

**Press Release:**  
**Low-Income Berkeley Seniors Celebrate Win Against Tenant Abuse**

**When:** Saturday, September 9, 2023

**Where:** Harriet Tubman Terrace Apartments  
2870 Adeline Street,  
Berkeley, CA 94703

**Time:** 1 PM – 4 PM

**What:** March and press conference

Press conference with Harriet Tubman tenants, community organizers/advocates, musical presentation, tenants from other low-income housing tax credit buildings

Berkeley - After nearly two years of being misled, stonewalled, and left to live in hazardous conditions, residents at an apartment complex for low-income senior citizens celebrate the success of their strong organizing efforts which resulted in the appointment of a paid housing advocate by the City of Berkeley.

On Saturday, Sept. 9, the victorious seniors and the community will hold a celebration at the site in South Berkeley with drum march, press conference, speakers, food and music performances.

In 2022, the 91-unit Harriet Tubman Terrace underwent ill-advised remodeling choices yet missed out on necessary upgrades to the electrical, plumbing, heating, and cooling systems.

The contractors also violated numerous building codes in the renovation and even outfitted the one-bedroom units with downsized cabinets and appliances meant for studio units.

The new advocate is a liaison to monitor living conditions and services between tenants, FPI Management Company and an investment group led by Foundation Housing.

“The advocate will approach management for us. That alone is helpful, as most of the residents are fearful of the management but not of the advocate,” said Elaine Bloom, a Harriet Tubman Terrace resident. “An ally will us help to live in safe housing and have quiet enjoyment in this our forever home.”

While the residents and community celebrate the victory of the appointment of the paid ombudsman, the rally will also acknowledge the importance of empowering low-income senior tenants, many who are isolated and fearful of speaking up for their housing rights.

“Our hard work has paid off,” said Dar Oyamasela, president of the tenants’ association at Harriet Tubman Terrace. “We have won round one, but the struggle continues.”

Harriet Tubman Terrace is a low-income senior apartment complex that was originally built in South Berkeley to house musicians in their old age. FPI is a privately-owned, third-party property manager for senior facilities that are funded by Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC).

The tenants lived in dangerous conditions as workmen tore out the kitchens, bathrooms, and closets in their apartments while exposing residents to asbestos. The poor remodeling included installation of flimsy, sometimes unusable, replacement fixtures. Sliding-glass patio door frames were installed improperly and let in air and rain. New kitchen counters were often too small for the microwaves on which tenants had once placed them. The management relocated tenants to dirty, bug-ridden empty units in the building, which for many did not provide necessary accessibility. Tenants also experienced loss or destruction of personal items and family heirlooms.

Just six months after renovations were completed, tenants in some units already see floorboards buckling and light fixtures sagging, evidence of shoddy workmanship all paid for by tax credits.

Many members of the neighborhood consider the two-year ordeal for the seniors at Harriet Tubman an affront to all South Berkeley. The grassroots group Friends of Adeline (FOA) says the community and Berkeley City Council should be outraged. The FOA calls it elder abuse, abuse by contractors, and ownership. “This is an indication of lack of concern for the people who live in your city,” the group says.

**Additional information:**

- Berkeleyside newszine article
  - “South Berkeley seniors live with lack of heat, shoddy repairs under new management”  
<https://www.berkeleyside.org/2023/03/07/south-berkeley-seniors-live-with-lack-of-heat-shoddy-repairs-under-new-management>

[South Berkeley seniors live with lack of heat, shoddy repairs under new management](#)

A nonprofit purchased the senior housing complex last fall, and tenants have organized to bring forward dozens of grievances.

[www.berkeleyside.org](http://www.berkeleyside.org)

- YouTube video report
  - “Harriet Tubman Terrace Residents Face Horrendous Violations in their Homes”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sWB1FrIZ1rE>