concerns these residents made it clear that their issues that include damage to cars, threats of violence, violence, sexual harassment, racist slurs, harassment of LGBT tenants, unfair evictions are not being addressed appropriately and in many instances swept under the rug.

I personally have been assisting residents at Marie McGuire with these issues and I can attest that many of these issues are written down, submitted and no one ever hears a thing about them again. SAHA maintains that the outcome of these complaints cannot be discussed as that would violate confidentiality requirements. We maintain that any resident who openly gets high or drunk, makes threats of violence, beats their dog, keeps people awake at night with noise and allows their offspring and boyfriend to beat them has forfeited their confidentiality as the entire building knows who the village idiot is!

Prior to taking their grievances public residents at the Lofts of Marie McGuire marched to the apartment of the former president of the Resident Council handing him his notice that the members wished to oust him as per the Council by-laws. On March 23rd he resigned in shame as the residents did not wish to be represented by a White man who had no problems with referring to Black residents as N**ers, who made unwanted sexual advancements to women residents and who was calling the police on residents that he had personal issues with. Many residents submitted written complaints and to this day nothing has transpired that we are aware of to this man who by SAHA's

own rules should have been issued numerous lease violations. It takes three such violations to get evicted from a SAHA property, or so the bureaucrats claim.

Other residents have submitted complaints of sexual harassment from another male resident only to be ignored by SAHA management. One woman resident was also threatened with death and physical harm and it took almost three weeks to get her moved to another location and then only because she joined us at the SAHA Administration building and spoke to the news media about her situation. Supposedly she was granted emergency status, but it took three weeks to respond to her concerns! Meanwhile the perpetrator of the threats, the cruelty to her dog, the loud noise at night still lives at Marie McGuire and says she will appeal her eviction notice.



While none of us feel that people should be evicted unfairly we all feel that the woman in question has gone over board in her disruptive behavior and needs to go. We also question the eviction of a Black resident who accompanied us, who was provoked into an altercation by the former Resident Council president and thus getting him his third lease violation. Other residents who are late in their rent are encouraged to make agreements to pay the late rent to avoid eviction. The problem is that the managers are denying that payments have been made or that such agreements even exist. Thus our Council is educating the tenant body to never go alone into the office and make sure all agreements are in writing!

The fight for justice at Marie McGuire will be an ongoing struggle and we understand that. We just feel given the fact that SAHA is a public entity funded by our rent and federal taxes it should be held accountable. We are not begging for charity, nor do we seek special treatment. We are demanding justice!

Bio: Pancho Valdez is a retired trade unionist and activist who began fighting for social justice in the summer of 1965. He can be contacted at: mestizowarrior@gmail.com or at 210-422-8000