

Low Income Tenants Organizing For Justice



By Pancho Valdez & James Hamilton, organizers and tenants of SAHA.

On March 19th San Antonio Police were summoned to 1215 Fair Avenue where the Fair Avenue Apartments of the San Antonio Housing Authority are located. On the 11th floor police discovered the decomposing body of 43-year-old Thomas Lyons who had been shot several times and stuffed into a closet. Lyons a plumber by trade with drug addiction issues was not a resident there. Despite tenant complaints of an odor that existed for weeks—complaints were not taken seriously until maggots crawled under the door onto the hallway. The manager, Antonia López, who has a history of mistreating tenants had ignored complaints, as usual.

Berta Cáceres, a resident, stated that drug dealing and prostitution is common there due to a lack of security. The Express-News reported on June 2 that SAHA had cut security funding by 42%.

On April 4th, a group of tenants from three different buildings organized by the **Tenants Union of San Antonio** picketed the **SAHA** Administration building at 818 S. Flores. Much to their dismay many tenants were interviewed by media sources exposing the injustices at **SAHA** buildings.

On April 17th, a group of **SAHA** tenants met with **SAHA** Board of Commissioners: Chairman Dr. Morris Stribling, Commissioner/Resident Charles Clack and newly appointed Commissioner Sofia López. They appeared astounded after listening to the testimony of tenants from Fair Avenue Apts., Lewis Chatham Apts. and the Marie McGuire Apts. They heard about the corrupt manager at Chatham Apts. who tolerates racism and practices favoritism for tenants willing to be snitches. They viewed color photos of an elderly tenant beaten by a younger, bigger tenant. The victim was evicted but the assailant continues living at the Chatham Apts. and is building manager Marie Flores' snitch.

An older male resident from Fair Avenue Apts. testified about the drug dealing and prostitution tolerated by **SAHA** management. There have been more than two murders at this building in the past.



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At the end, Marie McGuire Apts. tenant, Pancho Valdez, testified how management has allowed a self-admitted member of the **Ku Klux Klan** to grope women in the elevator, refer to Black tenants as n***rs, committed a terroristic threat with a knife, and more recently, assaulted his girlfriend in the building and, yet, remains there—as he, too, is a **SAHA** management snitch. This snitch apparently has close ties to **SAHA** upper management. I have seen people of color evicted for lesser violations. **SAHA** CEO David Nisivoccia's response when I complained was; "Isn't he entitled to due process?" Due process after three years of terror?

On June 6th, five tenants from three buildings and the ex-wife of Thomas Lyons all testified at the **SAHA** Board of Commissioners meeting. While we were small in number our message was strong. Unfortunately, the Board along with upper management heard us but didn't respond or act to correct situations brought before them.

We feel that the San Antonio community should know how **SAHA** bosses are denying low income tenants their rights. The community should also know that **HUD**, a federal agency that is mandated to oversee **SAHA**, told three of us that they are NOT authorized to enforce the agency's own regulations!

Thus, we organized with the **Tenants Union of San Antonio** aka **TUSA** to demand and secure justice. We ask for supporters to email David Nisivoccia the CEO: david_nisivoccia@saha.org. Demand that he end the favoritism, the violence, the racism and beef up security.

ACTION ALERT: The Patchwork Healing Blanket: *Piece by Piece and Country by Country.*

Women from around the globe are invited to send in individual cloth squares [27 ½ x 27 ½ inches | 70 cm x 70 cm] of cotton, hemp or bamboo material in natural color that are hand-embroidered, painted, written or printed on that express women's rage against violence. The squares will be connected to form a giant healing blanket that will be carried into the Zocalo in Mexico City as a massive public art project and peace demonstration on September 21, 2019. It will then be sent to the US border, where mujeres will throw it over the wall to sisters on the other side as a symbol of support and solidarity among women of the world.

For details on how to participate or host the blanket where you live contact Marietta or Alex, Mamaz Collective /Mujer Arte de Oaxaca by email at: patchworkhealingblanket@gmail.com

