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Community leader, family evicted from home after 26 years

Approximately 20 Santa Ana residents and representatives of local organizations rallied on Tuesday, October 30th, in front of the home of Reyna Mendoza. Reyna, her three daughters, and an elderly couple who sublet a room, are being evicted by a developer who recently purchased their home of 26 years. October 31 will be their last day in this home, and as Reyna explained, “I don’t want to leave Santa Ana, but we have not yet found a place to live.”

Community members at the Rally and Press Conference came together chanting, with signs reading #HomesforAll and “Santa Ana, Our Home,” calling on local officials to take action. Speakers emphasized that Reyna’s story represents widespread evictions and displacement of longtime residents in Santa Ana. Reyna’s home is on the corner of 4th Street and Lacy - a neighborhood that has been hit hard by gentrification, with rising rents pushing many residents (and businesses) out of the neighborhood, often into slums or overcrowded housing in order to afford rent. The Orange County Sheriff’s Department recorded an average of 493 evictions each year between 2012 and 2015, and as Idalia Ríos of Tenants United Santa Ana (TU Santa Ana) pointed out, there many, many more evictions and cases of displacement that do not reach the Sheriff’s Department. Idalia also underlined the ultimate consequence of this housing crisis and a general lack of protections for low-income residents and renters: over 5,900 homeless children in the Santa Ana Unified School District.

1 Over 35 latino-serving businesses have closed in the past 10 years in the downtown. Northgate Gonzalez, a landmark business on 4th Street just a block away from Reyna’s home, met stark opposition earlier this year, when they shared a proposal this year to replace their very popular, centrically located grocery store with a market-rate, non-affordable housing project. Local residents cited unaffordability, increased traffic, inconvenience to local residents and homeowners, and the importance of Northgate grocery store for the neighborhood.
Rios spoke about the Permanecer y Prosperar Platform, a series of policy solutions brought forward by local residents and nonprofits. A Tenants Opportunity to Purchase policy, for example, would allow renters such as Reyna an opportunity to purchase their homes. In Washington, DC, such a policy has allowed tenants to become owners, promoting economic growth and wellbeing. Other policy solutions include “Just Cause,” which protects renters from unjustified evictions; a rental assistance program; and use of public land for public benefit.

The ongoing displacement of low-income renters, a huge demographic in Santa Ana\(^2\), represents a threat to the City’s cultural and social fabric. Economically, the City has lost millions of dollars seeking outside investment, instead of investing in the growth and development of local residents. The Permanecer y Prosperar Platform presents solutions for the City, brought forward by active residents and organizations with decades of experience in resident engagement. Outgoing Councilmembers, incoming candidates, voters and all residents are being called in this Platform to foster real development, rooted in local participation and equity.

**Additional materials**
- Permanecer y Prosperar Platform
- Audio excerpts from the Press Conference by Radio Santa Ana (in Spanish)
- Video of Press Conference (downloadable)

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\(^2\) Santa Ana’s median income is around $52,000/year, about 20k below the County median; also, renters of all income levels are a majority (over 50% of residents) in Santa Ana.