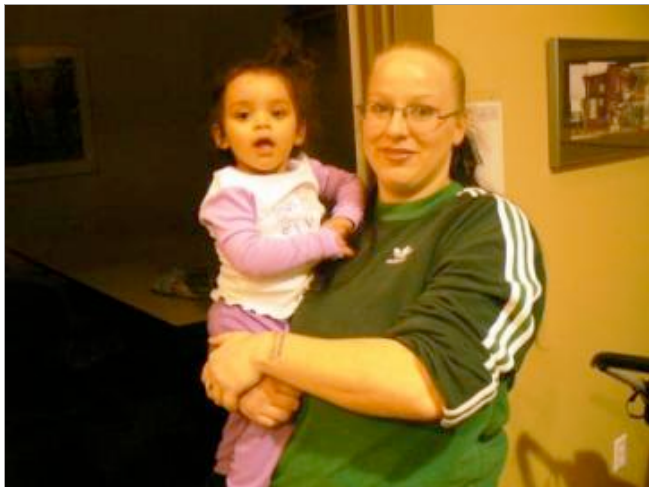


Friday, Mar 12, 2010

Global/Local Communities Neighborhoods Work & Economy Politics & Policy Arts & Lifestyle Opinion Special Sections

## Evicted tenants seek stronger renters' rights laws



By Sheila Regan

Diana Thompson and her daughter spent Christmas at a shelter, after being evicted from a foreclosed building.

BY SHEILA REGAN, TC DAILY PLANET

December 30, 2008

Diana Thompson's eyes filled with tears as she described how she came to spend Christmas at a shelter this year. She had been the only tenant in a building fallen into complete disrepair. The building was foreclosed, and then condemned, and Thompson was ordered to leave on December 1. The mother of a two children, one of whom is disabled, she gathered all the belongings she could carry and stayed in a motel for 12 days, and then moved into a shelter. Her landlord never returned her phone calls, and she has lost most of her possessions, including toys for her children, furniture, and clothes, due to the rushed move. "I hope something is done in the future," Thompson said, "because I don't want to ever do this again."

Thompson spoke at a listening session sponsored by Foreclosure Information for Tenants (FIT), a campaign organized by the [Public Policy Project \(PPP\)](#), an organization that empowers citizens to affect public policy. The meeting took place at Habitat for Humanity in Minneapolis, and focused on renters' rights in the foreclosure crisis. About thirty people attended the meeting, including Senator Linda Higgins, members of the [Community Stabilization Project \(CSP\)](#), a nonprofit organization that advocates for housing and tenants' rights, and three speakers who had lost their homes due to their landlords getting foreclosed upon.

Another young woman could not finish her story. Anonsa began: "Me and my family..." and then ran out of the room, unable to go on. A statement by Anonsa was later read, which told about her family moving to the Twin Cities from Red Wing. Their landlord informed them that he would not make any of the repairs needed in the building because he was being foreclosed upon. Like Diana Thompson, Anonsa and her family had to spend this Christmas at a shelter.

Crystal Scott told her story of foreclosure and eviction. When she signed a year lease, her landlord didn't inform her the building was being foreclosed. She got an eviction notice from her landlord at the beginning of December that said she had until December 29 to move out. But on December 19, she got a call from her

### More Information: (from FIT pamphlet)

Hennepin county: Legal Aid Society of Minneapolis: 612- 334-5970  
 Ramsey, Washington, Dakota, Carver, and Scott counties: Southern Minnesota Regional legal Services: 651-222-4731  
 Southern rural counties: 1-888-575-2954  
 Everywhere else in Minnesota can contact HOME line: 612-728-5767 or 1-866-3546  
 Minnesota Legal Aid-CLE  
 Minnesota Legal Services Coalition  
 2324 University Avenue W, Suite 101B, St. Paul, MN 55114

neighbor that a moving company was evicting her that day. Wells Fargo, the bank foreclosing on her landlord, had ordered her belongings be put into storage, and sent her the bill for \$2,200.

[New Minnesota legislation protecting the rights of renters](#) became law in August. The law requires that renters must get a copy of the notice that the landlord's mortgage is being foreclosed. After a building is announced foreclosed, the owner has a six-month redemption period in which to refinance the building. The foreclosing bank or person canceling the contract for deed must give renters a 60-day written eviction notice. Renters may continue paying rent to either their landlord, or to the bank after the redemption period is over.

The new legislation also stipulates that if the utilities are under the landlord's name, he must continue to pay them. If the landlord fails to pay utilities, renters can put them in their name and deduct the cost from their rent.

While the new legislation gives new protections for renters, enforcing those protections is another matter.

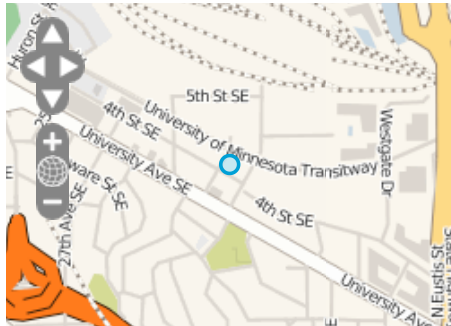
"If you can't enforce the law, it's worthless," said Anita Jackson, a community member at the meeting. "I'm looking for legislators to look for ways to have a moratorium on foreclosures until something is done."

Senator Higgins said that Minnesota legislators did pass a bill that put a moratorium on foreclosures, but it was vetoed by Governor Pawlenty.

FIT is seeking an amendment to the renters' rights bill that would increase the enforcement, accountability, and consequences for landlords who violate the new laws. The [St. Paul City Council passed a renter notification ordinance](#) on December 23.

*Sheila Regan is a theater artist based in Minneapolis. When not performing or writing, she serves as educational coordinator for Teatro del Pueblo.*

**Copyright:** ©2008 Sheila Regan



**Sheila Regan**

*Sheila Regan ([sheila@tcdailyplanet.net](mailto:sheila@tcdailyplanet.net)) is a Minneapolis theater artist and freelance writer.*

---

**Article Tags:** [Minneapolis Phillips Foreclosure tenants' rights](#) [Daily Planet Originals](#) [Government Housing](#)

---

### [Boo Hoo Hoo](#)

Submitted by Not feeling sorry (not verified) on Tue, 2008-12-30 13:52.

Tenants know the home is in foreclosure long before they're physically removed from the unit. The liberal eviction judges in this state make it difficult to remove the dead beat tenants and then owner is stuck paying the mortgage, and if they can't pay it themselves why would they continue making repairs? Next time you're told to move out... move out.

[reply](#)

### [Just a little common courtesy!](#)

Submitted by Malinda (not verified) on Tue, 2009-01-06 23:09.

I am going to guess that "Boo Hoo Hoo" is a landlord that has done the whole foreclosure deal and someone either called them out on it or now feels guilty. Why would you move a tenant into your building when you know that you are in the process of foreclosure. You are

only collecting that money to go directly into your pocket. It is not that tenants fault that you failed to pay your mortgage. Why should that tenant have to pay for your mistakes? How easy would it be for a landlord to say to the tenants "I am in the process of losing this building." Simple communication! If the roles were reversed, wouldn't you want that common courtesy. Or maybe you would like your landlord to take all of your money and leave you homeless. Not just you....you and your children. Maybe you have heard that shelter life is like living at the Ritz Carlton. Its not...its a shelter. I remember when my family lived in a building many years ago and it was foreclosed on....the landlord continued to collect the rent. We asked her what was going on and she continued to deny that it was happening. Then one month she came to collect the rent and I let her know that there was no rent to collect. She had the nerve to get huffy with me. She tried to tell me that she would evict me, file a UD, and have the Sheriff's sit me out. She said a lot of other things too. I counteracted everything she said with "do it". There was no way I was giving her another red cent and I still had to move! I used that money to move my family somewhere else. Unfortunately other families may not have the same courage I had to stand up and say that. So how about a little common courtesy for your fellow man/woman/child. Is it really that difficult to create some type of enforced law that prohibits landlords in the process of foreclosure from collecting rent and/or forces landlords to tell tenants that they are losing their property.

[reply](#)

---

### [Rules are good - enforcement lacking](#)

Submitted by Peter T (not verified) on Sun, 2009-01-04 00:41.

Renters have enough theoretical protection today; now it should be both made known more widely and better enforced. Stories like that from Crystal Scott are still too common. Further moratoriums on mortgages, on the other hand, are not the solution to today's housing problems.

[reply](#)

---

### [The question is, who are you fighting?](#)

Submitted by Gardog (not verified) on Thu, 2009-01-15 12:35.

In many of these cases it is the landlord who is being foreclosed, but the tenants whose property is siezed. Boo Hoo doesn't care, but most humans do. What makes it worse, however, is that the tenant whose property has been siezed is at that point not fighting thier landlord, with whom they might have some chance of working our a deal, but a national bank like Wells Fargo, as in the example cited in the article. Does Wells Fargo or Citibank or Wachovia care whether you are living in a shelter? If they have an employee who does, is that employee empowered to show even a bit of concern? Of course not! Once the bank has secured your possessions they are co-opting you to help them put pressure on the landlord. This sort of conscription of the tenant to help the bank squeeze the landlord is especially immoral. The law would prohibit it, but if the law is not enforced against the banker holding the key to the storage (and it certainly does not seem that city, county or state government has much interest in enforcement against the banking interests), then what is a now homeless parent to do? We typically aren't talking about someone who can leave the nanny in charge of the kids while they go to visit their solicitor to discuss the case. Finding a way to keep your kids safe takes priority over all other concerns. The bank then charges the tenant fees for having someone dump the tenant's possessions in a landfill while the landlord skates away with the rent. The tenant ends up on the street with nothing but approbation from bozos like Boo Hoo.

[reply](#)

---

[workaround](#)

---

[Home](#) | [TC Media Alliance](#) | [About](#) | [Planet Café](#) | [Donate](#) | [Media Partners](#) | [Volunteer](#) | [Contribute News](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Contact Us](#) |