

IN JUST TIMES

a publication of the

NATIONAL LAW CENTER
ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY



Changing Laws, Changing Lives

April 2018



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Dear Friends—

Lashonda Smith worked two jobs in Milwaukee and still struggled to pay the rent along with her other bills. When her non-profit day job employer lost funding and could no longer pay her, she tried increasing her night job hours. But she fell behind anyway: “...bills are steady slipping, lights off, rent 12 days behind, water behind, now I’m evicted.”



Maria Foscarinis
Executive Director

Smith’s story is one of many told in *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, the powerful Pulitzer prize-winning book by sociologist Matthew Desmond. *Evicted* tells the personal stories of dozens of poor families who lose their homes to eviction and face homelessness—and bolsters them with data on hundreds. Now Desmond and his team are assembling a [national evictions database](#), and the book has inspired an [exhibit at the National Building Museum](#) in Washington, D.C.

Evictions lead to homelessness in large part because of the [lack of legal rights for renters](#). Families facing eviction typically do so without a lawyer because they can’t afford one, thereby forgoing what rights they have. Once they lose their homes, poor families often [can’t find housing they can afford](#) because of the affordable housing crisis. And if they are lucky enough to have a housing voucher—often after years, or even decades, on waiting lists—they may be [turned away by landlords](#) who refuse to rent to voucher holders.

Our new report, [*Protect Tenants, Prevent Homelessness*](#), details some of these issues and our proposals for addressing them, and through our Housing Not Handcuffs campaign we are working to promote them. Recently, in Broward County, Florida, we helped advocates of the Florida Homelessness Action Coalition win [passage of a law prohibiting landlords from discriminating](#) against prospective tenants based on source of income such as vouchers.

Now, the Trump administration is imposing even more barriers on poor families, including [new work requirements](#), even though most poor families are already working, like Lashonda, but not making enough to pay the rent.

[Join us](#) as we work to fight these proposals and advocate for common sense rights to prevent more people from becoming homeless.



Maria Foscarinis
Founder & Executive Director

Exhibition Inspired by Matthew Desmond's *Evicted* Opens at National Building Museum in D.C.

By LaTissia Mitchell

On April 13, 2018 the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C. [opened its latest exhibition: *Evicted*](#). The immersive exhibit takes its inspiration from Matthew Desmond's Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Evicted* about the housing crisis facing poor renting families in the U.S. The curator, Sarah A. Leavitt, did not want to simply replicate the book's information, so the exhibition is national in focus and uses recently-published research from Princeton University's [Eviction Lab](#). Specially-commissioned visual infographics and forward-thinking design introduce visitors to the numbers and statistics that will help them to better understand the causes for and ramifications of chronic eviction. To portray this crisis, the exhibition employs photography and audio interviews. Using a stark and brutalist aesthetic, the exhibition does not



invite intimacy. The visitor is intentionally not allowed to identify with people to mimic the dehumanizing process of losing private space and possessions.

A particularly effective element of *Evicted* is the representation of the housing court data. Visitors can read research findings on the lack of tenant protections printed on the outside of a minimalist structure in the middle of an exhibition gallery. The data is printed on three sides of the structure, and the fourth side has a window to a recessed video screen. As opposed to other structures in the exhibit that visitors can physically enter, this one does not allow access. Desmond has said that housing court becomes inaccessible for poor people evicted from their homes for a number of reasons: housing court is only during work hours, arranging child care can be burdensome or impossible, and finding transportation can be difficult. Like much in exhibit, justice remains elusive for people who need it most. *Evicted* joins a pair of current exhibitions at the museum that create a dialogue about the history of housing, the lack of affordable housing, and the current housing crisis in this country.

The Law Center is serving as an educational resource for those interested in advocating for stronger laws that prevent evictions, following the release of its [*Protect Tenants, Prevent Homelessness*](#) report in March. [Learn more here.](#)

Trump Administration's Proposed Rule Would Punish Immigrants Who Use Housing Assistance

By Michael Santos

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is proposing a [new rule](#) that would expand the grounds to deny an immigrant admission to the U.S. or the ability to become a lawful permanent resident if they are likely to become a public charge. A person who is primarily dependent on the government for cash assistance like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) can be considered a public charge. The proposed rule would expand the definition of public charge to include immigrants, their dependents, and those U.S. citizens living with them who currently use or have used in the past 36 months non-cash benefits, including housing assistance under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, the Housing Choice Voucher Program, and other forms of government housing assistance.

If implemented, immigrant communities, which frequently host extended family members or friends in their home at times of need, would be discouraged from doing so, putting both their own housing, and the housing of those they would otherwise host, at risk. The proposed rule effectively forces immigrants to relinquish housing assistance and other critical supports and services in exchange for receipt of immigration benefits, putting them at greater risk of experiencing homelessness by discouraging both current and future acceptance of public benefits in order to avoid a public charge determination. The Law Center and the National Housing Law Project are working with other housing and immigration advocates to develop a strategy to oppose the proposed rule once it is available for public comment. Please stay tuned for updates.

NEWS from the LAW CENTER

Jobs at the Law Center

AmeriCorps VISTAs: Three AmeriCorps VISTA members will play central and vital roles in the Housing Not Handcuffs Campaign and the Law Center's work by performing activities including outreach and network development, database management and data analysis, and supporting development & communications activities to build organizational capacity to extend beyond the three-year project.

Operations Manager: Reporting to the Deputy Director, the Operations Manager is responsible for executing the Law Center's operations, with responsibilities in human resources, financial oversight, and administration. The Operations Manager assists in the financial management of the organization, working with and coordinating outside accountants and bookkeepers.

For details on these and other career opportunities, visit nlchp.org/employment.



LOOKING FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

We're looking for VISTA Members to join our team and use the power of the law to prevent and end homelessness.

NATIONAL LAW CENTER ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY

VISTA
Volunteers In Service To America

more info at:
nlchp.org/employment



We're hiring!

The Law Center is seeking an Operations Manager. Join our team in the fight to end homelessness.

NATIONAL LAW CENTER ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY

NLCHP in the Media

The George Washington Hatchet-DC (Apr. 12): [Lawsuit Alleges DC Officials Improperly Seized Belongings in Homeless Camp Clearings](#)

Nooga.com-Chattanooga, TN (Apr. 10): [Citizens Debate on Constitutionality of Proposed Panhandling Ban](#)

World Socialist (Apr. 9): [Lawsuit Accuses DC of Destroying Personal Belongings of the Homeless](#)

WTVC-ABC Local (Apr. 3): [Chattanooga City Council Passes New Panhandling Ban Ordinance](#)

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette (Apr. 1): [Fayetteville Residents Gather for Transgender Day of Visibility](#)

Duluth News Tribune-MN (Mar. 26): [Cold Not to Support Those Out in Cold](#)

News Review (Mar. 29): [Weekly Gathering Supports Homeless Folks' Right to Public Space](#)

Texas Observer (Mar. 28): [In Rare Legal Move, City of Amarillo Takes Landowner to Court Over Homeless Camp](#)

The Technician—NC State University (Mar. 27): [Homeless Students: The Forgotten Demographic](#)

The Stranger (Mar. 26): [America is Experiencing an Eviction Epidemic](#)

Pittsburg Courier (Mar. 16): [Blacks Comprise More Than 40 Percent of U.S. Homeless Population](#)

Westword (Mar. 15): [Right to Rest Bill Dies. Delivering a Devastating Defeat for the Homeless](#)

Colorado Springs Gazette (Mar. 15): ['Out of Sight, Out of Mind' Policy Damages Homeless](#)

Governing (Mar. 13): [The Homeless-Campus Concept Catches On](#)

Events

June 8: LEAP Luncheon

Join the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty and fellow members of the Lawyers' Executive Advisory Partners (LEAP) at our **annual luncheon** hosted by Simpson



Thacher. Network with fellow leaders of pro bono programs at major law firms and corporate legal departments, and hear from dedicated pro bono attorneys working to end and prevent homelessness in America. Whether

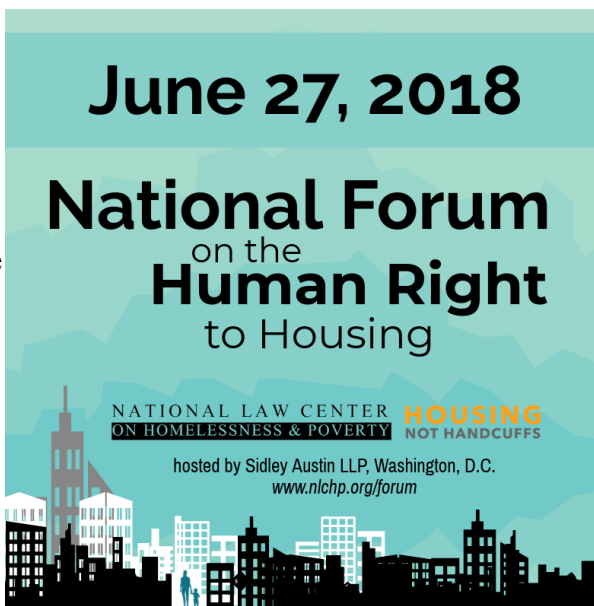
you are part of a LEAP member firm or interested in joining LEAP, all are welcome to attend, but RSVPs are required. For more information about LEAP, visit nlchp.org/leap.

June 8, 2018

Hosted by Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP

June 27: National Forum on the Human Right to Housing

Save the date for the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty's annual **National Forum on the Human Right to Housing**! People who are currently or formerly homeless, attorneys, government officials, and advocates from across the country will gather in Washington, D.C., to organize and strategize on ways we can work to end the criminalization of people experiencing homelessness. Registration will open in May. Learn more at nlchp.org/forum. For more information about law firm and corporate sponsorship opportunities, contact Development & Communications Director Maggie Ardiente at mardiente@nlchp.org.



Equal Justice Conference May 10-12

Law Center Senior Attorney Tristia Bauman will speak at the [Equal Justice Conference](#) May 10-12 in San Diego. She will be part of a panel titled, "The Criminalization of Poverty: Homelessness, Bail Reform and Employment."

National Health Care for the Homeless Conference & Policy Symposium May 15-18, Minneapolis, Minnesota



**2018 NATIONAL HEALTH
CARE FOR THE HOMELESS**
CONFERENCE & POLICY
SYMPOSIUM
MAY 15 - 18 | MINNEAPOLIS, MN

WORKING TOGETHER FOR COMMUNITY

The NCHC conference will explore what it means to be “Working Together for Community” through intensive trainings in health care and homelessness. Law Center Senior Attorney Eric Tars will present in a session on “Housing, Not Handcuffs.”

Seattle University Forum

Law Center Senior Attorney Tristia Bauman spoke on April 14 at the [Seattle University Forum](#): “Finding Space to Solve Homelessness: Addressing Homelessness Through Public, Private, and Religious Land Use.” She was a featured speaker in the “authorized encampments” track.



University Presentations

Law Center Senior Attorney Eric Tars recently presented on housing as a human right to University of Maryland law students in March and a Yale University Human Rights class in April. He also recently presented to the University of Pennsylvania Nursing School about intersections between homelessness, healthcare and human rights.

national organization dedicated solely to using the power of the law to end and prevent homelessness.

With the support of a large network of pro bono lawyers, we address the immediate and long-term needs of people who are homeless or at risk through outreach and training, advocacy, impact litigation, and public education.

www.nlchp.org