

## In this episode ...

We're diving into the world of advocacy and organizing, specifically, public health's roots in social change and how the field can reconnect. In the second episode of our four-part series, we're exploring how organizing around housing issues advances public health priorities. We're delving into tenants' rights groups: how and why they started; how they have protected tenants from abuse; how they've improved living conditions; and how they've encouraged people to become more politically engaged.

## Episode 2: Tenants' rights: A matter of health

### Our guest, Dr. Jamila Michener:

- Bio: <https://www.jamilamichener.com/>
- Include this image in doc: <https://government.cornell.edu/jamila-michener>
- *Racism, Power and Health Equity: The Case of Tenant Organizing*: <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2023.00509>
- *Fragmented Democracy: Medicaid, Federalism and Unequal Politics*: <https://www.jamilamichener.com/fragmented-democracy>

### Our hosts:

- **Beth Silver**: <https://uwphi.pophealth.wisc.edu/staff/silver-beth/>
- **Ericka Burroughs-Girardi**: <https://uwphi.pophealth.wisc.edu/staff/burroughs-girardi-ericka/>



### Timestamps:

**0:20** – Ericka and Beth discuss the history of tenants' rights movement, housing justice and the power of organizing

**1:54** – Beth introduces Dr. Jamila Michener

**2:29** – Interview with Dr. Jamila Michener

- **2:45** – The connection between organizing, tenants' rights, and our health
- **5:02** – Successes and examples of when tenants change the circumstances of their communities
- **8:30** – Defining power
- **12:35** – Why power is important, and what channeling collective power looks like at the grassroots level
- **17:55** – Themes of housing injustice: Vulnerability, cumulative layers of harm and a profound sense of powerlessness
- **21:38** – History of the tenants' rights movement and where the movement stands today
- **25:13** – What public health learns from the tenants' rights movement
- **29:02** – Two strategies to fight unhealthy housing conditions: Direct action and local policy change
- **37:29** – How public health can support community organizers
- **40:43** – Where tenants can find information and learn about their rights

**42:33** – Ericka and Beth debrief and discuss what to expect in the next episode of the series

## Links to topics mentioned during this episode:

- *Tenant Power Returns*, a series from *Shelterforce* examining the past, present and future of tenant organizing: <https://shelterforce.org/2022/11/14/tenants-rights-its-not-a-moment-its-a-movement/>
  - (Miriam Axel-Lute. *Tenants' Rights: It's Not a Moment, It's a Movement*. Shelterforce. November 14, 2022).
- KC Tenants, the citywide renter's union, says Royals ballpark in downtown Kansas City, Missouri, would lead to higher rents and gentrification: <https://www.kansascity.com/news/politics-government/article285655497.html>
  - (Mike Hendricks. *KC Tenants says downtown ballpark would mean higher rents and 'gentrification'*. The Kansas City Star. Updated March 25, 2024.)
- Frederick Douglass, in a speech titled, "West India Emancipation," on August 3, 1857: "Power concedes nothing without demand. It never has, it never will." <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/1857-frederick-douglass-if-there-no-struggle-there-no-progress/>
  - (BlackPast, B. (2007, January 25). (1857) Frederick Douglass, "If There Is No Struggle, There Is No Progress". BlackPast.org. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/1857-frederick-douglass-if-there-no-struggle-there-no-progress/>)
- The history of the tenant movement in New York City in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the use of the Red Scare to suppress it: [https://digitalcommons.nyls.edu/journal\\_of\\_human\\_rights/vol4/iss1/14/](https://digitalcommons.nyls.edu/journal_of_human_rights/vol4/iss1/14/)
  - (Jaffe, Anne (1986) "The Tenant Movement in New York City, 1904-1984," *NYLS Journal of Human Rights*: Vol. 4: Iss. 1, Article 14. Available at: [https://digitalcommons.nyls.edu/journal\\_of\\_human\\_rights/vol4/iss1/14/](https://digitalcommons.nyls.edu/journal_of_human_rights/vol4/iss1/14/))
- The Tenant Union Federation (TUF): <https://tenantfederation.org/about/>

## CHR&R Resources:

**National Findings Report** - Evidence shows that participating in our communities strengthens our social connections and sense of belonging, benefiting our physical and mental health. Learn more from our 2024 National Findings Report: <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/findings-and-insights/2024-national-findings-report>

**Data snapshots** - Explore the data in your community: <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/health-data>

**What Works for Health** includes 400+ evidence-informed policies and programs to address your community's priorities: <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/strategies-and-solutions/what-works-for-health/strategies>

**Curated strategies** - Find a list of What Works for Health strategies that improve civic health:

[https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/strategies-and-solutions/what-works-for-health/strategies?f%5B0%5D=curated-list%3ACivic%20Health&sort\\_by=search\\_api\\_relevance&preprocess\\_id=2732](https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/strategies-and-solutions/what-works-for-health/strategies?f%5B0%5D=curated-list%3ACivic%20Health&sort_by=search_api_relevance&preprocess_id=2732)

**Narrative change** - Change what's possible with Narratives for Health:

<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/strategies-and-solutions/narratives-for-health>

**Webinars** - Check out our library of webinars that provide practitioners with strategies and examples that improve health and equity: <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/findings-and-insights/webinars>

**Structural determinants of health** – Read *Keeping It Political and Powerful: Defining the Structural Determinants of Health* to learn about the structural determinants of health: <https://www.milbank.org/quarterly/articles/keeping-it-political-and-powerful-defining-the-structural-determinants-of-health/>

- (Heller JC, Givens ML, Johnson SP, Kindig DA. *Keeping It Political and Powerful: Defining the Structural Determinants of Health*. Milbank Q. 2024;102(2):0227.)

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