**Title**

Housing Literacy: Understanding Your Lease, the Rent Law Fight, and Your Rent History

**Date and Location**

May 1, 2019

6:30pm -8:30pm

The Graduate Center, CUNY

365 5th Ave, New York, NY 10016

9th Floor, Room 9207

**Event Description**

New York City has some of the strongest, but most complex rent regulation laws in the country. However, when tenants don’t fully understand their housing rights, it’s difficult to take full advantage of the protections that rent regulation offers. To address this issue, we worked with ***Tenants and Neighbors*** and website designers ***Partner and Partners*** to build Housing Literacy. The website is intended to increase tenants’ housing literacy by identifying particularly important aspects of rent regulation laws and developing resources aimed at helping tenants better understand the City’s rent regulation laws.

The central Resource of Housing Literacy is the annotation of the three most common documents that renters encounter when signing a lease for a rent-stabilized unit: a standard lease, a renewal lease, and a lease rider. The annotations highlight specific areas of these documents that tenants should read and understand carefully; point them to resources so that they can learn more about the issues they face; and give them basic knowledge to ask better questions and take steps to address their housing-related issues.

Join us as we unveil Housing Literacy. We’ll talk about the website, how to use it, and highlight some important issues. The Executive Director of *Tenants and Neighbors,* Delsenia Glover,and housing lawyer Ellen Davidson will discuss their vision for the website, the importance of organizing, and layout the legislative agenda for this summer as the New York State Senate and Assembly are set to renew the rent laws. Finally, we’ll talk about the importance of knowing your own rent history and walk through how to read one.

**Speakers**

Speakers include Delsenia Glover, the Executive Director of *Tenants and Neighbors*, Ellen Davidson, a board member for *Tenants and Neighbors* and a lawyer at Legal Aid Society, and Kasey Zapatka a Digital Publics Fellow at the Center for the Humanities and a third-year doctoral student in sociology at the Graduate Center.

**Delsenia Glover**

Executive Director of Tenants and Neighbors

Delsenia joined the Tenants & Neighbors staff in September 2013 and became Executive Director in 2018. In her time at Tenants & Neighbors, she co-created the Tenants & Neighbors Tenant Leadership Institute and Tenant Association Leadership Program and leads the legislative and policy campaigns to strengthen the rent laws at the state-level and works with the National Alliance of HUD Tenants to strengthen rights for HUD tenants across New York. A housing activist in Harlem, in 2007, Delsenia created a group called the Gang of Six — an alliance between the three largest rent-regulated developments in Harlem including Lenox Terrace, the Riverton, and the Savoy (formerly Delano Village). More recently, she began another group, the Central Harlem Tenants Alliance.

Prior to joining Tenants & Neighbors, Delsenia worked in education and public relations. She is a founder of the Bronx Career & College Preparatory High School and has also worked as a public relations and media relations specialist with several public relations agencies in New York City. Delsenia is a graduate of Fordham University with a BA in Communications and is a 2017 New York Community Trust/Baruch College Leadership Fellow.

**Ellen Davidson**

Tenants and Neighbors Board Member and Housing Lawyer at Legal Aid Society

Ellen Davidson is a Staff Attorney in the Law Reform Unit of the Civil Practice Area of the Legal Aid Society. She represents tenants, public housing residents, and Section 8 participants in administrative proceedings and in court. Additionally, she brings affirmative litigation, seeking systemic changes, on behalf of tenants across New York City in state and federal court.

From 2001-2006 Ellen was a Staff Attorney in the Housing Law Unit of Legal Aid’s Bronx Neighborhood Office where she represented individual tenants in eviction cases in Bronx Housing Court.  Ellen is an expert in federally subsidized housing and the rent stabilization laws.

She has been a board member of Tenants and Neighbors since 2002.

**Kasey Zapatka**

Digital Publics Fellow at the Center for the Humanities, Doctoral Student in Sociology

Kasey is a third-year doctoral student in Sociology at The Graduate Center (CUNY). He is broadly interested in researching urban inequality at the neighborhood level. Specifically, his interests focus on housing inequality, residential segregation, affordable housing, neighborhood change, gentrification, and suburbanization. Kasey is working on developing a dissertation project that looks at how neighborhood patterns of inequality and residential segregation shap spatial patterns of neighborhood affordability for the middle class.

Aside from his work as a Digital Publics Fellow at the Center for Humanities, Kasey is a Research Associate at the Center for Urban Research where he conducts labor market research for various CUNY colleges/universities, governmental institutions, and non-profits throughout the city. He also works as a research assistant for Paul Attewell in the sociology department, researching the income benefits for those with varying degrees of educational attainment. He holds a Bachelors in Spanish Literature and Language and a Masters in Sociology.