



## PINEHURST TENANTS UNION

### WE ARE STRONGER TOGETHER



#### What is Extreme About Self-Interest?

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When you hear the words “tenants union”, does it sound extreme? To some, it may, to others it’s simply community. It represents neighborliness. Being connected to your community strengthens you and the community itself. Looking out for your neighborhood kids is neighborly- in fact we hardly think twice about it once we’ve met them and they are friends with our own children. Making sure everyone can eat is neighborly, checking in on sick and disabled folks is neighborly, keeping each other housed is neighborly. Just like a “Good morning” greeting that includes your first name, these little things bring us closer and create a stronger sense of security. When we get together and get to know our neighbors we become stronger, because we CARE more.

We spend so much time looking down trying to mind our own business or enveloped in our phones that we fail daily to make real connections with those around us. Whereas we are forced by financial contract to interact with management; we are never put in a position to really talk to the people who live next door.

This creates in some, a superficial loyalty to those in power—those that do not share our self-interest. Not allowing the use of community spaces for community activities is a great way to keep us all feeling very separated. The very clear indicator that we are disconnected from each other, is how many of us were angry with Pinehurst for taking away our grills and the lack of coordinated effort we put forth to stop them. Because we all know “you don’t want to piss management off or they could screw with our homes.” And that my friends, is exactly why they have power over us. A few people complained about the grills independently and nothing happened, however if 96 households show up demanding them it would be a game changer. This is the power of the union, the union makes us strong.

Fear. Fear is the most common tool used to control people and extract what you can from them. Because some of us are afraid of retaliation, we hesitate to act or to join a union with our neighbors.

Some may figure ‘I’m fine. I pay my rent on time. I follow the rules. I don’t need a union, I can handle whatever comes my way myself.’ “Yet what force on Earth is weaker than the feeble strength of one. But the union makes us strong.”<sup>1</sup> Many people spend time in an imaginary safety bubble; the “not me” dissonance is real. We see people tossed into the streets everyday and we think ‘not me, I’m not a lowlife sleeping on a sidewalk.’ What we should be thinking is ‘that’s not right and shouldn’t happen to anyone. Anyone could be next, including me.’ Homelessness can happen to anyone, literally, anyone. For any number of reasons—but the number one reason is unaffordable rent. Every reader is currently shocked by that, I’m sure. No one ever complains that The Rent Is Too Damn High.

Fighting back, putting up a stink in order to protect our housing and ensure we are treated respectfully in the homes we pay for is an unfortunate necessity. But I think the need to come together creates a want to live in our communities and see them prosper. We don’t see them as ours because “we just rent”.



## What is Extreme About Self-Interest? cont.

We don't own our homes and for some reason that makes us feel less powerful. Let me assure you we are. Together we control the purse strings. Landlords are not workers. Owning property is not a job, scalping it back to people in need of homes for an excessively inflated rate is not helpful, it is predatory. Landlords are property scalpers, period. They have it, we need it and so they charge as much as they can and do the least amount of upkeep as humanly possible so they can get that 2nd boat. Their lives look nothing like yours and mine. They do not sweat over the car payment coming up or question whether they should put back that second carton of eggs to stay on budget. The only thing that concerns them is taking more from those that work for it. They want to extract every possible scent from the people that curse at alarm clocks every morning and rush to soccer games after being forced to stay late so the boss can make another \$. Us. You, me and every other working class person, just trying to get by. If we don't stand up and say enough is enough, it never will be. Greed cannot be satiated. It is an ever growing beast that hungers for more, a taste wets their appetite and if you simply feed it whatever it wants whenever it wants eventually it will eat you entirely.

This beast has a name, capitalism, and it threatens everything from the roofs over our heads to the water we drink and the air we breathe. How soon the beast consumes us all will depend on how organized we are. Our relationships with our neighbors and fellow workers are where loyalties should lie. We all need to recognize that we will all be steamrolled in one way or another, all of us. When it comes for us we need to be prepared and have tight knit communities that will collectively stand up for each other. We can build this. We have already begun. BUT WE NEED YOU!

We need you, your mamas, your fathers, your aunties and uncles, cousins, friends and coworkers that are renters to get involved. Pinehurst is not the only tenant union forming in Kalamazoo, we have inspired the formation of several others with the ultimate goal of unionizing ALL Kalamazoo tenants. When we achieve this, we will inspire other cities, counties and states to fight for renters rights.

Together we can withhold hundreds of thousands of dollars from those that seek to take take take from us. We are helping to pave their way for better fairer housing for all. Join us.

Stand up for yourself. Stand up for your housing and your rights as a human being. Stand up for your neighbors, community and future generations. Join Pinehurst Tenants Union today. Sign your Union card online on our website at [www.pinehursttenantsunion.org](http://www.pinehursttenantsunion.org). And then get out there and talk to your neighbors and anyone else that you know that rents. Hand them a flyer or a copy of this newsletter. Direct them to our website resources page for organizing help, inspiring stories and information on how and why rent is what it is.

Get involved. We want to know you. We WANT to talk to you and know your story. We want every single human being to have a stable home and we want to empower every renter with the confidence and determination to agitate, educate and organize.

These things are not extreme, they are the minimum we must do. Extreme is forcing a family into the streets so some greedy parasite can furnish their new vacation home and deny their domestic household workers healthcare.

People who hoard wealth while they watch others suffer, they are extreme. Unionizing to fight back is normal, needed and effective.