



Housing Justice in Athens: Examining Local and State Emergency Rental Assistance

EARLY DRAFT - INITIAL QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

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I. Introduction

The U.S South is the fastest-growing region in the country and the region most impacted by COVID-19. It is also a region with historical - present wealth and health inequalities along intersections of marginalized identities of gender, race, sexuality, ability, etc. (Vestal, 2020). Housing precarity, thus, disproportionately impacts multiply-marginalized tenants (Benfer, 2021). In 2020, 23 of the 33 states categorized as high COVID-19 transmission hotspots were located in the U.S South and West, which are also regions where 62% of people of color reside (Lee, 2020). Due to vast gaps in wealth and health for Black and people of color in the South, these communities disproportionately bear the impacts to well-being prompted by the pandemic with housing as the central site of struggle for everyday survival. Latinxs are particularly negatively impacted as they are overrepresented in low-wage, unstable, “essential” jobs that exacerbate housing insecurity (Ortiz Reyes, 2021). In our focus site, ACC has experienced the highest number of job losses (1,191 low-income jobs) out of 12 Northeast GA counties (Georgia Tech Center for Economic Development Research, 2020).

This project, through the work of a local grassroots housing organizing group, the Athens Housing Advocacy Team (AHAT), shares the ongoing story of housing insecurity in the Southeast told from the perspectives of multiply-marginalized tenants and housing advocates. It gathers pieces of the overall story of housing that are frequently excluded or silenced, including the voices of tenant organizers, housing advocates, and community leaders who build complex relationships of solidarity and strategies of resistance that are essential to any initiative to ensure housing for all.

We understand that rental assistance programs play a larger role in maintaining housing insecurity that extend beyond the moment of the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, in the concluding section, we offer policy recommendations and outline next steps for further research about emergency rental assistance programs and policy that reflect the ongoing role of these programs and policies in maintaining racialized housing inaccessibility and segregation.

Three elements guide this research and together exemplify engaged scholarship. First, the research project focuses on two rental assistance programs: the state-level Georgia Rental Assistance (GRA) and the local Eviction Prevention Program (EPP). Although eviction is not necessarily the focus of this research, it is important to understand the broader scope of housing in Athens. We examine the two program’s application process to determine the effectiveness of these programs and how they

maintain housing inequality through their inaccessibility. Second, funding from the Urban Institute has facilitated AHAT and community-led eviction mapping in collaboration with the ACC geospatial office and UGA community mapping lab to enhance understanding of the degree and experience of housing precarity in Athens. Third, the Urban Institute grant has enabled AHAT to hold interviews with tenants, which has provided critical qualitative data regarding ongoing barriers experienced by low-income communities of color attempting to access healthy, dignified housing. These elements combine the co-production of quantitative eviction and emergency rental assistance data for ACC with a qualitative assessment that provides rich stories behind the data.

1.1 Unpacking the Housing “Crisis” in Athens, GA

We place the word “crisis” in quotes to signal the multiple stories and consequent functions of “crisis” in the context of housing. “Crisis,” due to its historical mobilization resulting from a sociopolitically perceived temporal emergency, is suspect because it is often accompanied by practices of criminalization and social control that must be interrogated (Hall et al., 1978). Dominant narratives of “crisis” position issues at hand, in this case housing, as an aberration rather than as a feature by which systems of oppression are maintained. In other words, “crisis” constructs an illusion of a perceived temporary emergency while obscuring a sustained constant state of emergency that is needed for systems of oppression to continue.

This research project focuses on Athens, a city located in Northeast Georgia. Athens-Clarke County (ACC), a county with a consistently high working poverty rate and renter-occupied units, is a metropolitan area that has experienced the worst housing shortage among other metropolitan areas in the US (Badger & Washington, 2022). According to the Urban Institute’s Financial Health and Wealth Dashboard (2022), 67% of renters spend more than 30% of household income on housing while the homeownership rate is 37% with the median home value of \$200,000. These statistics allude to the ever-increasing racial wealth gap¹ which are continuations of a legacy of racialized housing access practices and policies that have excluded generations of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (Milner, 2022) from wealth-building opportunities. By the end of 2021, the average monthly cost of rent in Georgia increased by more than 20%, positioning it as the sixth-highest rent increase among all U.S states (Raymond, 2021). By the end of 2021, the average monthly cost of rent in Georgia increased by

¹ Assets (what people own) and capital access (resources available to secure housing, pursue higher education, savings for emergencies, etc) minus debt (what people owe) = Wealth. The “racial” wealth gap indicates that wealth is racialized, whereby the average net worth of white families is 8 times greater than Black families and 5 times greater than that of Latinx families. Wealth is not equivalent to income: the racial wealth gap is three times larger than the income gap (Urban Institute, 2022).



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Report for Housing Crisis Research Collaborative

more than 20%, positioning it as the sixth-highest rent increase among all U.S. states (Raymond, 2021).

Acknowledging past harm is essential to enacting racial justice in Athens and understanding the continuing impact of racialized housing policies, including urban renewal and segregation, that contributes to present-day intergenerational wealth inequality (Coates, 2014). In 2021, ACC adopted the *Linnentown Resolution for Recognition and Redress*, apologizing for its role in urban renewal in the 1960s that led to the destruction of Linnentown, a Black community in Athens. This resolution represents the first official move toward reparations in Georgia.

The most recent housing “crisis” in Athens is the mass purchase by an out-of-state investor of the last remaining housing units for low-income tenants (an estimated 800 units), resulting in unprecedented evictions and disproportionately displacing Black and Latinx working-class residents, particularly those who rely on section 8 housing vouchers (a rental subsidy program offered through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) or social security income. In Georgia, state preemptive laws provide much freedom to landowners at the cost of few tenant protections while prohibiting rent control or local ordinances to secure low-income housing. Mobile home communities, where most Spanish-speaking Latinx tenants reside, are experiencing constant threats of eviction as new landowners impose increasing restrictions to the movement of tenants and external appearance of mobile homes.

Georgia received \$550 million through the Federal Emergency Rental Assistance funds in March 2021 to support limited-income renters impacted by the pandemic. As a program that draws from these funds, the Georgia Rental Assistance Program (GRA) provides up to 18 months of direct payments to participating landlords to help tenants stay in their homes. Local governments have designed their own rental assistance initiatives. Similarly, the Eviction Prevention Program (EPP) in Athens, launched in mid February 2022 and sought to keep renters experiencing eviction in their home by collaborating with landlords. Under the program, landlords who agree to participate receive a direct payment from the local government for a tenant’s past-due rent; the tenant’s past-due rental debt is then “reset,” and they are able to remain (Ridley, 2021). Athenian First Development Corporation, Inc. (AFDC) is the partner that was working alongside Athens Clarke County (ACC) on this local rental assistance initiative.

In early February 2021, Dignidad Inmigrante en Athens (DIA), a local immigrant rights organization, responded to the calls for solidarity from a predominantly Latinx-immigrant mobile home community. Residents received a mass eviction notification from management detailing that they had until May 2021 to relocate their mobile homes with the provided justification of plumbing system renovation, though we all knew the reason was that the land as private property was transferring ownership.

DIA collaborated weekly with residents for three months and supported the community in hosting workshops, public events, and fundraisers. Ultimately, the campaign was unsuccessful in its goal of keeping the community in place, but it prompted a larger movement for housing justice in Athens. Organizing for broader community and ally support proved difficult, which prompted DIA to expand the scope and framing of the housing problem to include a wide range of experiences and realities with housing precarity beyond the Latinx immigrant community. Drawing upon different social justice-oriented organizations in Athens, a coalitional housing advocacy group, the Athens Housing Advocacy Team (AHAT), emerged from this reflection of DIA's mobile home campaign and the ongoing efforts to build intersectional solidarity.

1.2 “Trespassers will be Prosecuted:” Theoretical Starting Point

Theories discussed in this section provides a framework for understanding the broader processes that create the conditions of unstable housing tenure. Recent urban housing literature considers the centrality of private property within racial violence and struggle because its arrangement yields hierarchical social orderings and legally encodes spatial inequalities (Rothstein, 2017; Taylor, 2019) in particular ways that are necessary for capitalist growth (Harris, 1993; Moreton Robinson, 2015, Roy, 2017). This project draws from existing literature to expand understanding about the varied, multi-faceted practices that normalize and sustain racialized housing dispossession.

The “private property” regime is normalized through political, legal, social, economic relations that are inscribed onto bounded space called “private property” owned by identifiable, solitary owners, who possess and hold entitlement to that property and whose right to exclude are sanctioned by law and violence. The claiming and signaling of private property necessitates spatial markers, such as fences, dwelling construction, hedges, etc. (Blomley, 2004). Hegemonic relations and discourses that regulate “private property” are also contingent on ordering and disciplining practices of material spaces and people that determine possession/ dispossession/ that are rooted in heteronormative, cis-patriarchal, white supremacist ideologies that shape citizenship, claims to community and belonging, and mobilities (Blomley 2004; Moreton-Robinson 2015). Importantly, the unsettled constructions of property, whereby “there is no clear inside or outside to property, but only graduated positions of conditional access” (Blomley, 2020), allows for resistance of these borders.

Modern conceptions of private property, relies upon racialization and violent legal and state enforcement. Cheryl I. Harris (1993), a critical race theorist and professor of civil rights and civil liberties at the UCLA School of Law, argues that “Blackness” enabled whiteness as a form of property, which has been discursively and materially (re)produced through the theft of Indigenous peoples’ land and the dysselection of

Africans from human status and into property - possessions - under chattel slavery. Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2015), a Goenpul author and activist for Indigenous rights, demonstrates how the legal right to belong hinges on whiteness as “the invisible measure of who can hold possession,” which continues to inform urban planning and governance.

One of countless tactics backed by U.S law has been contract home sales, used since the formal “abolition” of slavery to dispossess Black people from their homes (Coates, 2014). While the federal government denied access to the home-mortgage market in the 1930s to Black homebuyers, a series of predatory lending practices emerged that continue in the present. This tactic demonstrates one way in which the building of white wealth through the ownership of houses has relied on the extraction and theft of Black wealth. Furthermore, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor (2019), a professor of African American Studies at Northwestern University, reveals how racial segregation is a profitable business strategy. Racism’s productive role in “predatory inclusion” - the inclusion of Black homebuyers in conventional and federally supported mortgage financing structured through exploitative and expensive terms - within the housing system is to act as a financial tool of uneven spatial orderings.

Continuities of this past are deeply felt and experienced in the present, whereby “white households are worth roughly 20 times as much as black households... and... whereas only 15 percent of whites have zero or negative wealth, more than a third of blacks do” (Coates 2014). (Re)producing appreciation gaps in the value of white and Black homes is essential for the workings of racialized housing: the value of the houses of white homeowners continue to appreciate, allowing for white intergenerational wealth accumulation, while the houses of Black homeowners continue to depreciate or remain far below the value of white homes, hindering Black intergenerational wealth accumulation (Markley et al. 2020).

Under racial capitalism,² white wealth is founded upon intergenerational Black and Indigenous dispossession of life, being, home, and body.

Housing justice entails the manifestations of other forms of justice necessary for social reproduction, which are all ordered through insidious accumulation practices

² “Racial Capitalism” is a term coined by Cedric Robinson ([1983] 2000), but the underlying meaning of this theory emerges from centuries of Black Radical Thought. Racial capitalism conveys that modern capitalism cannot survive without racializing practices, which are always entangled in other forms of differentiating hierarchies. Robinson articulates a history of European feudalism that mobilized ideologies of “race” to justify intra-European relations of enslavement and conquest through use of force. The emergence of capitalism as a world system, consequently, expanded these existing feudal social relations based on racial differentiation.

marked by privatization, incarceration, captivity, and dispossession. Siciliano et al. (2011) define social reproduction as “the historically contingent processes by which we reproduce the conditions and relations of economic and social security. These include not only the technical means of reproducing the physical integrity of our bodies, but also the methods by which we reproduce ourselves as political subjects” (2). In other words, social reproduction is the securing of everyday life, what is necessary for survival and well-being. What they term “crises of social reproduction” is actually a component of the workings of capitalism rather than an aberration - control and discipline over social reproduction secures and reproduces accumulation of capital by maintaining precarity in all facets of living and being. After the 2008 housing “crisis,” 10 million homeowners became tenants when more than 3 million houses were foreclosed (Siciliano 2011, 12). Rather than an exception of racial capitalism, the 2008 foreclosure crisis signifies its “replication and reformulation” (Fields and Raymond 2021, 10).

II. Research Questions and Methods

2.1 Research Questions

Abolitionist Geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2017, 17) specifies that the goal of understanding power is to “figure out what...; makes oppressive and liberatory structures work, and what makes them fall apart.” If our theories for understanding what makes oppressive structures work is limited, then our responses and actions within liberatory structures will fail. In continuing the work of understanding how power functions in the realm of housing, this project seeks to build stronger responses to “crisis” to better care for community well-being. In this pursuit, three questions animate the research project:

- 1) How is housing insecurity produced and maintained in Athens, GA?
- 2) What tenant experiences reveal the scale of structural inequalities that are imbricated in housing policy and decision-making processes?
- 3) In what ways do local and state rental assistance programs address or perpetuate the systemic roots of housing insecurity?

In answering these questions, this project aims to reveal the (dis)continuities historical-present racialized housing processes at the state, regional, and national scales.

2.2 Data Collection and Analysis Methodologies

This mixed-method research uses participatory action research (PAR) and ethnographic methods that prioritize the knowledge and experience of community members, which shifts away from damage-based frameworks that perpetuate representations of Black, Indigenous, Communities of Color as powerless (Tuck, 2009). PAR prompts community change by asking for the “active involvement of research participants in the focus and direction of the research” while challenging unequal power relations (Hay, 2016). This mixed-method research uses participatory action research (PAR) and ethnographic methods that prioritize the knowledge and experience of community members. To respond to the study’s core questions, we incorporate the following methods to this project’s data collection and analysis:

Participant Observation

This method focuses on everyday contexts, experiences, and interactions, which necessitates the sustained and unstructured involvement of researchers in their communities. Detailed field notes of AHAT events and meetings with tenants written by the primary research is the primary source of data collection for this method. Jess’ current involvement in AHAT and ongoing relationships with organizers has been instrumental in gaining additional research participants and building relationships of trust that are necessary for PAR.

Archival Documents

ACC Magistrate Court Dispossession Files

Currently, there is no publicly-accessible data on evictions in Athens, GA. AHAT has scanned and analyzed dispossession files from the ACC Magistrate Court since Fall 2021 to collect information that informs the ongoing community-led counter-eviction mapping project, which is a collaboration with the University of Georgia Community Mapping Lab and AHAT.

Importantly and as mentioned above, this research focuses on “evicting” practices (landlord use of threats of eviction to force compliance without the intention of actually filing, land politics of mobile home communities whereby many own their mobile home but do not own the land, tenant experiences with unhealthy housing or difficulties in landlord-tenant relationships, etc) rather than “evictions” per se. “Evictions” are not the only form of housing dispossession, but they are entangled in the countless strategies that are used to dispossess people from their homes. Currently, eviction patterns and frequencies are not collected or analyzed in ACC, so there is inadequate data. Without a starting-baseline of the neighborhoods that experience the highest threats and filing of

dispossessions (eviction), it is difficult to understand the other forms of dispossession that are interconnected with eviction.

Historical Documents

Historical documents, including newspapers and policy reports, allow for broader connections among historical and present housing contexts of Athens and provide data for analysis about (dis)connections to current housing precarity. Historical documents gathered from the University of Georgia's Special Collections Library from 1960 onward, such as planning maps, census data, and news articles specific to Athens' spatial segregation informs this research. This timeframe encompasses events that are relevant to understanding segregated housing in Athens.

Present-Day Media

Public documents about and written by DIA and AHAT, such as social media posts, newsletters, blogs, and articles, serves as another archival source.

Eviction and Anti-Eviction Counter Mapping

"It is possible to simultaneously use maps to prove that inequality exists, while also demonstrating that the ways we conventionally think about such inequalities through maps are insufficient to understand the complex realities of the processes that we are mapping"

– Taylor Shelton, *Situated Mapping: Visualizing Urban Inequality Between the God Track and Strategic Positivism* (2022: 1).

It is insufficient to solely map evictions and processes of dispossession without intentions to use such maps to transform the inequalities we are mapping, as Shelton notes in the quote above. This project begins with developing an eviction data-set using Magistrate Court files. We first have been developing a "hotspot" map, which depicts the neighborhoods in Athens that are experiencing the highest evictions. We are in the process of correlating this data with demographic information obtained from the U.S census. We recognize that this initial process of visualizing the number of evictions is not sufficient.

The next step is to use our data-sets for "counter-eviction" mapping, which is fundamentally community-engaged work. Mishuana Goeman (2013: 18) reiterates how "[m]aps exert political control by manipulating the representation of space into a language of normativity." Thus, the intention for counter-mapping is to disrupt the

language of normativity regarding eviction that traditional forms of mapping have tended to (re)produce. With this method, we take seriously the unevenness of community-engaged mapping (Mahmoudi et al., 2022) and the warning of the “growing number of cartographic labs and companies that produce geospatial data related to eviction and property ownership, but that prioritize data accumulation and scalability over grounded housing justice” (McElroy, 2022: 357).

Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews with AHAT/ DIA organizers as well as tenants who are experiencing intensified housing precarity have centered their stories and strategies of resistance. Interviews have been completed in Spanish, English, or Spanglish, depending on the preference of each participant. We anticipated conducting a total of 25 interviews lasting between 45 to 90 minutes (10 AHAT / DIA members and neighborhood leaders; 15 tenant organizers). Due to unanticipated health issues, we are working on completing these 25 interviews.

Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis is the method that guides this project’s data analysis and interpretation. Narrative analysis interprets the structure, function, substance, and performance of stories to illuminate broader social, historical, and spatial processes, including cultural norms and representations as well as relations of power. Textual data has been coded based on recurring patterns or etic themes drawn from the project’s research questions as well as the theoretical framework. After the first cycle of coding, we completed a second cycle of coding to reorganize the first set into a shorter list of emergent codes reflecting broader patterns and community participant feedback, entailing the combination of similar codes or forming sub codes based on internal and external homogeneity among the data. Alongside these two rounds of coding, we incorporated other themes that emerged from conversations with community collaborators.

“Crip Time” and Pandemic Interruptions

The Athens Housing Advocacy Team (AHAT) began collecting the important data on the progression of evictions and levels of housing insecurity in Athens in Fall 2022. Initially, this research was designed to assess this eviction data to determine the efficacy of two emergency rental assistance programs at the state and local level: GRA

and EPP Athens. The plan was to apply results from the two emergency rental assistance programs to develop long-term rental assistance strategies. Unfortunately, our research team deviated from the original research plans in order to better respond to unanticipated, researcher, community member, and organizer needs on the ground. Additionally, the two emergency rental assistance programs were terminated before they had the chance to meet the one-year benchmark. The main researcher identifies as disabled and had many flare-ups in the course of this project. Several tenant organizers are also disabled.

Several times during Summer 2022 at the height of the most recent local housing “crisis,” different AHAT organizers were sick with COVID-19 and temporarily unable to continue the work. Therefore, the research team switched to “crip time,” which means the turning of time to better meet the needs and well-being of disabled bodies and minds. To honor crip time and the changes to research plans that arose through in-bodied, on-the-ground encounters, we include a brief quote from Ellen Samuels’ *Six Ways of Looking at Crip Time* (2017):

“For crip time is broken time... It forces us to take breaks, even when we don't want to, even when we want to keep going, to move ahead. It insists that we listen to our bodyminds so closely, so attentively, in a culture that tells us to divide the two and push the body away from us while also pushing it beyond its limits.”

III. Findings

This section consists of various findings that emerged during the data collection and data analysis processes. First, we focus on five tenant testimonies from the Magistrate Court archives to emphasize “evicting” practices that do not result in eviction but rather are representations of broader structural systems. Then, we discuss tenant-organizer meetings that were facilitated in English and Spanish from August to December 2022. We conclude our findings with tenant experiences with the GRA and EPP to again reveal broader systems to maintain housing precarity beyond the scope of “evictions.”

2.1 “This ain’t home”:³ Tenant Testimony⁴

“I look like this, but I like to read things,” Rai, a tenant who grew up in Athens and is living in a two-bedroom apartment with a HUD section 8 voucher, commented to a

³ All section titles that contain quotations are statements from tenant-organizers.

⁴ Many tenants expressed fear of their well-being and safety for “making some noise.” When referring to tenants, we chose to prioritize anonymity. The names in this report are pseudonyms, and any potential revealing information (community, neighborhood, street, etc) are intentionally excluded.

few AHAT members who had responded to their call. This comment resonated with one of the AHAT members because it reveals the tenant's awareness of their appearance as a working-class, older, Black womxn who has navigated condescending experiences in her attempts to access more dignified and healthy housing than the unit she was currently in. She was frustrated that ACC and the management "*know something's going on but they're giving [her] the run-around.*" In sharing how she is living as a single parent with four children in a dwelling that did not feel like home, Rai was distraught that the Division of Family and Children Services is involved because her children are consistently missing school due to illness that Rai suspected was from the conditions of their unit, including black mold, suspected asbestos, roach and rat infestations. Rai repeatedly mentioned that they "*want to be seen, to let people know what's going on, to make a statement to [their] babies to not give up fighting.*" Rai revealed that there are no other options and does not know what to do - there is a 2.5 year waiting list for housing complexes that accept section 8 vouchers.

When sheriffs serve tenants with a dispossessory warrant, Georgia law requires tenants to file an answer to the Magistrate Court within 7 days of receiving the warrant (referred to as "Summons"). Tenants who choose to file an answer can mark the following options: "I admit to the claim of the Plaintiff; I request a payment schedule" OR "I deny the claim of the Plaintiff as follows (tenants are instructed to state reasons for denial of claim); I have a counterclaim as follows." Tenants who mark denial of claim or counterclaim typically write extensive detail of their experiences on the answer form. These answer forms are important because they reveal tenant perspectives that are often under examined. Our analysis of ACC Magistrate Court dispossessory files from September 1, 2021 to January 31, 2023 indicate the extent to which tenants contest and file counterclaims, from refusals to pay amount owed due to improper notification of rent increases or unlivable housing conditions to filing counterclaims for sickness resulting from landlord and/or property management negligence.

Suspicion of landlord intentions is one major theme we noticed in the dispossessory files. One tenant believed that the stated rule violations that were used against them were fabricated by the landlord's son, who they felt so threatened by that the tenant installed security cameras around the property. This tenant also explained they had performed renovations on the property, and thus, asks for compensation for costs if they are evicted. Another tenant contested eviction because the landlord refused contact for months from the tenant, the Department of Community Affairs, and a local organization. Others note that landlords filed dispossessories illegally or failed to comply with the 60-day eviction notice requirement.

"Condemned" living conditions, as one tenant noted, is a second theme we observed, as this section's opening testimony reveals. A tenant, in their "summons," filed a counterclaim after getting sick: "Asked the landlord to fix my air; spent the whole

summer without air.” The tenant was evicted a month later. In the Magistrate Court files, several tenants filed counterclaims to compensate the wages lost from caring for themselves or family members resulting from the lack of repairs or responses about maintenance requests, including broken air conditioning units, mold, pest infestations, malfunctioning heaters, etc. While the files suggest that the Magistrate Court judges sympathized with tenants and interacted with tenant evidence, the judgments rarely accept counterclaims nor hold landlords/ property managers accountable for unsafe living conditions or refusals to carry out maintenance requests.

In what follows, we prioritize 5 tenant stories from the ACC Magistrate Court dispossession files. These files, regardless of the case judgments or end results, communicate the stories of tenants who are experiencing increased housing vulnerability at a time of overall economic instability prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic in their own words. Tenant testimonies are rarely studied in Athens, and they typically end up locked in Magistrate Court archives. The tenants we have reached out to have been eager, like Rex, to share their stories to help others who are going through similar obstacles or promote understanding of the extent of housing insecurity.

Lee, Tenant 1

On the morning of their hearing, Lee faxed a note to the Magistrate Court, writing: *“I am requesting to have my court hearing rescheduled due to the fact that I am having to go to the Emergency room.”* The court, in its default judgment, denied the tenant’s request that the case be continued on another date for the following stated reasons: *“[Plaintiff’s representative] objected to the case being continued. [Tenant] did not provide a phone number in [their] answer or request to move for a telephone hearing. Georgia law requires that dispossessions be resolved within 14 days of service.”* Lee was evicted 12 days later.

Kay, Tenant 2 (mobile home)

Kay repeatedly asked for the court’s mercy and understanding of his situation in his request to the Magistrate Court for a second hearing because he failed to appear due to misunderstanding the hearing location.

“I am currently disable, hard of hearing, and stutter with some memory loss. The landlord was accepting payments from me promising to pull eviction. With me being disable Im begging the court to consider giving me more time to relocate due to me being not present in the correct courtroom, being legally disable without any family or friend support...Im also begging to try and plead my case present in correct courtroom to try

and negotiate a payment plan...thats what I thought we had agreed to when I were giving money in payment increments just days before the schedule courtroom...I understand my responsibility, which is why in 6 years Ive never been late...I will and can in future accept and take care of my responsibility like an responsible adult."

The court denied Kay's request for a second court hearing because, as written by the Court: " Plaintiff objects. It is incumbent on all parties to be in the correct courtroom at the correct time. Court location is posted on all notices." Kay was evicted 14 days later.

Tess, Tenant 3

Tess formerly lived in an apartment complex that was among the 800 units recently purchased for 15 years. In their "summons" answer, they mention troubling conditions:

"Didn't fix any problems we requested for the month of August (tubs, bugs, toilet, sink and hot water heater had mold). We also had leaking water, wires not put up properly. Never changed the fire extinguisher. I will pay for water, pest, & trash (Will not pay rent for august, september). We tried to pay august rent because we was moving in september but wouldn't take the money cause they filed for eviction. They changed management three times.... My daughter was sick from the mold in the house"

Mai, Tenant 4

Mai, a disabled tenant, spoke back to the Magistrate Court after they failed to provide the accommodations she had requested. She is a disability rights advocate and has been leading disability rights initiatives for more than 20 years.

"I am not contacting the clerk's staff because they have proven to not be properly apprised of the law...It is unfortunate that you, in your moving the case to Superior Court, left out both diversity jurisdiction and the fact that your court refused to accommodate me under the ADA...Shame on you for lying about [providing accommodations]."

EI, Tenant 5

EI, searching for alternative housing after experiencing domestic violence, sought assistance from local organizations while she applied to the Eviction Prevention Program, wrote the following in an email sent to a local organization.

“Due to their lengthy payout process and volunteer program my rental office is continue to file eviction against me...I am awaiting further financial assistance from [local organization] at which point I will have the financial relief I need to maintain my housing independently as I continue to heal.”

EI is aware of the long wait periods of local service providers due to limited staff and space. EI notes how finding housing is part of her healing process and path of becoming independent, demonstrating how dwelling is central to social reproduction.

The court signed the form initiating a formal eviction, but EI shortly contested this judgment and filed a request for the judgments revision:

“The judgment in the above-styled action has been satisfied as the Defendant satisfied all required steps for assistance from the Athenian Redevelopment Corporation on [September 2022] as directed by the court ...Defendant will all include supporting documents to show the steps [the landlord/ management representative] has taken to evict the Defendant and refused financial assistance from [a local organization] as well as used personal contacts at the Georgia Rental Assistance to receive payments after [they have] evicted tenants from the property. At this time, I would request the court resent the writ and secure Defendant’s residence as the required amount...has been exceeded with the payment from Athenian Redevelopment Corporation on behalf of the defendant on 10/14/22 to Plaintiff”

The Court denied the defendant’s request, writing that the Plaintiff must file a “Satisfaction of Judgment with the Court.” The results of EI’s case are unknown as the file was incomplete.

Reflections on Tenant Stories

We decided to include extended tenant responses contained in Magistrate Court files to share important stories that otherwise remain silenced. These stories communicate crucial information that can shape local housing policy in ways that most respond to tenant needs. Lee and Kay unsuccessfully filed a request to postpone their hearing dates, with plaintiff refusal as the first reasons listed. These two cases indicate a needed change in addressing the vast power differentials between landlords and tenants. These two cases exemplify the Magistrate Court’s inability to respond to unexpected circumstances or to tenant needs.

Kay’s case involved a land-lease mobile home, whereby tenants own their mobile home but do not own the land on which their home sits. Mobile homes are frequently excluded from housing justice frameworks, but 18 million people [live]

in mobile homes” and exclusion furthers the broader cultural narrative of mobile home residents as “marginal and disposable” (Sullivan, 2017: 938). In reality, mobile homes are not mobile because the cost to do so is inaccessible and weakens the structural integrity of the home, particularly for homes that were built before 1980 (Sullivan, 2017). Land-lease tenure represents a “divided asset ownership” that creates housing affordability at the same time that it creates housing insecurity (ibid).

Confusions over the correct court room number is another reason Kay’s case stands out. Although the tenant does not specify which room they mistook to be the courtroom, in analyzing notices in dispossessory files, the address and name of the Magistrate Court of Athens-Clarke County are confusing (Room #240 is the Magistrate Court Office; Room # 228 is the courtroom). Even though we are somewhat familiar with the spaces of the Magistrate Court because we scan the dispossessory files, one of us (Jess) was uncertain about where to appear for a friend’s hearing even after a phone call to the office. We also emphasize that all notices are written in English only.

Tess’ unattended to and unresolved maintenance requests demonstrate the poor and dangerous housing conditions that initiate health issues, such as respiratory problems, and exposure to fire that she would be unable to put out due to a missing fire extinguisher. In Tess’ case, the withholding of rent for August and September constitutes a form of resistance against an unfair housing system.

Mai’s response to the Magistrate Court is powerful in that she demands accountability from Court clerks rather than remaining silent. Importantly, all five tenants were either disabled themselves or cared for a disabled family member. The Magistrate Court’s denial of postponing hearing dates and insufficiently providing ADA accommodations alludes to a broader ableist housing system. Meanwhile, the lack of landlord accountability to repairing unhealthy and dangerous dwelling conditions (re)produce disabling conditions.

Interestingly, EI submits a file to change the Court’s judgment in a form that resembles the Court’s language and style. As we will highlight in subsection 2.3, EI shares a common assumption that the GRA funds are misused by landlords to enrich themselves while they evict tenants. We are unable to confirm or deny this assumption as we did not have access to GRA files. Furthermore, EI is aware of the long wait periods of local service providers due to limited staff and space. She notes how finding housing is part of her healing process and path of becoming independent, demonstrating how dwelling is central to social reproduction.

2.2 Tenant - Organizer Meetings: “What can we accomplish together? Is it worth it?”

AHAT hosted various tenant-organizer meetings from late August to December 2022. All meetings involved tenants who were directly facing eviction due to the recent purchase of the remaining affordable housing units. Tenants collaborated in two groups: one composed of Spanish-Speaking tenants, the other of English-Speaking tenants. Both groups successfully organized into tenant unions and crafted demand letters that we sent to the investor who had purchased the remaining affordable housing units.

“Sometimes you gotta get in good trouble”: English-Facilitated Tenant Group

In AHAT’s first tenant meeting, the facilitator asked this section’s opening question to a room full of community leaders, advocates, and tenants responding to a series of eviction notices and rent spikes across 5 different multi-family complexes across Athens. The impacted residents who attended this meeting were all Black tenants, most of whom were born and raised in Athens. During the meeting after hearing the stories of other attendees, one participant exclaimed, “I was shocked by the numbers I heard today. I didn’t know that all of this was happening. What is the ask?” This participant’s statement alludes to the importance of popular education as the broader public in Athens, it seems, is unaware of the severity of housing insecurity. His question, relatedly, demonstrates the need to offer suggestions of resources and actions to tenants and community leaders who are aware of the housing context but do not know how to support community needs and demands.

Regarding the denial of section 8 housing vouchers, one tenant - organizer was curious about the possibility of potential claims of discrimination and violation under the Fair Housing Act. The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing based on “race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), familial status, and disability (U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development, n.d.). Section 8 housing voucher eligibility is based on documented citizenship status and renters who are “very low income (50% of area median income) or low-income (80% of area median income)” (U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2019). AHAT and tenant - organizers choose not to pursue this route because the act does not include income as a protected category. AHAT organizers reflected that there is a clear connection between section 8 housing voucher refusals and race, but this connection is often difficult to “prove” in courts.

Importantly, the English-facilitated group held an inspirational press release at ACC City Hall. Tenants shared their experiences to a crowd of people; at one point, a person who was walking past City Hall returned to pick up a sign while other witnesses cried upon hearing these stories. In the next tenant-organizer meeting where we reflected on the press release, one tenant exclaimed, “*I’m so proud. It’s still not over,*

we're showing we're not playing. Sometimes you gotta get in good trouble. Change is coming, it might not be the change we want, but change is coming. I'm looking forward to doing great things together." Another tenant enthusiastically expressed their fearlessness: *"The whole world's going to know me. I'm not embarrassed. Going through this makes me want to fight for other people."*

"Entre todos tenemos poder⁵": Spanish-Facilitated Organizer Meetings

The first AHAT tenant-organizer meeting in Spanish involved a broad overview of how housing is a piece of larger dehumanizing systems. Varying levels of vulnerability and risk were pronounced in these meetings as many folks were un(der)documented. One tenant explained the extent of the struggle of organizing for housing: *"A dónde vamos a ir? La gente tiene miedo y ha decidido ceder y pagar antes que quejarse [Where are we going to go? People are afraid and have decided to give in and pay rather than complain]."* Another tenant-organizer replied, *"Si nos conformamos y seguimos siendo pequeños, nada va a cambiar [If we conform and remain small, nothing is going to change]."* Overall, the neighbors who attended the first meeting encouraged each other that overcoming fear is worth the risk in order to initiate the transformation needed.

Subsequent Spanish-facilitated AHAT meetings focused on popular education and strategies for using existing services, such as code enforcement, to improve housing conditions. We hosted a code enforcement and documentation of needed repairs workshop for two weeks in order to support tenants in writing letters to management about needed repairs. A primary form of protection against retaliation is detailed evidence and documentation of communication with property management and/or landlord. One AHAT organizer shared that *"en mi pueblo, dicen 'el papelito habla' [in my town, they say, 'the little paper speaks']* to emphasize the importance of gathering evidence for self-protection. Additionally, tenant-organizers expressed a sense of targeting from property management; some of their neighbors who were not Latinx were not receiving the same notices or notifications of rent increases, which the majority of the tenants attributed to race and skin color as well as language. One tenant revealed to some of the AHAT organizers that *"todos nos olvidan y nos dejan atrás [everyone forgets us and leaves us behind.]"* The "us" the tenant referred to was Spanish-Speaking Latinx immigrants who live on the outskirts of Athens. These stories illuminate groups of people who are excluded from conversations about housing, which limits the effectiveness of housing policy and initiatives.

⁵ Translation: "among all of us we have power"

2.3 Rental Assistance Programs: “Subsidizing Landlords”

Georgia received \$550 million through the Federal Emergency Rental Assistance funds in March 2021 to support limited-income renters impacted by the pandemic. As a program that draws from these funds, the Georgia Rental Assistance Program (GRA) provides up to 18 months of direct payments to participating landlords to help tenants stay in their homes. However, according to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, Georgia is among four U.S. states with the slowest disbursement rates despite its large renter population (Thanawala, 2021). As of November 2021, the Department of Community Affairs had allocated 9% of the \$550 million, assisting 3,000 households in a state composed of approximately 250,000 renters facing eviction. Tenants were evicted while awaiting GRA status reply. The program was abruptly terminated in late October 2022, a week after the local eviction prevention program terminated. Several tenant-organizers have remarked how this is not mere coincidence.

Local governments designed their own initiatives to respond to the GRA's limitations. Project RESET is one notable initiative that first emerged in Gwinnett County, GA. This project provides rent and utility relief to renters who have experienced housing insecurity related to COVID-19. In about one year, Gwinnett County's Project RESET program assisted in more than 1,300 eviction cases (Gwinnett County, 2021). Similarly, Project RESET in Athens, launched just this year, aims to keep renters experiencing eviction in their home by collaborating with landlords. Under the program, landlords who agree to participate receive a direct payment from the local government for a tenant's past-due rent; the tenant's past-due rental debt is then “reset,” and they are able to remain (Ridley, 2021). Athenian First Development Corporation, Inc. (AFDC) is the partner that is working alongside Athens Clarke County (ACC) on a local rental assistance initiative. AFDC launched the Eviction Prevention Program (EPP) in mid-February 2022. The program ended in mid-October 2022.

Georgia Rental Assistance Program (GRA)

Tenant-organizer meetings yielded larger conversations, rumors, and confusions about the Department of Community Affairs (DCA)'s distribution of Georgia Rental Assistance Program funds. One tenant revealed that “DCA doesn't pay the bills on time.” Another tenant exasperatingly sighed when she found out that the GRA was administered by DCA: “Oh, it's through DCA? Nevermind, I won't do anything with them.” The nodding of heads in agreement from other tenants in the room when these tenants expressed themselves leads us to believe there is a consensus of general suspicion of DCA that prevents tenants from applying to the GRA.

Similarly, a few tenants communicated suspicion over misuse of funds, whereby landlords were receiving money from the program but still evicting tenants. These

concerns emerge from the application process, which relies on landlord cooperation and information. For instance, Oak, an AHAT organizer who assisted tenants in the GRA application process, explained, “We ran into issues where you basically need approval from the landlord. And so you had to get landlord contact info and they had to create an account and essentially, accept the rental assistance, so it doesn't go to the tenants themselves; it goes to the landlord.” These remarks signal an overall negative perception of landlords based on tenant lived experience and the condescending premise of the program that assumes landlords are better capable of using funds than tenants.

Oak, an AHAT organizer since its establishment, mentioned that the GRA was “a bandaid on the issue because you're basically subsidizing the landlord. The solution would be for the government to put in some sort of limitations on what these places can charge...So landlords are going to extract as much as possible to maximize their profits. Oak continued to articulate further “hoops” in the GRA application process that made it ineffective at keeping tenants in their homes:

“Even if the application did get approved, it would take two to three months for them to even review it. And they would return with comments of things that needed to be revised and only give the tenants seven days to revise and resubmit their application. There are unnecessary hoops in the way to slow down the entire process. And I think that was intentional. [It] is basically subsidizing the landlords and not really protecting the tenants.”

Oak's understanding of the GRA application process as intentionally designed to fail reflects tenant's negative perceptions that prevented them from applying in the first place. The positioning of the GRA as “subsidizing landlords” reveals how this program seemingly allowed “landlords [to] extract as much as possible to maximize their profits” (Oak, 2023). This remark also conveyed the ongoing limitations of government-based solutions to resolving the housing crisis, which we articulate more below.

Eviction Prevention Program (EPP)

One resident retold condescending interactions with Athenian First Development Corporation representatives during an AHAT tenant-organizer meeting: “AFDC representative made me feel like she was up here [signaling with one hand] and I was down here [signaling with other hand to be below the first].” This comment prompted another tenant to share a similar experience when calling the AFDC office to ask questions about the EPP application, but the person who answered was impatient and did not fully answer their questions.

Additionally, the majority of Athenians AHAT approached about the programs were unaware of both the EPP and GRA due to limited outreach from the organizations

responsible for dispersing those funds. In Athens, AFDC’s outreach completely excluded Spanish-speaking Athenians. While AHAT organizers who assisted tenants in the GRA and EPP application processes, conveyed that the whole EPP process was much more efficient than the GRA, they noticed that EPP, unlike GRA, did not offer any application or service in Spanish. Language omissions “cut out a huge demographic here in Athens” (Oak, 2023). Analysis of the AFDC’s monthly reports, which provided the demographic information for all funded cases, supported organizer assumptions and experiences; AFDC never funded “Hispanic/ Latino” applicants. Rather than an intentional discrimination against Hispanic/ Latino applicants, the lack of funding for this demographic is best explained through the lack of Spanish translation and outreach from this organization, including promotional information about required documents and eligibility.

Limitations of Rental Assistance Programs

AHAT facilitated GRA and EPP outreach and workshops to assist tenants in the application process. Interacting with and building relationships with tenant-organizers via workshop offerings and neighborhood canvassing revealed important knowledge, particularly regarding limitations, about rental assistance programs and solutions to a local housing “crisis” that would otherwise remain obscured or under-examined. As articulated above, both programs did not sufficiently attend to tenant needs nor resolve the housing “crisis.” In the end, most of the funds for both programs had not been dispersed. Meanwhile, entire demographics of tenants, such as Spanish-Speaking immigrants or undocumented tenants, were excluded, or tenants were evicted awaiting a response, in the case of the GRA. Limited outreach prevented tenants from applying while those who were aware of these programs often chose not to apply due to negative experiences with program representatives or suspicion of the funding entities. Even still, many who applied were at the mercy of landlords and application reviewers and were evicted nonetheless. As Oak lamented, “Government entities aren’t looking out for working class people. This money was there... I believe that they could have done what was needed to make sure the money was dispersed properly.”

IV. Policy and Offering Suggestions

In February 2023, ACC re-opened the call for proposals for an organization to partner with the county to re-start the eviction prevention program, with \$800,000 of ARPA funds available (Athens-Clarke County Unified Government, 2023). The stated goal of the EPP is “to offer a mutually beneficial solution that not only prevents homelessness, but also addresses the significant economic impact COVID-19 has had

on both landlords and tenants in Athens-Clarke County” (ibid). While AHAT is unable to submit a proposal because we do not meet the eligibility requirements, we humbly offer suggestions so that this rental assistance program, and future housing resource offerings, best attend to tenant lived experience of housing insecurity.

4.1 Source of Income Non-Discrimination Ordinance

“Source of income discrimination” is the refusal to rent to applicants based on the person’s form of income. This particular form of denial, AHAT has noticed in Athens with the refusal of section 8 housing vouchers, are pretexts for refusing to rent to disabled tenants, tenants of color, womxn, and older tenants. As such, “source of income (SOI) discrimination contributes to the perpetuation of racially segregated communities and neighborhoods with concentrated poverty” (Fasanelli & Tegeler, 2019). A Source of Income Non-Discrimination Ordinance, designed to add an additional protection under the Fair Housing Act, prohibits landlord discrimination against tenants based on their source of legal income, importantly including government section 8 housing vouchers (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2020).

In 2020, the City of Atlanta passed a source of income non-discrimination ordinance as the first municipality to pass such a policy in Georgia despite state preemptive laws that prohibit them. Although if Athens, similarly to Atlanta, were to pass such an ordinance, it would not hold legally in state courts because it violates state preemption laws, such an ordinance would symbolically communicate to Athenians and landlords an intentional understanding of tenant lived realities while offering a specific movement targeting state preemption laws by exposing this form of discrimination to a broader public.

4.2 Expansion of Local Service and Program Eligibility

Our experiences with tenant-organizers who were ineligible to apply to GRA or EPP or were unable to access resources from local organizations reveal necessary shortcomings that exclude large groups of tenants. We suggest the expansion of eligibility for local rental assistance programs and homelessness resource offerings for the following excluded tenants: un(der)documented folks, formerly incarcerated folks, non-English speaking folks, and (dis)abled folks. We understand that the local government currently relies upon federal funds to offer rental assistance programs and support local service providing organizations; federal requirements mandate documented citizenship status and impose other stipulations on the use of funds that hinder the effectiveness and inclusivity of services and programs. Despite these requirements, AHAT asks for ongoing conversations with local policymakers to offer services that specifically attend to the realities of tenants who currently do not receive any form of

support. We also urge policymakers to intentionally create spaces of conversation with multiply-marginalized tenants to expand policy impacts.

4.3 Remediation of Existing Housing Stock

Former City Commissioner Tim Denson, who was a leading advocate in approving the Eviction Prevention Program, proposes two factors that will “get us out of this housing crisis: 1.) density is key as we must produce more housing than we are producing now (Athens is projected to become home to an additional 26,425 residents by 2040) and 2.) we must ensure that a larger percentage of the housing being produced is ‘affordable’” (Denson, 2022).

Housing justice organizers who have collaborated with tenants refute the proposal of the construction of additional housing units as a way to resolve the housing crisis. Data from the magistrate court files and hearing the stories of tenants indicate that there is indeed a sufficient housing stock. However, the problem is that the existing housing stock is outdated and in need of repair to become safer and healthier dwellings. Currently, however, the majority of low-income Black and Brown tenants continue to live in deteriorating dwellings due to landlord / rental management refusal to fulfill maintenance requests.

AHAT organizer Oak explained that “there's more vacant homes in the US than there are homeless people. We're seeing all these developers buy up these homes. And a lot of these stay vacant for most of the time...It's not an issue of supply; the issue is affordability.” Affordability is Denson’s second proposed solution, which he places in quotes due to disagreements over the meaning of “affordable.” While we agree with this solution, we also urge, based on the most recent denial of section 8 and the mass purchase of the remaining “affordable” units in town, we emphasize the need for developing restrictions that prevent landlords from drastic rent increases and from denying the acceptance of housing vouchers. “Affordability” must also center physical accessibility within housing units for tenants with disabilities and access to public disability transportation services, which we discuss further below.

V. Current and Future Directions: Expanding the Scope of Housing Justice

AHAT is continuing to collaborate with community leaders, tenant-organizers, the ACC Geospatial Office, and UGA’s Community Mapping Lab to expand the scope of this research and potential solutions. Considering the vast implications of interconnected processes of racialized dispossession in housing practices, enacting housing justice is

not possible without an intersectional, multi-scalar lens that calls upon decolonial struggles, a focus on environmental-racial-economic-gender justice, and connections among the local-rural-urban-suburban-global. Below, we share future directions we intend to take with this research in ways that broaden the scope of urban housing research.

5.1 (Dis)Ability and Housing Discrimination

There are limited studies about disabled housing experiences. Disability justice scholars of color, based on their own embodied knowledge and the knowledge of their communities regarding specific forms of housing insecurity and inaccessibility at the intersections of race and (disability), have long emphasized the need for such research (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018; Sins Invalid, 2019). In the midst of mass evictions and refusal of section 8 housing, AHAT witnessed a significant number of disabled tenants who are unable to find accessible housing and the resources to search and apply for existing assistance programs. AHAT volunteers have physically assisted disabled tenants in packing and transporting belongings as well as driving tenants to appointments to receive housing assistance. Although disability is not specifically an eligibility requirement, most tenants in Athens who are disabled are considered “low-income” and thus rely on housing vouchers. A future research direction is to examine how insufficient housing for people with disabilities and denial of section 8 housing violate the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which prohibits discrimination based on disability.

5.2 LGBTQ + and Gendered Tenant Experiences

Several AHAT members identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community and move through Athens as femmes. Most tenant-organizers who collaborate with AHAT are Black womxn. LGBTQ + tenants and homeowners experience high levels of housing insecurity due to discrimination and trans/homophobia yet remain excluded from housing conversations (Glick, 2020). AHAT members have witnessed Black trans women who would rather stay on the side of a road than to stay at a local shelter in order to avoid violence.

As geographer Anne Bonds (2019, 577), asserts, “[i]t is impossible to understand the racial economies of property without attention to gender and sexuality and the ways in which women’s bodies and socially reproductive labor were (and are) essential to property making, even as their bodies continue to be understood as property to be regulated by the state.” Another research direction AHAT will pursue is to center the resilient collective strategies of womxn of color and queer, trans, gender non-conforming folx in housing justice.

5.3 Anti-Eviction Counter Mapping

We will use our existing data set and maps that visualize the frequency and location of the highest number of evictions in Athens to shift from “eviction mapping” to “anti-eviction” mapping, which are maps that can contribute to community organizing and local decision-making that supports tenants (Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, 2021). Counter-mapping specifically asks for community members who are most impacted by housing insecurity to play central roles in the making of the map. Such an approach seeks to attend to the unsettling origins of geography and cartography, whereby the representation of abstract space has relied upon the simplification and obfuscation of complex relations, necessitating binary organizations of space and the positioning of people in designated place through the language of normativity (Blomley, 2003; 2004). The intention for counter-mapping is to disrupt the language of normativity regarding eviction that traditional forms of mapping have tended to (re)produce. The form and content of this counter-mapping component will be decided upon collectively with community collaborators.

VI. Ongoing Conclusions

Contributions to Transformative: Change Sigue en la Lucha, Continue in the Struggle

Socio-Political Impacts

This research provides important data on the progression of evictions and levels of housing insecurity in Athens. Mapping eviction data can demonstrate specific local problems and how community housing needs can be fulfilled that contributes to the expansion of local organizational strategies, resource offerings, and policy development to better support tenants in Athens, especially in variously marginalized communities. In other words, this research highlights the strategies and responses of renters undergoing eviction that are otherwise under examined in broader geographic scholarship. The results from this project will assist those interested in urban housing issues understand the kinds of questions and solutions to ensure the fundamental right to being housed, particularly related to the impacts of grassroots housing advocacy organizations in the communities in which they are embedded in the U.S Southeast.

Developing relationships of trust with tenants has revealed the complexities of housing precarity that has broadened our group’s framing of the problem and responses, such as considerations of disabled or LGBTQIA + tenants. Collaborating with non-profit organizations as well as city and neighborhood leaders has additionally

forged relationships of trust that have facilitated conversations about tenant needs, increased access to housing assistance and community resources, and expanded accountability and response processes for changing existing or developing alternative resource and program offerings.

This project's **political and social contribution** is threefold. First, the research contributes to constructive recommendations and feedback to inform ongoing housing initiatives in Athens, particularly for multiply - marginalized renters. This research provides important data on the progression of evictions and levels of housing insecurity in Athens as there is no local entity that tracks this information. Mapping eviction data can demonstrate specific local problems and housing needs that can contribute to the expansion of local organizational strategies, resource offerings, and policy development to better support tenants in Athens, especially in variously marginalized communities. In other words, this research highlights the strategies and responses of renters undergoing housing insecurity, which yields important knowledge to inform local policy campaigns. Preliminary application of eviction data reveals the complexes that experience the highest frequency of evictions, which has informed AHAT's canvassing and resource offerings as well as broader public awareness.

Second and related to the first point, this project positions Athens, GA as a critical case study for deepening knowledge about racialized housing processes and broader patterns of the reproductions of housing insecurity that differentially impact community vulnerabilities. When we share quantitative information about evictions or qualitative stories about the tenants who are currently undergoing eviction, the majority of people are typically surprised. The project addresses a gap in housing justice literature related to the intersecting struggles for gender, immigrant, housing, and language justice. Moreover, this research focused on an understudied element of housing research: the lived experiences of renters and the sustaining practices of eviction as it occurs in the "now." The findings of this research project adds much needed conceptual nuance and complexity to political conversations of contemporary housing in smaller cities, particularly in the U.S South. Deepening this knowledge at the local level is essential for base-building and growing the movement for housing justice at broader scales.

Third, the research will be shared and communicated through formats that will be accessible to a wider range of readers beyond academics while providing concrete, material resources and support to community collaborators. Research findings will soon be featured on the UGA community mapping lab website in English and Spanish and will guide AHAT's community-led anti-eviction mapping efforts as well as AHAT resource-offerings to provide material resources and support to community collaborators.

This project deviates from existing studies on housing precarity in three major forms, contributing to the project. First, this project shifts the analytic frame to “evicting practices” by focusing on the ways in which evictions are lived and performed in the “now,” thereby revealing the embedded power relations and practices that are frequently excluded. Baker (2021) suggest changes in terminology from “eviction” to “evicting practices” to highlight the entangled power relations and multiple technologies of dispossession, noting the limitations of existing studies for over-examining the causes and outcomes of evictions because this frame assumes a “beginning” and “ending” of the process that is removed from its other sustaining forces (Akers et al., 2019). In other words, this research isn’t solely nor directly examining “evictions.” Instead, this research understands evictions as one of numerous institutionalized practices that (re)produce housing insecurity.

Second, and related to the first point, the project prioritizes community resistance rather than dispossession. Personal experience of one of the writers (Jess) has demonstrated that the stories of multiply-marginalized peoples, which have been eschewed from historical archives or simplified in contemporary overemphasis on processes of oppression, inform more effective responses to urban housing issues in ways that more immediately respond to community needs. As such, this research is interested in how community collaborators with lived experience of housing precarity tell different stories, strategies, and knowledge that expand the scope and scale of housing justice and urban housing policy. These stories illuminate the relations that sustain “evicting practices” as they occur in the here and now.

Third, existing urban research focuses on larger cities, such as Atlanta. Thus, there is limited information about how these processes manifest across different space-times, particularly since place-based research yields important understandings of broader complex patterns of injustice. As such, a place-based analysis of Athens, GA expands the complexity of these historical processes and how they function in ways that allow for comparative analyses and the creation or revision of broader generalizable racialized housing patterns.

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