

WE ARE PARKDALE!

OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD. OUR NEIGHBOURS. OUR FIGHT.

Parkdale is more than the stores and businesses between Dufferin and Roncesvalles, Queen and King. It's us: the people that live in the buildings up and down Jameson, Triller, Dowling, Dunn, Westlodge, Dufferin, Spencer, and Tyndall. Families are raised here, friends are made here, and community is built here. We came from all over the world and we speak many different languages but we live together now and we need to speak up for each other.

Whether we're Indigenous, Tibetan, Roma, Carribean, East Asian, Arab or European this neighbourhood has become our home. But there are those who want to take our home from us. It's more than just landlords like Akelius, Metcap and Wynn ignoring us, not repairing our units, raising our rents and pricing us out of our neighbourhood. It's about our neighbours being deported, our under-serviced schools, cutbacks to our social services, attempts to close our legal clinic, and having to work day in and day out to just barely get by.

Our neighbour's struggle is our struggle. What threatens our neighbours threatens our neighbourhood. When our neighbours are strong,

our neighbourhood is strong. No one else is going to look out for us but each other. If we want to be strong together, we need to organize together. Our neighbours at 188 Jameson organized together to fight back against Akelius. They fought a multibillion dollar corporation that tried doing to them what's been done all over our neighbourhood. They fought Akelius and their neighbours gathered around them in support. They won. This is something to admire. Our neighbours at 188 Jameson deserve our respect and our appreciation. The best way to show that is to do as they did. Start organizing and keep organizing. Build on those achievements; keep the pressure up.

This neighbourhood is a good neighbourhood but it could be a strong neighbourhood. Building that strength is why we organize. With our neighbours in our buildings is how we organize. Rent increases, evictions, disrepair, deportations, service cuts, school closures, and bad jobs are what we should organize against. Our neighbours and our neighbourhood is what we're organizing for. We organize together, fight together, and win together - or we struggle alone and lose alone. It's that simple.

Community Bulletin

Join the Parkdale Women's Language Exchange.

Women speak many languages in Parkdale. Women have many experiences in Parkdale. The Parkdale Women's Language Exchange is where women can come together over tea or coffee, practice their English and learn about each other's languages and experiences.

For more information, email: parkdaletalks@gmail.com



**PARKDALE
ORGANIZE!**

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ORGANIZE AND WIN!

188 JAMESON TENANTS BEAT BACK RENT INCREASE BY HALF

On April 28, Parkdale tenants walked into the Landlord and Tenant Board with heads held high, their confidence born of the organizing they've taken up in their buildings over the past year. The day began with tenants speaking to a rally of around one hundred of their neighbours and supporters from across the city, all of whom have been following their work and inspired by their struggle. By the time legal proceedings got underway the hearing rooms were packed.

Having spent the past year organizing with their neighbours, knocking on doors in the building, holding meetings and making decisions together, they came to the Board in a position of strength. Akelius had a solid case to raise tenants' rent by 10% above the guideline justified by 'capital repairs' it had made to the building including to the roof, elevator, common areas, and balconies. The fact that before the tenants even walked into the Board their landlord was making noises about withdrawing parts of its application proves the effectiveness of the tenants' organizing.

The Landlord and Tenant Board is an institution that works to intimidate and isolate tenants. On top of this the 188 Jameson tenants knew that if the case went before the tribunal a 7-8% increase would be the most likely outcome. Even still, the tenants held their ground throughout the negotiations and rejected the landlord's initial offers to settle. Confronted with a group of organized working class tenants the landlord began to show its frustration; at one point after being turned down by the tenants Akelius responded saying they "didn't know what to do with these people".

At the end of the day Akelius conceded to a 4.5% increase over three years (1.2% in 2014, 1.6% in 2015, and 1.7% 2016). Akelius



Tenants from 188 Jameson celebrate their victory.

also gave in to the demand not to bring applications for above guideline increases in the next two years and agreed to allow tenants up to six months to pay any back any rent they owe due to the increase. This is a big victory for tenants in Parkdale.

The tenants at 188 Jameson have shown that when we're organize and fight back together we can win, even when up against a multibillion dollar real estate company like Akelius and a notoriously landlord-friendly Landlord and Tenant Board. The tactics that these tenants have used in their struggle, whether crashing the Akelius office, making statements to the media, or fighting at the tribunal, have been effective because the tenants have organized themselves in their buildings. If we are to defend Parkdale from landlords like Akelius and MetCap it's up to tenants in every building in the neighbourhood to do the same.

RENT STRIKE SUCCEEDS ON SPENCER AVE

“We don’t have to be stepped on like cockroaches”

Interview with a Parkdale organizer

Deborah Savage is a long-time Parkdale resident. During 2013 she and her neighbours on Spencer Avenue went on rent strike in a fight with their slum landlord.

Parkdale: Organize!: Tell us about your connection to Parkdale

Deborah Savage: I’ve mostly lived in Parkdale since 1995. My father is from the neighbourhood.

Recently they’ve been trying to upscale the neighbourhood. There are a lot of new people living here now and it has got a lot preppier. It used to be more tight knit here. But still, the people living here have fought for the things they need in the neighbourhood, the services, and everything is nearby and accessible.

PO: Why did you start organizing with your neighbours?

DS: Looking for affordable places to live in the neighbourhood I ran up against slum landlords. At first I didn’t try to organize. A few years ago I was living on King Street in a place with all kinds of problems, bugs and everything else. I tried to fight by myself and take my case through the Landlord and Tenant Board and I felt like I was being stomped on by the system.

Then I moved to another building on Spencer and that building was even worse—no heat, broken doors and windows. I started speaking to my neighbours and they had the same problems. I made it a point to speak to every single one of my neighbours. I would stand by the mailboxes in the front of the building and chat with people as they came in and out. I gave people my phone number and I said to give me a call if you want to do something about it. We started getting together and talking about what we could do. I started sending mass text messages to all my neighbours to share information so we could respond collectively. We also went to Parkdale Legal to get advice

PO: What led to the rent strike?

DS: My neighbours and I went together to the landlord and requested to have our apartments fixed up. He did nothing. So we decided to with-



hold our rent collectively. We all paid our rent into a trust account instead of to the landlord. That got his attention. To him it was all about money and we weren’t giving him his money. We were on rent strike for seven months. All that time we were gathering evidence of all the problems so if he decided to take us to court we’d be ready, but he never did. Instead he hired a paralegal to negotiate with us. We elected a committee of tenants to negotiate for us. In the end we all decided to move out. We used the money we saved to get better places. In the end the landlord lost \$50,000 in rent from us.

PO: What did you learn from all this?

DS: The rent strike empowered us. It gave us strength to know we don’t have to be stepped on like cockroaches. You don’t have to let landlords do this to you. Parkdale Legal showed us how important it is to document everything, keep all your paperwork, and gather evidence to support your case.

PO: If you could change one thing about Parkdale what would that be?

DS: They’re upscaling all the housing around here. Why can’t they build housing people can afford? We need low-income housing in Parkdale.

PO: Anything else you’d like to add?

DS: Don’t give up! The fight continues.

PARKDALE PROFILE: JAMYANG NYIMA

“Parkdale is a second home for me and all Tibetan refugees.”

Talking with Tenants

Jamyang Nyima is a long-time Parkdale resident, community organizer, and Tibetan language interpreter.

Parkdale Organize!: For how long and where have you lived in Parkdale?

Jamyang Nyima: I’ve lived in Parkdale since 1999 when I first came to Canada. First I lived in 165 Jameson but I soon moved to 96 Jameson. 165 Jameson is owned by the Wynn family – enough said.

PO: Where were you living before moving to Parkdale?

JN: I was born in India and spent most of my life there. Since then I have lived in Nepal, Switzerland, and then briefly in New York City before I moved to Toronto.

PO: Why did you move to Parkdale?

JN: I moved to Parkdale because the majority of the Tibetans in Toronto live in the neighbourhood. In 1999 rent in Parkdale was quite cheap.

PO: In your time here what have you come to appreciate about the neighbourhood?

JN: Parkdale is a neighbourhood with lots of different ethnicities living side by side. The location is great – it’s close to everything I need. The most important thing is the sizeable Tibetan community here. I’ve never felt alone living in Parkdale.

PO: What changes have you seen in the neighbourhood over the years?

JN: I learned after a few years of living here that Parkdale had a bad reputation in some parts. My son went to Queen Victoria Public School on Jameson. When he qualified for the gifted program he transferred to Fern Avenue Public School in Roncesvalles because there is no gifted program at Queen Vic. In grade seven my son brought some friends to hang out in Parkdale after school – he later told me his friends were telling other kids, “I went to Jameson and I survived!”. I guess it’s mostly middle class families, artists, and professionals who live in Roncessvalles (laughs).

My son did so well in school until grade seven. But then he started playing basketball (laughs). Until grade seven I only heard good things at the parent-teacher meetings (laughs). Anyway, he got it in his head he would play professional basketball. He was and still is a good player. But when he was young I kept telling him to focus on school, not just basketball. Be realistic, you’re an Asian, you’re only going to get so tall! (laughs). He still plays. He’s in university to be a phys-ed teacher.

Overall Parkdale is a very nice place. But when I came to Parkdale it was a rougher neighbourhood. There were more drugs and prostitution. The neighbourhood changed over time as Tibetan families arrived and made homes here. It was gradual. When I first moved here there were a lot more Tamil and Vietnamese families but less so now. Parkdale became more family friendly with the Tibetans arriving but then other people started moving here and landlords started to increase the rents.

PO: How has living in this neighbourhood changed or impacted you?

JN: It’s been very positive. Parkdale has been good to me. Canadians have been good to me. In India Tibetans get a hard time because we are refugees. We are called out on the street for being Tibetan refugees. Not in Parkdale. Here we’re treated well by our neighbours. Parkdale is a second home for me and all Tibetan refugees.

PO: What are your hopes for the future of this neighbourhood?

JN: Right now the landlords are trying to push us out of the neighbourhood. If they push us out we won’t know where to go and we’ll have to start all over again. Speaking of Tibetan seniors, they need to be here together among their peers. If they are displaced and become isolated they will have big problems.

I hope that Parkdale remains a place where regular people, and especially immigrants and seniors, can live. It’s our home and we must stay. That’s why the organizing at 188 Jameson is important. What happened at 188 Jameson has changed the way we think in the Tibetan community in Parkdale. Before the tenants at 188 Jameson organized we just accepted that landlords can do whatever they want and we stayed quiet. Now we see that it is possible to stand up to them. I keep getting stopped on the street in Parkdale. People are asking me about what happened at 188 Jameson. The word is spreading.