



# Recapturing the **Humanity** in Housing

**Janine Nkosi**  
**California State University, Fresno**  
**Affordable Housing Summit**  
**August 18, 2016**



**WARNING**

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**AWKWARD**

**EMOTIONAL**

**WRECK**



AUGUST 16, 2016

## Burning apartment building that trapped family may not have been legal

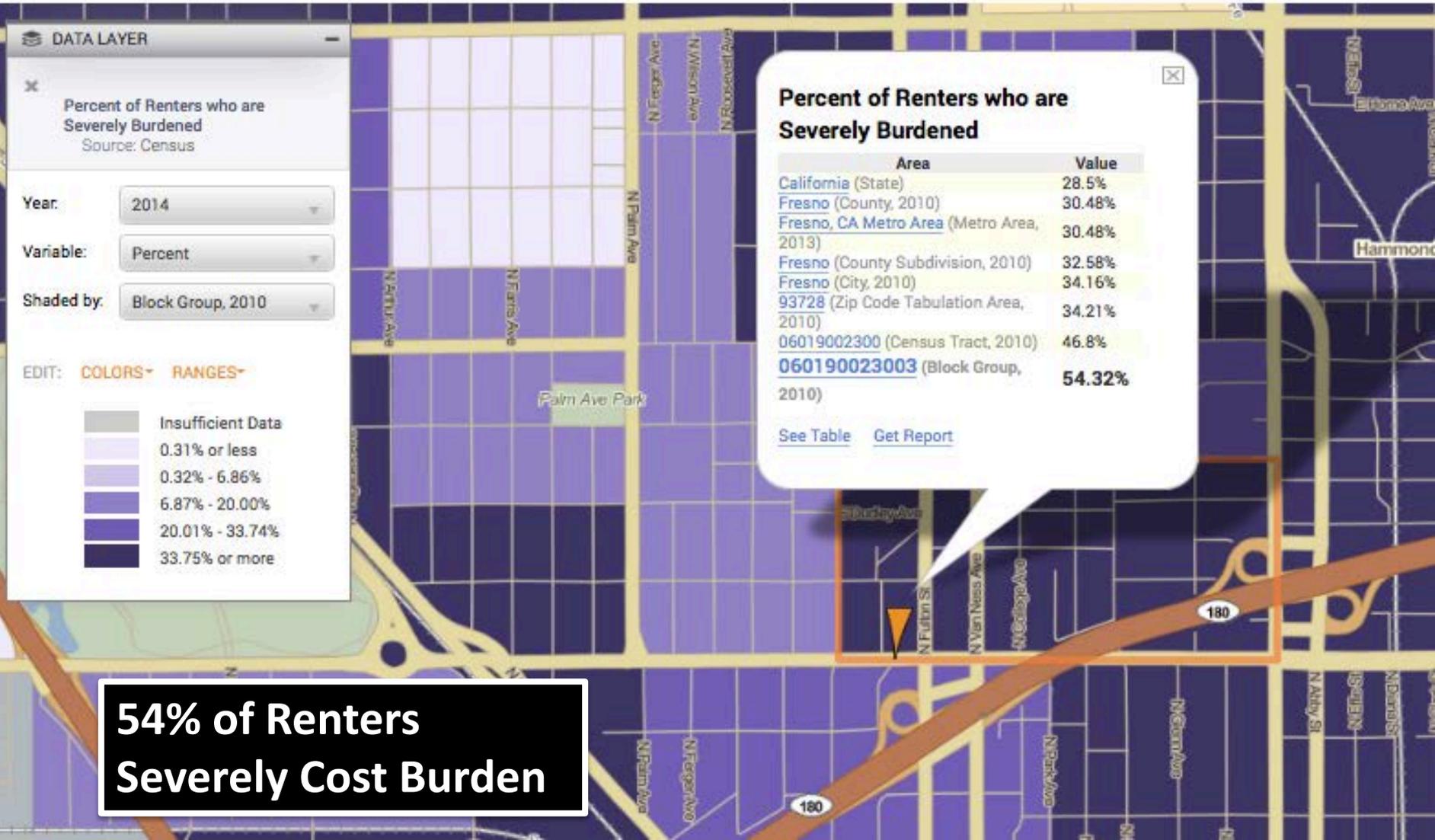


BY RORY APPLETON [RAPPLETON@FRESNOBEE.COM](mailto:RAPPLETON@FRESNOBEE.COM)

A mother and her children [narrowly escaped](#) their burning apartment Monday after they were briefly trapped behind a chain-link fence outside their home. Their building may not have been zoned for residential use, nor was the vacant lower section properly maintained to keep out the squatters who likely started the blaze.

Roseanna Montoya, 39, and her three children lived at 815 E. Belmont Ave., but that was not obvious to passersby. From Belmont, the building appeared to be a vacant warehouse or stores located between a thrift store

Estimated percent of all renters who are severely cost burdened between 2010-2014. ▾



**DATA LAYER**

Percent of Renters who are Severely Burdened  
Source: Census

Year: 2014

Variable: Percent

Shaded by: Block Group, 2010

EDIT: COLORS RANGES

- Insufficient Data
- 0.31% or less
- 0.32% - 6.86%
- 6.87% - 20.00%
- 20.01% - 33.74%
- 33.75% or more

**54% of Renters Severely Cost Burden**

☆ Estimated typical (median) income of a renter occupied household between 2010-2014. ▾

**DATA LAYER**

✕ Median Renter Occupied Income  
Source: Census

Year: 2014 ▾

Variable: Median ▾

Shaded by: Census Tract, 2010 ▾

EDIT: COLORS ▾ RANGES ▾

Insufficient Data
\$22,218 or less
\$22,219 - \$29,602
\$29,603 - \$37,500
\$37,501 - \$50,767
\$50,768 or more

**Median Renter Occupied Income**

Area	Value
California (State)	\$41,358
Fresno (County, 2010)	\$28,722
Fresno, CA Metro Area (Metro Area, 2013)	\$28,722
Fresno (County Subdivision, 2010)	\$28,982
Fresno (City, 2010)	\$27,363
93728 (Zip Code Tabulation Area, 2010)	\$23,072
<b>06019002300 (Census Tract, 2010)</b>	<b>\$18,844</b>

[See Table](#) [Get Report](#)

**Median Renter Occupied Income \$18k**

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#### [Living Environment, Social Participation and Wellbeing in Older Age: The Relevance of Housing and Local Area Disadvantage](#)

Article Peer Reviewed

Byline: Wojtek Tomaszewski (1) Keywords: Ageing; Living environment; Housing; Neighbourhood; Social participation; Wellbeing Abstract: This paper explores the links between the quality of the living environment, social participation and wellbeing in older age using data from the Household, Income an . . .

**By:** [Tomaszewski, Wojtek](#)

**Year:** 2013

**Published in:** Journal of Population Ageing

[Check for availability](#)

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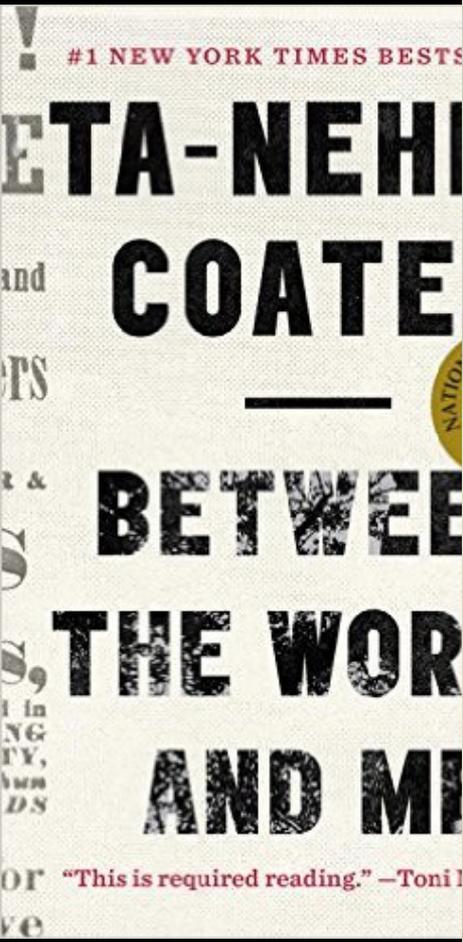


# Effective Proactive Rental Regulation



Alan Mallach, Senior Fellow

Fresno, CA July 21, 2016



**FRESH FRUIT, BROKEN BODIES**  
**MIGRANT FARMWORKERS IN THE UNITED STATES**

*"Important and captivating . . . a gripping read." —Paul Farmer*

**By the winner of the 2014 MARGARET MEAD AWARD**

**SETH M. HOLMES, PhD, MD**  
*With a foreword by Philippe Bourgois*

! #1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

ETA-NEHISI  
COATES  
—  
BETWEEN  
THE WORLD  
AND ME



OR "This is required reading." —Toni Morrison

...all our phrasing –  
race relations, racial  
chasm, racial  
justice, racial  
profiling, white  
privilege, even  
white supremacy,  
serves to **obscure**  
that **racism** is a  
**visceral experience.**

...[racism] dislodges brains,  
blocks airways, rips muscles,  
extracts organs, cracks bones,  
and breaks teeth.

You must never look away from  
this.

You must always remember that the sociology, the history, the economics, the graphs, the charts, the regressions all land, with great violence, upon the body.

(Ta-Nehisi Coates, 2015, p. 10)

CostBurden  
Sprawl  
GrassrootsOrganizing  
Redlining  
AffordableHousing  
Trust  
Eviction  
Overcrowding  
Banking  
BuiltEnvironment  
Revitalization  
HealthyHousing  
Opportunity  
Solidarity  
HousingDiscrimination  
SubstandardHousing  
Rehabilitation  
Land  
Neighborhood  
SlumHousing



“

FRESNO IS THE LAND OF DELAYED MAINTENANCE.  
Leah Simon Helberg, lawyer for tenants together



VERMIN: Gon Northsheth shows a photo of cockroaches he caught in the Sunset Village Apartments and that he shared with his wife and baby.

LIVING IN MISERY: A FRESNO BEE INVESTIGATION

## FRESNO SLUM HOUSING

People living in run-down apartments ignored for too long

BY ANABELLA CASTILLO, BARBARA ANDERSON AND ROSALEA LEE  
aanderson@fresnobee.com

Leah Decubas keeps a tightly rolled pack of 17 mice in his freezer. It's proof of the pests contaminating the three-bedroom apartment in southeast Fresno that he shares with his wife and four children.

When he opens a kitchen cabinet, dozens of cockroaches fly out. Sometimes when the family wakes up at night, they can feel cockroaches tickling the inside of their ears.

The \$650-a-month apartment has other problems: exposed wires, holes in walls, faulty electric outlets, mold.

"We shouldn't be living like this," says Decubas, 47.

This apartment is not an isolated case. Thousands of the city's poorest and most vulnerable people live in substandard and unsafe apartments. They stay silent because they fear being evicted or deported, and they continue to live in misery.

City officials know for decades about problems with low-income housing. Property owners faced few repercussions from a city still reeling from the effects of the Great Recession that slashed deeply into code enforcement. But by refusing to put teeth into inspections and enforcement efforts, the city failed to protect many of its most at-risk citizens.

SEE HOUSING, PAGE 4



MOLD: A tenant at 2061 S. Hayston Ave. said the landlord knew about the black mold problems in the shower but would not do anything about it.



INSECTS: Cockroaches scurry across electronics in a bedroom in the Decubas apartment. The family cleans out the roaches several times a month, but they return.

LIVING IN MISERY: A FRESNO BEE INVESTIGATION

## 'This is our Flint, Michigan'

After Bee investigation, Fresno's substandard housing demands full attention, leaders say



City code enforcement inspector Steve Cox listens to Nacoya Polite with her children, Ethan, 4, and Ben, 1, as they talk about issues in their apartment during an inspection. They're in the living room due to a broken heater. The only heat they have is from an open electric oven.

Investigation by The Bee shines light on run-down, unhealthy apartments

Fresno city manager says there is no turning back on tougher policies

BY BARBARA ANDERSON AND TIM SHEEHAN  
banderson@fresnobee.com, tsheehan@fresnobee.com

Fresno's leaders no longer can ignore the city's substandard housing crisis, community activists and apartment industry executives said Monday.

The extent of slum housing, detailed in a Fresno Bee investigative report called "Living in Misery," should wake up the community, said Sergio Cortes of No More Slumlords, a volunteer advocacy group. "This is our Flint, Michigan," Cortes said. "Instead of a water crisis, this is Fresno's housing crisis."

Substandard housing is a systemic problem in the city, he said, and to address it Fresno residents

need to become engaged with this issue.

Mayor Ashley Swearingin said The Bee's report illustrates the problem of the magnitude of the problem.

"It's very easy for many people to drive past or simply not be aware of the challenges we face" with substandard housing, Swearingin said Monday.

"The more attention that is drawn to the problems of south Fresno and the inner city, the better, and the more momentum we will find to take the steps necessary to bring solutions to bear."

Swearingin emphasized the work a code enforcement task force is doing to develop a program for interior inspections of rental units. "We want it to be fair. We want it to be effective," she said. "We want to get the implementation right."

That is going to require a program that balances the rights and responsibilities of both landlords and their tenants. "If you're on the landlord's side of this, the tenants play a huge role in the deterioration of their property," Swearingin said. "If you're on the tenant advocate side, you hear about how the landlords have dropped the ball. Both are im-

SEE REACTION, 5A

## Heroin dealer links drug scheme to Foster

BY PABLO LOPEZ  
lopez@fresnobee.com

A Clovis man pleaded guilty Monday to conspiring with former Fresno police Deputy Chief Keith Foster to sell heroin - the second defendant to accept a plea deal, but the first to implicate Foster in a widespread drug-trafficking ring.

In announcing his plea, Rafael Guzman Jr. agreed with federal prosecutors that on Dec. 24, 2014, Foster contacted him

"to acquire heroin on behalf of a third party," Guzman then asked Foster what quality of heroin he wanted to purchase.

"The very best," Foster said, according to Guzman's plea agreement in U.S. District Court in Fresno. Guzman told Foster the top grade was "China white" and said he could get it after the holidays.

On Jan. 8, 2015, Guzman told Foster that "it's a green light." Five days later, Guzman told Foster that he needed someone to pick up the heroin for him, and "Keith Foster said he and the defendant should meet and talk in person," the plea agreement says.

"On February 2, 2015, Keith Foster contacted the third party for whom he was acquiring the heroin," the plea agreement says. "He/She told Keith Foster the heroin was no longer needed because someone else sold it cheaper than the price Keith Foster was offering to sell the heroin."

Foster denies taking part in any drug dealing, says his attorney, and has pleaded not guilty to the allegations.

As part of his plea agreement, Guzman, 42, waived his right to a jury trial and right to appeal his pending sentence, which ranges from 46 to 57 months, said Fresno defense lawyer Sal Sciandra, who represents Guzman.

But Sciandra made it clear in court Monday that Guzman will not testify against Foster or any other defendant.

"He's concerned," Sciandra told Judge Anthony Ishii, without elaborating.

In accepting the guilty plea,

SEE GUZMAN, 10A

“

STANDARD HOUSING HAS BEEN 40 YEARS IN THE MAKING, BUT WE'RE GOING TO FIX THIS.

Bruce Ridd,  
Fresno city manager

ONLINE

Entire project online with videos, more photos, interactive graphics. A survey and a renters' rights checklist at [www.fresnobee.com/housing](http://www.fresnobee.com/housing).

ENTIRE PROJECT ONLINE WITH VIDEOS, MORE PHOTOS, INTERACTIVE GRAPHICS, A SURVEY AND A RENTERS' RIGHTS CHECKLIST AT [WWW.FRESNOBEE.COM/HOUSING](http://WWW.FRESNOBEE.COM/HOUSING)

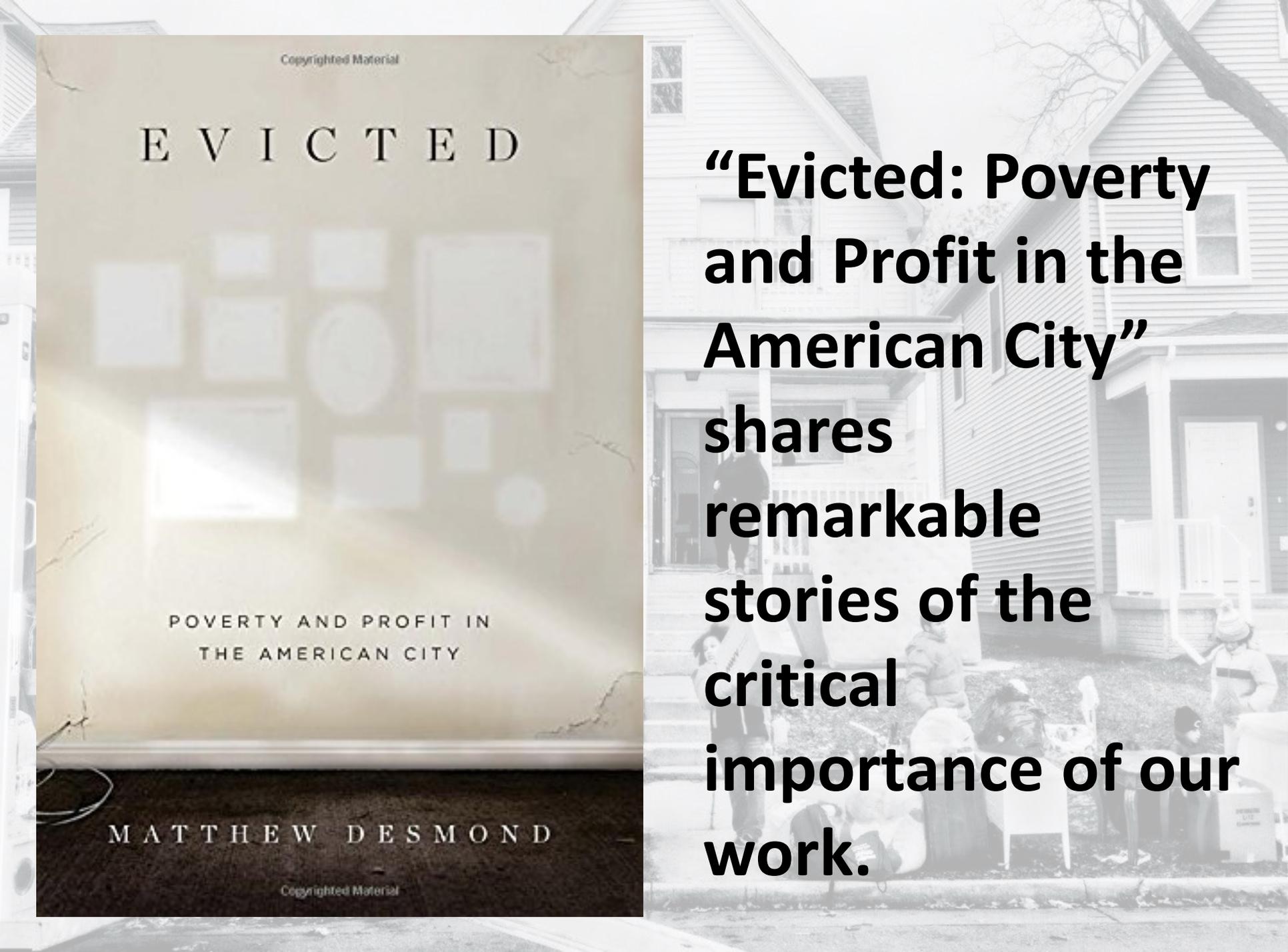
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# EVICTED

POVERTY AND PROFIT IN  
THE AMERICAN CITY

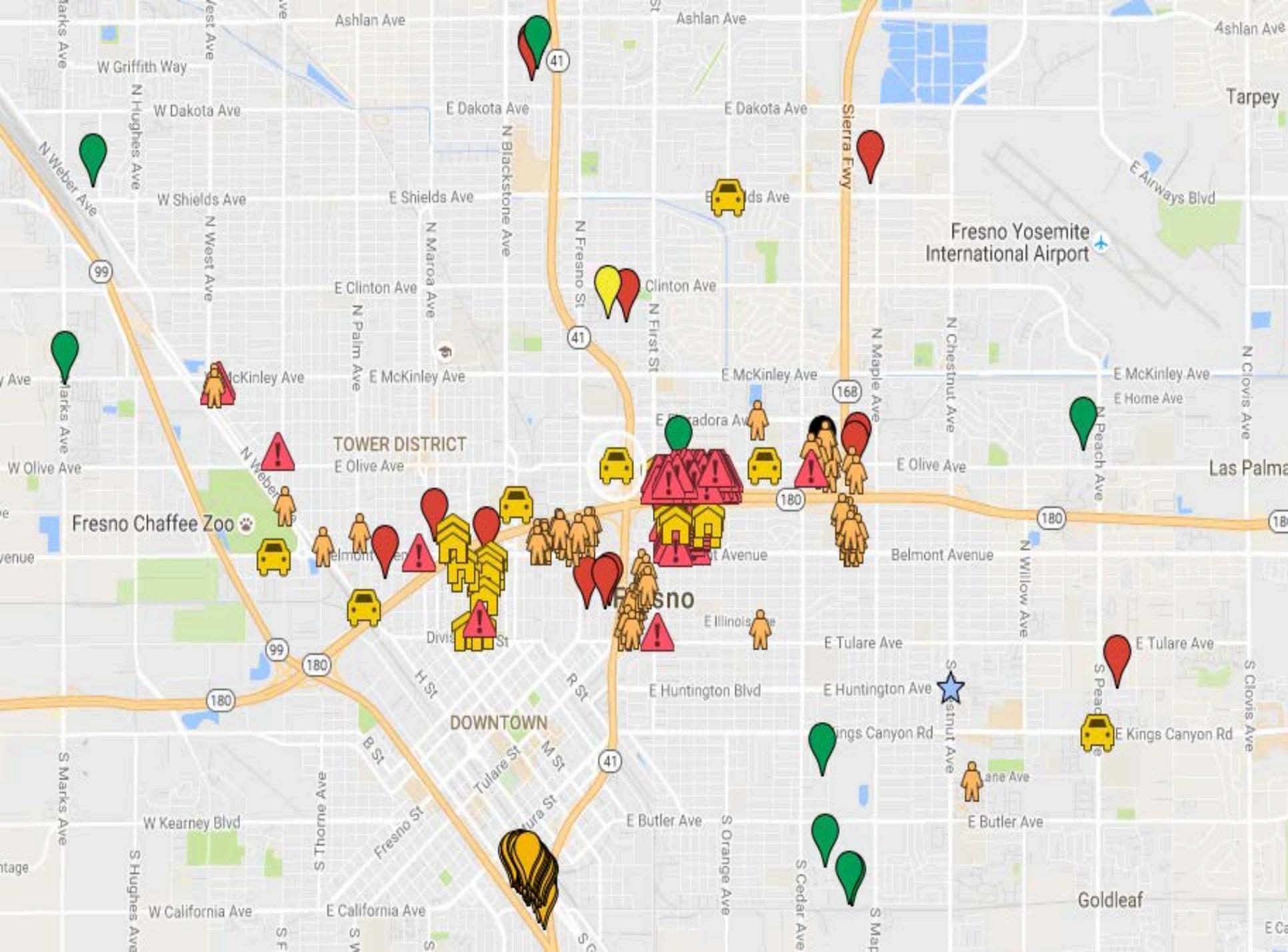
MATTHEW DESMOND

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**“Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City” shares remarkable stories of the critical importance of our work.**

If you want to  
understand **poverty**,  
**walk alongside**  
people who are  
living in poverty.



Fresno Yosemite International Airport

Fresno Chaffee Zoo

TOWER DISTRICT

DOWNTOWN

Fresno

Las Palmas

Goldleaf

99

41

168

180

180

180

41

S

180

E Ca

# WITHOUT STABLE SHELTER, EVERYTHING ELSE FALLS APART

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First you get evicted. Then your stuff is tossed to the curb.  
Your children must move schools. You lose your housing assistance  
and job. Landlords in good neighborhoods won't rent to you.  
You grow depressed and unable to cope.

#EVICTED BY MATTHEW DESMOND  
GET INVOLVED: [JUSTSHELTER.ORG](http://JUSTSHELTER.ORG)

CROWN



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MIGRANT FARMWORKERS IN THE UNITED STATES

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By the winner of the 2014 MARGARET MEAD AWARD

SETH M. HOLMES, PhD, MD  
With a foreword by Philippe Bourgois



*Fresh Fruit,  
Broken Bodies*  
bears witness to  
the everyday  
lives, suffering  
and resistance  
of Mexican  
migrants.

# FOR MANY, EVICTION IS ALMOST INEVITABLE

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## **The typical low-income family:**

... gets no government housing assistance.

... is forced into private housing market.

... spends at least 50% of what they have on rent/utilities.

#EVICTED BY MATTHEW DESMOND  
GET INVOLVED: JUSTSHELTER.ORG

CROWN

# The Public Gaze

— especially that of the wealthy public who shop at elite grocery stores and live in exclusive neighborhoods— is trained away and spatially distanced from the migrant farmworkers.



- My Data
- Demographics
- Incomes & Spending
- Housing
- Lending
- Quality of Life
- Economy
- Education

★ Estimated percent of all people who were of a race other than White between 2010-2014. ▼

**DATA LAYER**

Percent Non-White Population  
Source: Census

Year: 2014

Variable: Percent

Shaded by: Census Tract, 2010

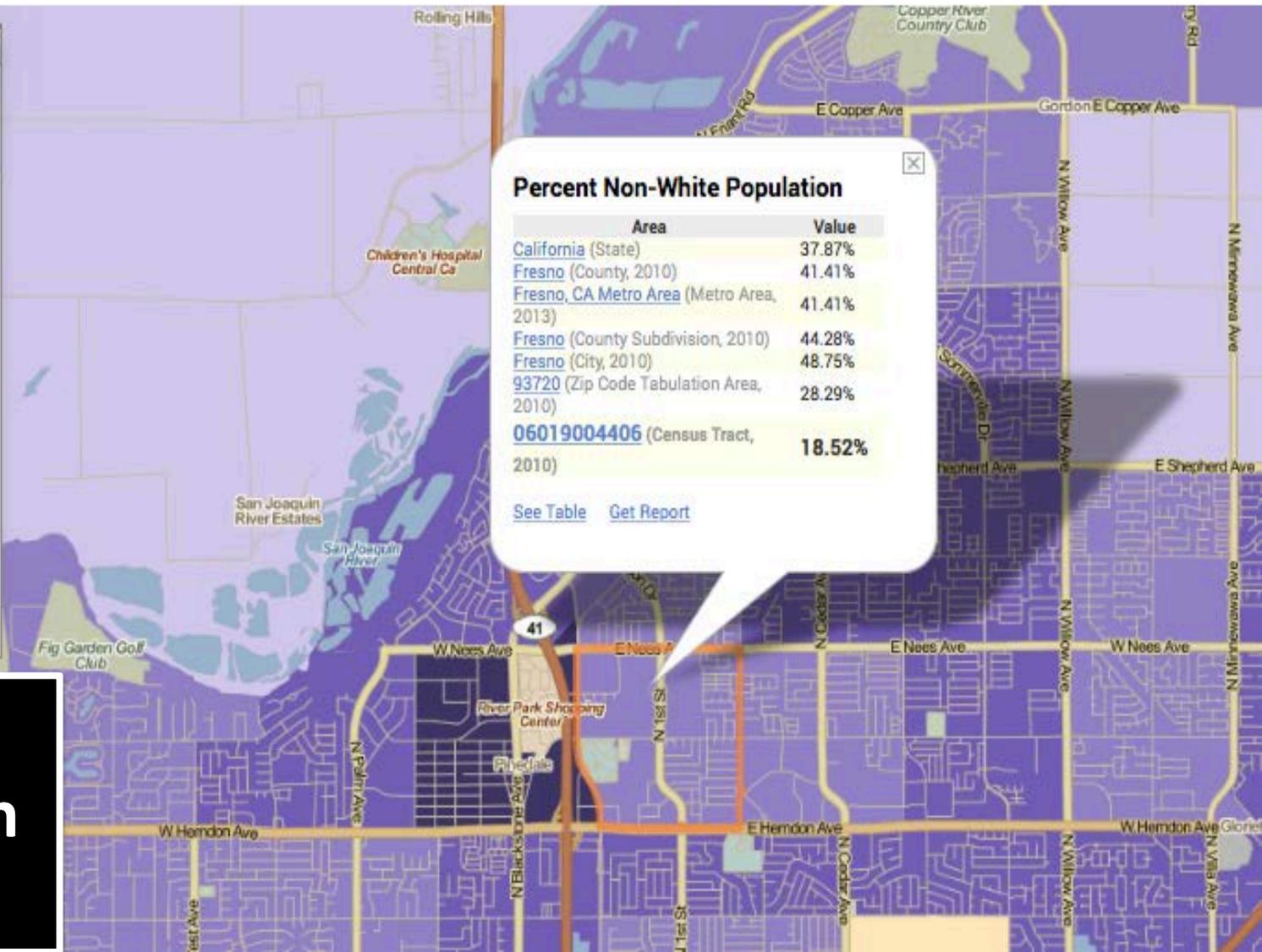
EDIT: COLORS- RANGES-

Insufficient Data
5.68% or less
5.69% - 13.11%
13.12% - 24.35%
24.36% - 44.97%
44.98% or more

**Percent Non-White Population**

Area	Value
California (State)	37.87%
Fresno (County, 2010)	41.41%
Fresno, CA Metro Area (Metro Area, 2013)	41.41%
Fresno (County Subdivision, 2010)	44.28%
Fresno (City, 2010)	48.75%
93720 (Zip Code Tabulation Area, 2010)	28.29%
<b>06019004406 (Census Tract, 2010)</b>	<b>18.52%</b>

[See Table](#) [Get Report](#)



**80%  
Population  
is White**

☆ Estimated typical (median) income of a renter occupied household between 2010-2014. ▾

**DATA LAYER**

Median Renter Occupied Income  
Source: Census

Year: 2014

Variable: Median

Shaded by: Census Tract, 2010

EDIT: COLORS ▾ RANGES ▾

- Insufficient Data
- \$22,218 or less
- \$22,219 - \$29,602
- \$29,603 - \$37,500
- \$37,501 - \$50,767
- \$50,768 or more

**Median Renter Occupied Income**

Area	Value
California (State)	\$41,358
Fresno (County, 2010)	\$28,722
Fresno, CA Metro Area (Metro Area, 2013)	\$28,722
Fresno (County Subdivision, 2010)	\$28,982
Fresno (City, 2010)	\$27,363
93720 (Zip Code Tabulation Area, 2010)	\$54,872
<b>06019004406 (Census Tract, 2010)</b>	<b>\$45,700</b>

[See Table](#) [Get Report](#)

**\$46k Median Renter Income**



Estimated percent of all renters who are severely cost burdened between 2010-2014. ▾

**DATA LAYER**

Percent of Renters who are Severely Burdened  
Source: Census

Year: 2014

Variable: Percent

Shaded by: Census Tract, 2010

EDIT: COLORS ▾ RANGES ▾

Insufficient Data
12.38% or less
12.39% - 19.24%
19.25% - 25.52%
25.53% - 33.27%
33.28% or more

**Percent of Renters who are Severely Burdened**

Area	Value
California (State)	28.5%
Fresno (County, 2010)	30.48%
Fresno, CA Metro Area (Metro Area, 2013)	30.48%
Fresno (County Subdivision, 2010)	32.58%
Fresno (City, 2010)	34.16%
93720 (Zip Code Tabulation Area, 2010)	25.59%
<b>06019004406 (Census Tract, 2010)</b>	<b>17.29%</b>

[See Table](#) [Get Report](#)

**17% Renters Severely Cost Burden**

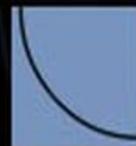
# The Public Gaze

“For the world in which I live and the people I live with and surround myself with, the thing that **frightens** me most is that [Mexican migrant workers] don't exist. They're totally off our radar. **They just don't exist**. It's more likely we would get involved with a child in Acapulco in an orphanage because it is more glitzy or, I don't know, **less scary** than finding out that there are **people five miles away** that I could be interested in.”



# UNNATURAL CAUSES

...is inequality making us sick?

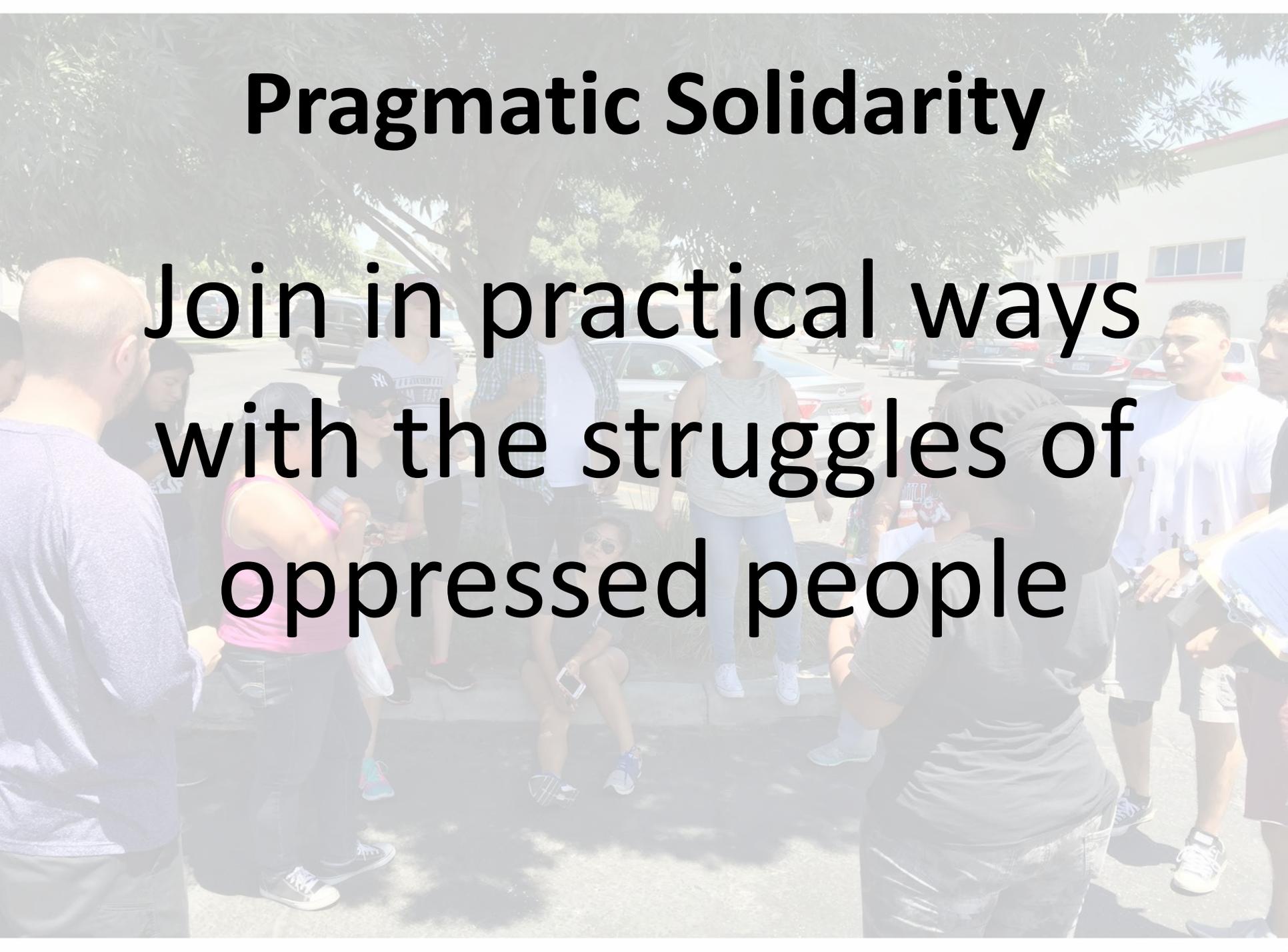


CALIFORNIA  
NEWSREEL

[www.newsreel.org](http://www.newsreel.org)

# Pragmatic Solidarity

Join in practical ways  
with the struggles of  
oppressed people



If it's created for  
us, but without us  
then it's not really  
for us.

# The Root of The Problem



**“Never forget the root.”**

LET YOUR HEART BREAK  
CRY YOUR EYES OUT  
WALK ALONGSIDE FAMILIES  
BELIEVE THEIR STORIES  
SHARE THEIR STORIES  
MAKE ROOM FOR THEM TO  
SHARE THEIR OWN STORIES

SUPPORT ROUTINE INTERIOR INSPECTIONS