



RTCNYC Tool 10.7

## Interview Guide for Tenant Profiles

*During the Right to Counsel Campaign in New York City, we often used our social media channels to amplify tenant member voices and stories by creating profiles of impacted tenants. This tool contains a sample interview guide to help you organize tenants' stories, guidelines for protecting their identities, and samples of how we used these profiles for our website, Twitter and Facebook.*

### Before the Interview

*You will want to obtain permission from the tenant on what personal information they are comfortable revealing. For example, some tenant profiles on our website have names, pictures, and the borough the tenant lives in, while others do not. It is important to note and respect their privacy. You may want to develop a consent form so that tenants understand how their interviews will be used.*

*[Here](#) are some helpful tips for preparing for interviews from the Research for Organizing Toolkit.*

### During the Interview - Interview Guide

Interview ID: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Section I: Introduction**

- *Please state your name and age (if the tenant has expressed permission to share this information).*
- *Where you live and how long you have lived there.*

#### **Section II: Your Story**

- *How has living in your building changed over time?*
- *Have you ever been taken to court by your landlord?*
  - *Please describe the circumstances that lead to you being taken to court.*
  - *How did being taken to court by your landlord make you feel?*
- *Did your landlord bring an attorney to court? How do you think this affected your case?*
- *What was the outcome of the case?*

#### **Section III: Why RTC Needs to be Implemented**


- *Did you have an attorney to represent you in court?*
  - *If yes: How did having an attorney help your case?*
  - *If no: How do you think your experience in court would have been different if you had an attorney?*



## After the Interview

Here are some sample tenant profiles we created and shared using various social media platforms. We used Canva to create these profiles. You will notice that some of these are simply pulled quotes, which we found more suitable for platforms such as Twitter, and some are longer form, more suitable for Facebook. Note that some profiles have pictures of the interviewee and some do not, and some have names and others do not; again, it is important to check in with tenants and make sure we are prioritizing their privacy.

**Carmen Vega-Rivera, Southwest Bronx resident since 1981**



When a new landlord bought her building, Carmen saw conditions deteriorate. **Heat and hot water were cut off for months.**

Carmen organized her neighbors to demand repairs and her **landlord sued her multiple times to stop her organizing.**

**She represented herself in court for many years** before securing free legal assistance in 2012.

A lawyer allowed her the freedom to keep fighting **knowing someone had her back** and knows the legal system.

**We need a Right to Counsel today** to level the playing field for all New Yorkers!

#RTCNYC #Intro214




Facing numerous medical conditions including cancer, a formerly homeless tenant was hospitalized and missed days of work. She paid for some medications out of pocket and fell behind in rent.

She could pay for her rent moving forward but struggled to catch up on the arrears she had accrued.

With no available legal services, she had to go back and forth to housing court for months—a daunting process that exacerbated her frail condition. A lawyer could have minimized the time she was in court and the resulting toll on her health.

– 58 year old, Bronx resident  
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**Marta Sabio, 73 year old Queens resident**


Marta has been living at her Harman Street apartment for 24 years. Her landlord wanted to evict her so he sued her claiming she owed him money even though she did not.

She had never been in court and was very nervous and wasn't sure if the landlord would be able to evict her. She went to court multiple times because the landlord's attorney adjourned the case over and over again to scare her.

With an attorney, Marta was able to stay in her apartment and she believes that everyone should have a right to an attorney to offset the abuse of landlords.

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**Randy Dillard, Southwest Bronx 60 year old single dad of 5**



**“ Having a lawyer in housing court was the difference between winning my case and living in a shelter. ”**

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