

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WHEN: Monday, March 16, 2020, 10:30 a.m.

WHERE: Forsyth County Hall (200 Main St.)

WHAT: To demand an immediate moratorium on evictions and mortgage foreclosures and a plan for delivering housing and medical treatment to the homeless population

WHY: To defend our city's most economically vulnerable residents during an unprecedented public-health crisis

For more information, contact Dan Rose at Housingjusticenowws@gmail.com or (423) 504-0513 Or Phillip Carter at (336) 705-8948 or phillip_c9@yahoo.com

Housing Justice Now Demands a Halt to Evictions and Foreclosures and a Plan to House the Homeless in Winston-Salem During the Pandemic

WINSTON-SALEM, NC, March 16, 2020—As the COVID-19 crisis deepens, and we begin to recognize that we are only as safe as our least protected neighbors, Housing Justice Now says the time has come to rally around our region's most economically vulnerable residents. The group will be taking that message to the Forsyth County Hall of Justice (200 N. Main St.) at a press conference on Monday, March 16, at 10:30 a.m.

To prevent this pandemic from worsening our existing housing crisis and to prevent the housing crisis from worsening this pandemic, Housing Justice Now calls for an immediate moratorium on evictions and mortgage foreclosures; AND demands that Winston-Salem come up with a plan for delivering housing and medical treatment for homeless people.

"These are things that should have been in place a long time ago, and the novel coronavirus is another reminder of why it's urgent," says Dan Rose, Assistant Professor of Sociology at Winston-Salem State University and Housing Justice Now member. "It's impossible to stay at home to maintain 'social distancing' if you don't have a home—and our city ranks 16th in the nation in evictions per capita."

Forsyth County is characterized by "staggering" inequality and structural racism, Rose said. It's home to world-class universities and hospitals, and yet one in six residents live in poverty; and more than one in eight lack access to health insurance. According to a 2015 study by renowned Harvard economist Raj Chetty, Forsyth comes in third from the bottom in the entire United States in upward economic mobility—a burden borne largely by the city's Black population.

As the necessary response to coronavirus develops, schools close, workplaces shut down, restaurant and bar business plunges, and service workers experience plunging hours and take-home pay, and sometimes layoffs. The region's severe economic inequality and racial segregation means "poverty is a kind of quarantine—but not enough of one to stop the spread

of coronavirus," says Philip Carter, a core Housing Justice Now member, community activist and former candidate for the city council seat for East Ward, which has one of the city's highest poverty rates. "A lot of our neighbors are already paying upwards of one-third of their monthly income to sky-rocketing rents," he said. "This crisis is forcing folks who are scraping by to make impossible choices: like paying rent vs. paying the gas bill or buying groceries. We're better than this."

"We need at least a 60-day stay of any pending evictions—now," he said.

Already, Washington, D.C., New York City, Miami, and other municipalities have halted evictions during the pandemic.

#####