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Video documents homeless takeover

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To the editor:

In May of 1990 the National Union of the Homeless coordinated takeovers of vacant housing in several U.S. cities. In Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, Detroit, Oakland, Phoenix, Minneapolis, and Los Angeles, homeless people were standing up and speaking out against homelessness as well as the red tape and lies propagated by government agencies such as the Department of Housing and Urban Development and local housing authorities.

After the Housing Now! march on Washington, D.C., in 1989, the National Union of the Homeless met with Jack Kemp (then Secretary of HUD) to talk about the severe problem of homelessness and what HUD was going to do to help solve it. Kemp responded by promising that 10% of HUD's vacant housing stock would be turned over to homeless people in the coming year. Larger amounts of vacant housing would be turned over to the homeless in following years. Unfortunately, Jack Kemp and HUD did not keep this promise. In order to try to meet the emergency need for housing as well as show the hypocrisy of HUD, poor and homeless people started to take these houses.

These events are documented in the video TAKEOVER which will be shown Wednesday, April 14, at 7 pm in the Griffith Film Theater. Following this presentation, Diane Johnson, the President of the Delaware Valley Union of the Homeless will speak. Diane helped coordinate the Philadelphia takeovers and played a vital role in getting Dignity Housing, housing for formerly homeless people, started in Philadelphia. Diane still works tirelessly for economic justice, organizing on the streets and in the shelters of Philadelphia.

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Trinity '94

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