

Approaching Justice: The Fair Housing Act & Community Organizing

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Intermountain Fair Housing Council



IFHC is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to ensure open and inclusive housing for all people. The IFHC's purpose is to advance equal access to housing for all persons without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, familial status, gender identity, sexual orientation, source of income, or disability. The IFHC attempts to eradicate discrimination through education of the fair housing laws, housing information and referrals, housing counseling and enforcement including filing complaints under the Fair Housing Act.

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Community Education

Community Education is a central focus for IFHC in working toward housing justice.

Education efforts include:

- Tenant Rights and Protections
- Understanding the legal process and laws as non-lawyers for real life application/action
- Community Organizing!

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Community Organizing



Community organizing is a process where individuals come together to act in their shared self-interest.

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Community Organizing

Scalable, Fractal, Emergent!



Moms For Housing, November 18, 2019

- Friend group
- Block
- Neighborhood
- Town/City
- Region
- Beyond!

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Leaderful, Emergent, Fractal Community Organizing

Community Organizing Principles
from neighborhoodanarchists.org

Activists, Organizers, Leaders; what's the diff?

Activist – empowered to take action for things they believe in.

Organizer – empower others to take action for things they believe in. They support groups of people to do things together.

Leader – present a vision and invite people to work together to create the vision. (No extra power, just a proposal of where to go.)

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Community Organizing Principles

from neighborhoodanarchists.org

- **Anyone can be an organizer**
- **Organizing involves a lot of forethought around ease, clarity and accessibility when it comes to engagement.**
- **Organizing is inspired by various skill sets and people can learn them.**
- **Organizers offer in-roads, hopefully with clarity and accessibility – Make things as clear as possible.**

Community Organizing Principles
from neighborhoodanarchists.org

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Distribute the Work

Empower others to contribute as much as possible!
Make it clear and easy!

- **Roles not tasks**
- **Set people up for success**
- **Passion not obligation**
- **Follow up**
- **Resist urgency!**

Community Organizing Principles
from neighborhoodanarchists.org

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Organizing is ALL About Relationships

To organize with people, you need to know them: who they are, what they care about, what they are excited to do, etc. They also need to know you: That you are sincere, competent, and that you care about them.

- **Meet people where they're at**
- **Check-in often**
- **Reach out individually**
- **Appreciation goes a long way**
- **Engage the heart**
- **Trust the people and they will become trustworthy***
- **People want you to succeed**
- **Enjoy the work**

Community Organizing Principles
from neighborhoodanarchists.org

* People respond to trust. Others may do things differently than you and that's okay. (Credit: adrienne maree brown in *Emergent Strategy*)

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Boise Renters United

Tenants 4 Tenants in Idaho



Started as a Facebook group by local renter and activist, Lori DiCaire in June 17, 2018

First in-person meeting hosted at Boise Library! (Lori and Anthony) December 12, 2018

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Boise Renters United Platform:

- **Housing is a human right.** Everyone has a right to a safe, secure, and habitable home. Fulfilling this basic human need is critical to maintaining healthy communities and a just and equitable society.
- **Tenants have the right to rent housing in their communities without discrimination** based on race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, sex, gender identity or gender expression, domestic violence victim/survivor status, political ideology, lifestyle, age, family status, marital status, source of income, disability, non-violent criminal record, health history, rental history, credit score, or subjective assessments by housing providers. Boise Renters United does not condone any form of discrimination within its ranks.
- **Tenants have the right to stability, predictability, transparency,** from their housing provider. Landlords must prioritize the welfare and dignity of their tenants over the profitability of their property.
- **All efforts should be made to avoid tenant displacement.** If a tenant is displaced, housing providers have a duty to offer recourse and relief for them. Additionally, we support the preservation of existing affordable housing.
- **Tenants have the power, the right, and the agency to organize for mutual aid and protection,** and to determine the rules and conditions of their tenancy through collective bargaining and other means without risk of retaliatory action from housing providers.
- **BRU seeks to challenge the exploitation of tenants** by landlords and moneyed interests and to dismantle the current landlord-tenant paradigm. To do this, tenants must organize for alternative housing models such as public housing, supportive housing, cooperative ownership, land trusts, and cooperative living.
- **BRU seeks to build power and solidarity among the tenant class.** We believe that this is best accomplished through a model of decentralized leadership and power. All renters are valued and should have the opportunity to share their experience, be heard, and be seen

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Boise Renters United



Community Successes, Progress, Impacts and Ongoing Efforts

- Support of Idanha Building Residents under Park Lane PM
- Pressure/Watchdog on city and state officials
- Touchpoint and support for Tenants throughout Idaho
- Central hub for connections and resources for tenants and allies
- Weekly Tenant Peer Support Hours
- Monthly General Meetings

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Boise Renters United Community in Action!



A disabled resident of the Idanha Building on Main Street is suing the management company of the iconic downtown Boise apartment building, accusing the company of violating his rights.



"People and housing are intertwined with our health and safety of our community and the economics of our community frankly are not."

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Blue Valley Tenant Association



After organizing and engaging in a 10-month struggle, BVTA successfully stopped a national trucking company from building a 100-bay terminal and service/ fueling station next door to their homes in spite of city zoning that allowed for toxic neighbors.

Coordinated Efforts:

- Empowered Tenants/Residents
- Engaged Community Support
 - Letter, Email, Call-ins
 - Witness/Pressure at Public Meetings
- Local Politicians
- Legal Support
 - LL/T; Brian Ertz
 - Fair Housing; IFCH

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Riddenbaugh Place Apartments Tenant Association



These residents' ongoing effort to stop redevelopment of the site where their community exists has halted progress on a project from a national developer, CDG.

Community Support in Action:

- Utilizing press contacts to control the narrative
- Engagement with developer, city, BSU, neighborhood associations and community members
- Public review process on hold while pandemic continues
- Search for alternatives includes resident ownership of property or land-swap

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Start Today!



- Educate yourself
- Talk to your community
- Organize!
- Vote
- Give your money to organizations and efforts centered around and led by marginalized peoples
- Get involved with IFHC, ATW, ACLU and others doing great work in the community

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