

The downtown local has been busy this past month with three Sunday reading group nights and one downtown local meeting. Each Sunday in Civic Space Park, we talk with new and familiar tenants struggling with the heat, the lack of public restrooms, and the carceral conditions of shelters, heat relief centers, libraries, and parks. We hear how unhoused Black tenants feel stripped of dignity by constant police harassment for acts as innocuous as feeding pigeons at the lightrail stop or working their canvassing job in a white, rich neighborhood. Both our readings and our conversations reflect that everyone is being ground down while the propertied capitalist class continues to profit off our suffering. This is apparent especially in our conversations about homeless service provider nonprofits. Tenants have aptly asserted these nonprofits hold no real interest in housing people, rather, seek to perpetuate a cycle of “helping” people with temporary and insufficient resources, over and over again, ensuring they will be constantly funded. So, what is to be done? Organize! Read about our efforts at Civic Space Park below.

Reading group updates:

On August 3rd we read Veronica’s Story from *(Dis)Placement: The Fight for Housing and Community After Echo Park Lake* and Dear Mitch Don’t Evict Us, a demand letter from Echo Park Lake tenants [Veronica's Story and Dear Mitch Don't Evict Us](#) from the Homeless Industrial Complex Reader. We talked about downtown local, tenant organizing, and the social divide in the park as a place for fun opposed to the park as a home to tenants and tenant organizing. That evening there was a pop-up concert in the park which brought in an influx of young people. The irony of reading about the class divide between gentrifier park goers in Echo Park Lake and the unhoused park residents, while seeing the same dynamic unfolding before our eyes, was not lost.

On August 17th we read *Without Housing: Decades of Federal Housing Cutbacks, Massive Homelessness and Policy Failures* from the Reader paired with a recent article *San Francisco and other cities, following a Supreme Court ruling, are arresting more homeless people for living on the streets* at a union member’s suggestion

[Without Housing and Recent News Article](#) . We had lively debate about the merits of organizing within the us empire. A new reading group attendee argued that all descendants of African slaves should move to Africa. Others argued that would be settler colonialism, and that nowhere is free from the grip of american imperialism, which is why it is essential to organize in the belly of the beast to destroy america, to throw sand in the gears of empire whenever possible.

On August 31st we read *How a Generation’s Struggle Led to a Record Surge in Homelessness* at a group member’s suggestion, paired with the first pages of *Dirty Divide: Out of Service*, a case study of public health inequity in Skid Row, Los Angeles

[NYT Article and Out of Service Report](#) . We talked about landlords and developers buying out blocks of buildings, evicting poor residents and profiting from higher rents charged to wealthier tenants. We discussed landlord discrimination against tenants on Section 8, and

how easy it is for landlords to evict tenants on vouchers. We also discussed the bathroom inaccess in Civic Space Park and strategized how to win open public bathrooms. This week saw increased attendance, including a tenant who previously declined the invitation to join, overheard the group conversation on the 17th, became interested in everything we talked about and wanted to be a part of the group. Yay to small wins!

Downtown local updates:

The downtown local met once this month on August 10th. We spoke about doorknocking, changing property management, supporting neighbors when faced with immediate fines, medical discrimination to the homeless, logistics for Washington Street organizing, and anti-black racism and policing in Arizona. Washington Street Shelter organizing is discussed further in a separate newsletter reflection!

We are working towards forming stronger social bonds and trust between tenants in the downtown local. Self crit - we had no formal local meeting on the 24th; it fell through since a few of us couldn't make it. We don't want this to happen again. If downtown local is to be successful, we will have to have consistent and reliable meetings, to get in the routine of talking as a group outside of the reading group Sundays.

All in all, the downtown local is carving a distinct space at the Sunday meals, amidst the nonsense.