

## **RTC Town Hall Guiding Agenda**

### **Goals:**

- Inspire people to organize
- Get the word out
- Empower tenants
- Get folks to understand and know how to use the right
- Get tenants to understand that now they have guarantee support
- Understand that evictions are not tenants' fault and leave your shame at the door!
- Hold landlords accountable - now they need to follow the law
- It doesn't stop at the forum. Find ways to keep building it.
- Leave the town hall knowing your rights, about a local group, how to get involved, about what having a right means and how we got here.

### **1. Welcome and Registration: 6: 00 pm**

- a. Have music, decorations, interpretation equipment, registration and food set up!
- b. Groups could be tabling starting at 6pm as well.

### **2. Overview and Framing: 6:30 pm**

- a. Sample Language:
  - Good evening everyone!!!! Welcome!!! We are so excited to invite you to X!!!!
  - Introduce yourself!

Tonight, we are here because when tenants were under attack, we stood up, fought back and won the right to have the power of the law to defend ourselves and stay in our homes! We won the Right to an eviction defense! Tonight, we are here to make sure you know what this right is and how it works, as well as to strategize together to make sure that EVERYONE knows about it and so that we can work to make it a powerful tool to build tenant power. Just because we won doesn't mean we can slow down, right? We have to be vigilant, know our rights and how to use them, so that we have the power we need to build the city we deserve.

### **3. Welcoming Activity: 6:35 pm**

- a. One option :
  - But before we begin, let's get to know each other!!! Please turn to your neighbor, say your name, where you're from and answer these questions:
    1. Optional questions:

- a. How long have you lived in your apartment?
  - b. Have you or someone you know been in housing court?
  - c. What was it like or what have you heard about it?
  - d. What makes a right something special and important?
- b. Another option:
  - Raise your hand if you have lived in your apartment for more than 5 years?  
More than 10? More than 15? More than 20?
  - Raise your hand if you think we should stop evictions!
  - Raise your hand if you think we need to build tenant power!
  - Raise your hand if you are ready to defend right to counsel and to use it to build tenant power!
- c. Another option:
  - But before we begin, let's get to know each other!!! Please turn to your neighbor, say your name, where you're from and answer these questions:
    1. What brought you here tonight?
    2. What's one thing you want to learn?
      - a. Have folks shout out the answers and write them up on butcher paper, or on index cards and collect them, or....

#### 4. On RTC, the History and the Coalition

6:45 pm

- a. How many of you have been to housing court? What is it like? Not good right? Well, it's not just you. We want to show a short video that will give you background on how many people are affected by evictions in NYC every year.
  - Show RTC Video, 5 minutes
  - Optional: you could do the skit here (probably best to do before the video)
- b. History:
  - So, we just did something historic! We created a new right! Do you think it was easy to win this new right? Do you think landlords are happy we have it? We DID A LOT To win this new right. Let's take a few minutes to review the history of the campaign, and the power of organizing.
  - History Activity--timeline of the campaign ([English](#), [Spanish](#))
    1. Some of you have a piece of bright yellow paper under your chairs! If you do, please find it and pick it up now. Each piece of paper tells a bit of our story as the coalition!!!
    2. Each paper is numbered. Who has number 1? Can you please come up and read it out loud? (organizer will tape each paper to the wall as they go). Who has number 2? etc. (there are 17 pages total)

- c. What does this history teach us about RTC?
- d. What is RTC really about? Why do you think we worked so hard to win it?
  - Building Tenant Power and strengthening tenant organizing
  - Racial and Economic Justice
  - Review the first page of the FAQ
    1. We all know that evictions aren't the sum of a bunch of individual problems—they are a reflection of a larger political problem. They don't exist because of poverty, they help exacerbate and create poverty. They are an epidemic. But because of the larger narrative, one that mostly benefits landlords, that says that evictions are tenants fault, that poverty and high rents are their fault, we have a lot of work to do to create space for tenants to know and claim their rights and their power. That's why this work has to be done by community groups—because fighting displacement can't be done in isolation, it has to be done in Community with each other.

## 5. How Will it Work

7:15 pm

- a. Review [FAQ](#) and [What to Expect](#) in Housing Court:
  - Key points to cover from the FAQ:
    1. Income Eligibility
      - a. Covers about 82% of people in housing court today.
      - b. If you're over income you have the right to an advice session, though we aren't sure how those are working yet
    2. Immigration Status
    3. 5 year phase in--by July 2022.
      - a. Zip Codes, temporarily relevant, we don't know the year two zips
    4. How you get an attorney in court
    5. NYCHA: RTC covers NYCHA tenants both in housing court and at administrative hearings at 250 Broadway, but because the providers are still hiring attorneys, they don't yet have capacity to cover the NYCHA parts. So except in Staten Island, where there is more capacity, RTC for NYCHA tenants hasn't started yet! We hope it will soon. You can sign up for email updates from the coalition to stay updated about this!
  - Testimony Here on the power of RTC
    1. Tenant leader? Or a lawyer who can share a range of successes?

b. Break Out Groups:

7:30 pm

■ Guiding Questions:

1. Any questions about how it works?
2. Now that we know about this new right, how do you think we can use it to build tenant power?
  - a. If everyone in a building knows they will be defended if/when the landlord retaliates, what new tactics do you think we could use?
    - i. 7As
    - ii. Rent strikes
    - iii. Pickets/direct actions
    - iv. Identify landlords who sue tenants a lot and start campaigns against them.
  - b. We know there is a lot of shame involved in eviction. What do you think we can do to help tenants lose their shame and feel emboldened to take action and defend their homes?
  - c. In the RTC zip codes in X, landlords will try to evict X families in just one year. What can you do to help people know about this new right and how to use it?
    - i. Use could also use the map of distressed buildings in your zip codes
  - d. Fill out Commitment Cards

c. Report Back

8:00 pm

6. **Call to Action**

8:15 pm

We are only 6-8 months into having this new right. What it looks like and how it works will be up to us! The coalition is actively working to make RTC more powerful---you can be a part of that by joining your local tenant organizing group! Are you ready to make turn this law into a right? Are you ready to use it to fight landlord harassment and displacement? Are you ready to fight? To stay? To win?

- a. How many of you will flyer your buildings? Your schools? Your jobs? Your places of worship?
- b. Form a tenants association in your building?
- c. Join your local tenant organizing group, X?
- d. Become active in the right to counsel coalition?

7. **Closing**

- a. Announcements for Upcoming Events

- b. Don't forget to sign up on the commitment card, visit the resource tables, and tell your neighbors!
- c. Closing Chant:
  - We believe in Eviction Free NYC
  - We believe! Eviction Free NYC!

Materials:

- [RTC Outreach Flyers](#) (ZIP file)
- [FAQ](#) about RTC ([Spanish](#))
- [FAQ](#) about rent too high ([Spanish](#))
- [Map](#) of Evictions and RS Units
- [Map](#) of Distressed Buildings in your zips
- History of RTC interactive activity (links above)
- History of rights poster ([English](#), [Spanish](#))
- History of the coalition ([English](#), [Spanish](#))
- Commitment cards
- Sound system
- Sign in Sheets
- Interpretation Equipment
- Press advisory
- Press talking points