

Speaking Up about My Housing

Martha Salas



Rats, Mice, and Trash

I moved to this apartment building in 2012. Over these years, I have seen many things happen in our building, and they are not pleasant and that is NOT acceptable. There were rats and mice, trash on the floor for many days, extremely dirty carpets, and walls that needed painting.

In our building, when we need something repaired, we call the landlord. However, he usually does not answer the phone. If we leave a mes-

sage, he does not usually call back. If the landlord decides to fix something for us, he usually takes three to six months. Many tenants fix things by themselves.

I Reached Out for Help

One day, I got tired because these things happened very often to us. I decided to ask for help. I went to the Latino Economic Development Center (LEDC). The LEDC helps the neighborhood in many ways. In my case, they helped me bring inspectors from the DC government to see our building. I also contacted the representative from our Advisory Neighborhood Commission, Patience Singleton. These authorities took action in our building. They made sure that the landlord made big changes at our building.

The landlord had never listened to us until now. Even though I am very busy at school, I will continue to speak up about my building because there are other issues to resolve.

Martha Salas is from Lima, Peru. She is a student at the Carlos Rosario Public Charter School in Washington, DC, where she is learning English so she can help communities speak up.



What Can You Do?

What was the problem Martha faced, and what did she do about it?

Do some research online and see if you can find 1) a community organization that might be able to help with local housing problems, and 2) a local government official. (You may have a city councilor or a neighborhood advisor like Martha has.)

If you have a problem with your housing, write an email to the organization and/or the government official. Or call or visit them. Report back to the class about what happens.

Read the articles on pp. 42-45 to learn about two community organizations fighting for fair housing.