Sometimes being a good tenant is not enough. Although I have lived in the same apartment 14 years and have paid my rent on time every single month, my landlord still treats me like a second class citizen. She consistently ignores my requests for repairs. As a result, my apartment is in such bad shape that it is not only inconvenient, but it is also causing health problems.

For example, the landlord has not changed the carpet the entire time I’ve lived there. I have asked her to change it many times. She finally said that she would get new carpet in January 2016. Now it’s almost a year later, and still no new carpet. I have told her that this carpet is a health hazard. It is full of dust mites and odors, which contribute to me getting sick.

In addition, the kitchen cabinets need replacing; they are falling apart. Every day, I have to sweep up cabinet pieces. Also, some cabinets have mold on them. There is also mold on the tiles around the bathtub. I believe this mold is causing my headaches. I had to go to the doctor a few times because my headaches were so severe. Finally, there is a dumpster next to my apartment and rats often come into my place. The landlord did set traps, and that decreased the number of rats, but it didn’t get rid of them. Nevertheless, I can’t live with them – even just a few of them; I’m scared of them.

These problems have made my life a struggle. I love my apartment but not the struggles. The apartment is in a good location, however, my health is important too. The landlord told me to hold on until January 2017. If nothing happens by then, I’ll take it to the next level which will include contacting the Health Department, reaching out to Legal Aide, and organizing the tenants who have similar complaints.

Marla A. Scott is a student at Atlanta Technical College. She moved to Atlanta from Cleveland, Ohio, to be closer to her mother. After years of struggling financially, she decided to return to school. In her spare time, she loves to write and recite poetry.

These problems have made my life a struggle. I love my apartment but not the struggles.

SUPPORT AND SOLIDARITY

If you are struggling with bad conditions in your apartment and/or large rent increases, you can get help for yourself and your family in various ways.

SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE TO TENANTS VIA:
Legal Aid — search the internet for legal aid services near you
Hud.gov — if you have been discriminated against, contact HUD to file a complaint
Health Department or Inspectional Services — go to your city or region’s website and find out how to contact your local Health Department or Inspectional Services. Make an appointment for them to visit your apartment.
Keep all your paperwork — rent receipts, a copy of your lease, forms filled out by the health department or inspectional services.

SOLIDARITY IS ANOTHER WAY TO GET HELP AND MAKE CHANGE:
Lucia (p. 4) and Darcell (p. 8) joined with others and an organization called City Life/Vida Urbana <http://www.clvu.org> to fight for their rights to decent housing. For them, the way to solve their problem was not to get into an individual fight with the landlord. Instead, they brought their community together to hold the landlord accountable. If you are facing a problem in your building, consider the solidarity model for addressing it. Search for a housing justice organization near you. Contact your neighbors and think about how you might be stronger if you are unified.

FIND OUT MORE: Right to the City <righttothecity.org>.