

THE PRICE OF BEING POOR — PART 4: The People Fight Back

A Special Investigation by Journalist Malik Washington
Destination Freedom Media Group & the Davis Vanguard

STATEMENT OF CORRECTION:

Destination Freedom Media Group Received a Demand Letter From Related Affordable Regional Property Manager Christopher Jones which notified us that we used a photo of Mr. Jones which he own the rights to. In keeping with his request, we retract the photo we originally used and replace it with a photo that is available publicly. We were not aware that the previous photo was not available for publication and, in the future, will conduct more intensive research. However, we stand by our reporting and encourage our readers to share this and our upcoming articles about related and other private property managers far and wide.

THANK YOU.



Photo credit: Kenisha Roach

The Bayview-Hunters Point Coordinating Council has been working hard behind the scenes to create a grassroots community-lead movement to confront corporate slumlords, like Related Affordable and John Stewart Company

It has become obvious that Mayor Daniel Lurie has issued a directive for no one in the City's government to support poor, underserved, and marginalized communities of color who live in the City and County of San Francisco

SAN FRANCISCO — There is a point where silence stops being endured and starts being challenged.

That point has been reached.

Across San Francisco — from Alice Griffith in Bayview–Hunters Point to Plaza East in the Fillmore, from Shoreview to LaSalle Apartments — tenants are no longer waiting. They have documented the conditions. They have filed complaints. They have attended hearings. They have submitted Notices of Violation. They have gone to City Hall.

And when the systems designed to protect them did not respond — they began organizing.

A RECORD THAT CAN NO LONGER BE IGNORED

The conditions are not disputed.

They are documented:
Rodent infestations
Mold and water intrusion
Structural deterioration
Broken elevators
Plumbing failures
Unsafe living conditions

These are recurring realities across multiple publicly subsidized housing developments.

And yet:

- No large-scale enforcement action has been publicly initiated against the primary corporate operators
- No contract suspensions or debarments have been announced
- No coordinated, cross-property investigation has been publicly produced

Mayor Daniel Lurie.
City Attorney David Chiu.
Inspector General Alexandra Shepard.
Human Rights Commission Director Mawuli Tugbenyoh.
The City has the record. The City has not matched it with action.

THE LA SALLE PETITION — EVIDENCE IN BLACK AND WHITE

At La Salle Apartments, tenants formalized what the City has yet to confront.

“We... seek the removal and replacement of the current property management... as we have been subject to repeated harassment and violations of our rights.”

They documented:

Unsafe and unsanitary conditions

Denial of access to utilities and facilities

Failure to complete repairs

Disrespectful and unprofessional treatment

And then they made a demand that redefines this investigation:

“Cease the use of private security to intimidate, harass or retaliate against tenants.”

This is not a complaint. This is a documented allegation. This is evidence.



Janice Smith, President of the La Salle Apartments Tenant Association
**Because of her advocacy and organizing efforts, Janice Smith
has been subjected to acts of retaliation by employees
of Related Affordable**

JANICE SMITH — LEADERSHIP, AND THE COST OF SPEAKING

At the center of this movement is Janice Smith, President of the LaSalle Tenants Association.

She organized.
She documented.
She led.

And according to a certified grievance submitted on behalf of over 100 residents:

“Association President Janice Smith... and other leaders have been subjected to targeted harassment.”

The same grievance states:

“This letter serves as a formal collective grievance... signed by 105 residents...”

Link to Janice Smith’s letter:

<https://1drv.ms/b/c/bd2dbf553coa1145/IQBL7QH2FJOvRahx4U mgAUoAdY8dYH4LUmeVK1VJiHmoYI?e=TpGmls>

This is not an individual dispute. This is collective testimony.

Here’s a link to the Petitions:

<https://1drv.ms/b/c/bd2dbf553coa1145/IQCSXco69AaySbXsYRBdGcHWAdBuRs dy8UbXa8tHsjOtkg?e=rXfyPZ All.pdf>

RELATED AFFORDABLE



Left to right: Christopher Jones, Regional Property Manager;
Joe Cross, Vice President; and Tracy McKnight, Local Property Manager

All three of these Related Affordable employees have been involved in retaliatory tactics against tenants who attempt to organize and educate their fellow community members

RETALIATION AND CONTROL — A LINE BEING CROSSED

The grievance goes further:

“The use of Resolute Protection personnel to monitor, follow, or intimidate residents engaging in lawful organizing...”

Across properties managed by Related Affordable and the John Stewart Company, tenants are raising consistent concerns about Resolute Security.

Not as neutral security.

But as:

A response to organizing

A presence following complaints

A mechanism residents experience as pressure

If organizing is being met with intimidation, that is not management. That is retaliation.

THIS IS NOT JUST BAYVIEW — THE FILLMORE SPEAKS

This is not confined to Bayview–Hunters Point.

At a community meeting with California Assemblymember Matt Haney, Dennis Williams Jr., Executive Director of the Fillmore Community Development Corporation, delivered a statement that broadens this crisis beyond a single neighborhood.

He spoke on behalf of residents from both the Fillmore and Bayview.

And what he described was not just housing failure.
It was system failure.

“Residents are not experiencing meaningful legal protection.”

“We are seeing evictions that were supposed to be prevented... cases not being filed... tenants living in uninhabitable conditions without strong legal intervention.”

Williams pointed directly at a breakdown between funding and outcomes:

“Over the past two years, Open Door Legal has received an estimated five to seven million dollars... however, what we are seeing on the ground does not reflect that level of investment.”

He raised concerns about:

Lack of in-person legal access

Limited litigation against negligent landlords

Weak enforcement against habitability violations

And most critically:

“We must address the racial equity issue... we are seeing disproportionately low levels of legal representation and case outcomes for Black residents... That is not acceptable.”

A SYSTEM FAILING ON MULTIPLE FRONTS

What Dennis Williams makes clear is this:

Even when residents seek help—

Even when funding exists—

Even when legal infrastructure is in place—

The outcomes are still failing the people most impacted.

And that failure compounds everything already documented in this series:

Unsafe housing

Lack of enforcement

Allegations of retaliation

Continued contracting with the same operators

This is not a single point of failure. This is systemic breakdown.

THE STATE IS NOW WATCHING

On March 23, 2026, tenants and community members brought their case directly to California Assemblymember Matt Haney.

They presented:

Petitions

Grievances

Documentation

Testimony

And according to those present:
Assemblymember Haney committed to contacting the California Attorney General's Office.
That is escalation.
Because when local systems fail—
The state gets involved.

MAYOR LURIE — YOU HAVE BEEN FORMALLY NOTIFIED

Mayor Lurie, the LaSalle grievance was copied directly to your office.
You have:
Documentation
Petition evidence
Allegations of retaliation
Community escalation
State-level attention

The question is no longer what you know.
The question is what you will do.

CITY ATTORNEY CHIU — THE STANDARD HAS BEEN MET

City Attorney Chiu, this is pattern evidence.
Multi-property complaints
Repeated violations
Collective grievances
Allegations tied to organizing
This meets the threshold your office has used in prior enforcement actions.
The law is not missing.
Enforcement is.

The City Attorney's Office touts diversity, equity and inclusion in their About page, as follows:

“Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

“Creating a more *just, diverse, equitable, and inclusive City is a top priority for the Office.* This commitment is exemplified in the litigation work that we do, the advice we provide our City clients, and in our Office's values, culture and workplace.”

REALLY, MR. CHIU? I wonder how BOS member Jackie Fielder feels about that?

OVERSIGHT BODIES — WHAT MORE IS REQUIRED?

Inspector General Shepard.
Director Tugbenyoh.
You now have:

Multi-page petitions, I purposely included the petitions in this article for the entire community to see.

Certified grievances

Named allegations

Community testimony

Cross-neighborhood validation

If this does not trigger a comprehensive investigation — what does?

THE PEOPLE ARE BUILDING THE RECORD

Tenants are no longer waiting for validation.

They are:

Documenting conditions

Organizing across neighborhoods

Elevating leadership

Creating public records

They are doing the work institutions were designed to do.

Here, we share three videos which illustrate some of the issues which have motivated community members and tenants to organize against Related Affordable.

Joyce English was a 75-year old elder who recently died after falling stairs on a Related Affordable property Osceola Lane:



Video - Joyce
English.mp4

No one inside can open this window gate – FIRE HAZZARD (video):



Video -window
gate.mp4

Unfinished construction of storage spaces that should have been completed months ago (video):



Video - Unfinished
Construction.mp4

THE PEOPLE ARE NO LONGER ASKING QUIETLY

Janice Smith is not alone.

Dennis Williams is not alone.

The residents of LaSalle, Alice Griffith, Plaza East, Shoreview, and beyond are not alone.

They are connected. Organized. And escalating.

THE RECORD IS NOW UNDENIABLE

Parts 1–3 established the system.

Part 4 establishes the response.

The people are fighting back.

The evidence is documented.

The system is being tested.

And now the question is no longer whether the City knows.

The question is whether the City will act — or whether the people will force it to.

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES!

Here's our song/video for this article:

Stevie Wonder - Living for the City

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSRyf5G2uI8&list=RDmSRyf5G2uI8&start_radio=1

UPDATED VERIFIED SOURCES & REFERENCES

PRIMARY DOCUMENTATION (CORE EVIDENCE)

1.) Petition for the Removal of Current Property Management at La Salle Apartments (Dec. 4, 2025)

Multi-page tenant petition documenting unsafe conditions, denial of services, and demand for removal of property management

2.) LaSalle Tenants Association — Formal Grievance and Demand for Removal of Property Manager Tracy McKnight (Mar. 13, 2026)

Certified grievance signed by 105 residents documenting habitability violations, retaliation allegations, and demand for management removal

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING & PUBLISHED EVIDENCE

3.) Washington, Malik. “Open Letter to California Attorney General Rob Bonta: When Slumlords Are Rewarded and Tenants Are Abandoned.”

The Davis Vanguard, January 27, 2026

<https://davisvanguard.org/2026/01/san-francisco-tenant-housing-crisis/>

Documents long-standing tenant complaints in Fillmore and Bayview–Hunters Point, including mold, plumbing failures, pest infestations, retaliation concerns, and continued City contracting with corporate housing operators despite documented violations. Establishes historical and statewide context for enforcement failures.

COMMUNITY TESTIMONY & PUBLIC STATEMENTS

4.) Statement of Dennis Williams Jr., Executive Director, Fillmore Community Development Corporation

Delivered at community meeting with California Assemblymember Matt Haney (Mar. 23, 2026)

Addresses gaps in legal services, lack of enforcement, habitability failures, and racial disparities in legal outcomes for Black residents

5.) Testimony and documented accounts from residents of:

LaSalle Apartments (Bayview–Hunters Point)

Alice Griffith Apartments

Plaza East Apartments (Fillmore District)

Shoreview Apartments

Collected through tenant interviews, public meetings, and investigative reporting by Destination Freedom Media Group

GOVERNMENT & LEGAL FRAMEWORK (AUTHORITATIVE LAW)

6.) California Civil Code §1941.1 — Implied Warranty of Habitability

Defines landlord obligations for safe and sanitary housing

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=CIV§ionNum=1941.1.

7.) California Civil Code §1942 — Tenant Remedies

Provides remedies when landlords fail to maintain habitable conditions

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=1942.&lawCode=CIV

8.) California Civil Code §1954 — Tenant Privacy & Anti-Harassment Protections

Relevant to allegations of intimidation and improper conduct

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=CIV§ionNum=1954.

9.) Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 42 U.S.C. §12101 et seq.

Requires reasonable accommodations and accessibility compliance

<https://www.ada.gov/>

10.) San Francisco Administrative Code Chapter 37 (Rent Ordinance)

Tenant protections and anti-harassment provisions

<https://www.sf.gov/resource--2023--rent-board-laws-and-regulations>

11.) San Francisco Department of Building Inspection (DBI) — Code Enforcement

Authority to issue violations and penalties for substandard housing

<https://www.sf.gov/departments--department-building-inspection--code-enforcement-dbi>

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES & OVERSIGHT BODIES

12.) Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD)

Oversight of publicly funded housing and regulatory compliance

<https://www.sf.gov/departments--mayors-office-housing-and-community-development>

13.) San Francisco City Attorney's Office — Code Enforcement Division

Responsible for enforcement of housing, nuisance, and tenant protection laws

<https://www.cityattorney/code/>

14.) U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Federal oversight of subsidized housing programs

<https://www.hud.gov/helping-americans/public-housing>

<https://www.usa.gov/subsidized-rental-housing>

15.) California Department of Justice — Office of the Attorney General
Authority over civil rights, housing enforcement, and systemic violations
<https://oag.ca.gov/civilrights>
<https://oag.ca.gov/housing>

SERIES CONTINUITY (INVESTIGATIVE RECORD)

16.) The Price of Being Poor — Part 1: The Corporate Landlords
Destination Freedom Media Group & The Davis Vanguard

17.) The Price of Being Poor — Part 2: The Contracts
Destination Freedom Media Group & The Davis Vanguard

18.) The Price of Being Poor — Part 3: The Silence
Destination Freedom Media Group & The Davis Vanguard



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Malik Washington is a San Francisco-based journalist and co-founder of Destination Freedom Media Group, an independent nonprofit newsroom dedicated to accountability reporting at the intersection of civil rights, public integrity, disability justice, structural accountability within American institutions, and community survival. He has been a published journalist for over 14 years.

His work—published in partnership with the Davis Vanguard—focuses on government power, criminal justice, environmental justice, and the human consequences of policy decisions too often insulated from public scrutiny. Washington’s reporting amplifies the voices of impacted communities while insisting on documentary evidence, transparency, and the unvarnished truth—especially when institutions demand silence.

His work appears on platforms such as Muck Rack and Black Voice News, examining the intersection of justice, governance, and community.

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