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## “Housing Inequities – Landlord & Tenant Rights

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I was asked to give a reflection regarding “Housing Inequities - Landlord & Tenant Rights.” To be transparent this is not an area of expertise for myself, therefore, I will concentrate more on Housing Inequities. I struggle with the fact that a social issue, like housing, has many layers of injustice, racial, economic, discrimination and social status. So, when I personally reflect on this issue, I became aware this is not just a housing issue.

To take a comment from my friend Christy Estrada a parishioner at St Pius, who wrote about Racial Inequities, I feel the need to disclose who I am and my background as it relates to housing inequalities. I grew up in Chicago, in a middle-class family, in a stable middle class neighborhood and since the age of 14, I had a religious community take care of my housing until I was 24 years old. I moved to St. Louis in 1990, and I never had an issue as it relates to getting approved to rent an apartment or being approved for a home loan.



I might not understand housing inequities in my own personal life, but I have had some amazing experiences that relates to this issue, and amazing does not necessarily imply being a positive experience. In my earlier 20s, I had the privilege to live in a house that was known as the St. Thomas apartments, a New Orleans apartment complex managed by the New Orleans Housing Authority. For the first time

in my life, I was a minority in the neighborhood where I lived. Secondly, for the past 30 years, I have been on a journey with many people who were homeless and have become housed. I am not an expert in this field but have been part of the struggles many faced relating to being housed or obtaining housing.

### Some basic facts:

The racial difference in the St Louis population is slightly over a 2% difference, between White and Black St. Louisans 46% White and 44% Black.

### When we look at housing statistics the percentages are more remarkably different.

- White residents are nearly twice as likely to be homeowners as Black residents.
- 77% of white households have affordable housing, compared to 56% of Black households.
- Black households are more than twice as likely as white households to be severely rent-burdened.
- Black residents are more than three times more likely than white residents to live in areas of concentrated poverty.

These are just a few basic stats as it reflects the housing inequities in our city.

### When it comes to homeless individuals the statistics become a little more dramatic

- 2,100 individuals are recorded as being homeless nightly • 75% are Black

As I reflect on these facts, I am trying to stay away from this being a political reflection, but two events that occurred really got my attention how housing is taken for granted by some while housing is a precious commodity for others.



## *As we prepare for the Lenten season, some things to think and pray about:*

*Is the service I do around our parish or in my life leading to justice? How does the service work I do lead to systemic change?*

*Is just completing the service enough? Am I connecting on a personal level with those I serve? Am I seeing the face of Christ in those I serve or more importantly are they seeing the face of Christ in me?*

*As the city approaches elections do I know the candidate or candidates who want to help with:*

*--increasing affordable housing in St. Louis*

*--having a plan for our unhoused neighbors and not just during inclement weather times.*



## **RESOURCES FOR YOU: how to access? just type in your browser**

Beyond Housing highlights the work of Dr. Jason Purnell and how he's tackling health disparities | FOX 2

"I Didn't Really Want to Leave": A Case Study of Public Housing Relocation Under Pressure | Center for Social Development | Washington University in St. Louis

Molly Metzger News | Center for Social Development | Washington University in St. Louis

First, our present administration came out and stated that a freeze will be put on all Federally Funded housing programs. This was rescinded the next day, but people who rely on subsidized housing, due to their lack of income, now are living in fear that their housing is in jeopardy. Running one of these programs, I received some calls from our participants we have housed asking me what is going to happen, how secure is their housing. One of the calls I received came from a man that was homeless for over 15 years of his life from 1995 to 2010, and if the funding stays in place will be housed for 15 consecutive years at the end of this year. I told him that I had no answers, **but all I could do at that moment was rely on a quote from Dorothy Day, - "Glenn, I will fight like hell to keep you housed."**

*To me it seems simple should we not be investing in making life better for our residents, those housed and unhoused.*

The second event was the death of Jennifer. St. Louis lost an unhoused resident as she was trying to stay warm outside of city hall. All I could think about is the hundreds of millions of dollars that the City of St. Louis cannot agree on how to allocate the money. To me it seems simple should we not be investing in making life better for our residents, those housed and unhoused.

As it relates to Jennifer's story, I know some may come from the mindset that she chooses to be homeless. I think of the two siblings who were leaving school one day and saw all their friends get on the bus to go home only to get in a taxi to be taken home to a shelter. ***Did they choose to be homeless?***