

Speaking Up about My Housing

Martha Salas



1. What does it mean to *speaking up*?
2. Have you ever had to *speaking up* about your housing? What happened?

Rats, Mice, and Trash

I moved to this apartment building in 2012. Over the 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 message, 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 *speaking 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. This piece was originally published in Issue #50 of The Change Agent.



Sometimes, You Have to Speak Up to Keep Your Home Safe

1. What was the problem Martha faced, and what did she do about it?
2. Do some research online and see if you might be able to find:
 - a) a community organization that could help with a housing problem, and/or
 - b) a local government official. (You may have a city councilor or neighborhood advisor like Martha has.)
3. If you have a problem with your housing, write an email to the organization and/or government official. Or call them or visit them. Report back what happens.
4. Compare this article with the one on p. 11. How do you community organizations play a role in making home feel safe?