

# Housing and Racial Justice Commendation

## Awarded to Omari al-Qadaffi

Whereas the United States is currently experiencing a crisis of housing affordability in which there are only 37 affordable rental homes for every 100 extremely low-income renter households, in which the average wage needed to afford a most one-bedroom apartment is \$21.22—more than the wage earned by a full-time worker at the fiftieth percentile U.S. wage, in which over 20 million of the nation’s 43 million renter households must pay more than the recommended 30 percent of income toward housing, and in which there is no state, metropolitan area, or county within the U.S. where worker earning the minimum wage can afford a modest 2-bedroom apartment working a standard 40-hour work week and can afford a one-bedroom apartment in only seven percent of U.S. counties;

Whereas the impacts of this affordable housing crisis disproportionately affect people and communities of color, due to historical and ongoing discriminatory housing practices that have diminished home ownership opportunities for BIPOC households, that have caused BIPOC households to have lower incomes and less wealth than their white counterparts, that have rendered BIPOC households more vulnerable both to economic and health impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, and that have seen BIPOC renters, especially African-American women, evicted from rental homes at rates much larger than any other demographic;

Whereas the City of Richmond, Virginia, has seen an inordinately large number of eviction cases, being listed by the Eviction Lab as the city with the second-highest eviction rate (11.44 percent) in the United States before the Covid-19 pandemic—a rate more than double the statewide average—with African-American tenants disproportionately sued for eviction in those cases;

Whereas the United States has faced the threat of mass evictions since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic with experts predicting as between 19 to 23 million evictions affecting from 30 million to 40 million tenants;

Whereas Omari al-Qadaffi is one of the most accomplished, high-impact community organizers in the Commonwealth of Virginia, whose past achievements have included leading a grassroots movement forcing the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority to establish an eviction moratorium for non-payment of rent cases in 2019, organizing a mutual aid effort to help hundreds of public housing tenants obtain hot meals, space heaters, and weatherizing materials when their heat went out in the middle of winter 2018, bringing a civil rights complaint against the Richmond transit system for making changes that negatively affected low-income communities of color, founding the Food Justice Alliance in 2017 which, among other projects, runs a community garden and a farmers’ market in two of Richmond’s largest public housing complexes, testifying before the Virginia General Assembly on numerous tenant protection bills including a requirement that public housing authorities provide notice to their residents before demolishing subsidized housing communities, and special protections that have kept Virginia families

housed throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. These achievements are on top of his daily work of talking with Virginia tenants, engaging in tenants' rights education, facilitating public housing residents' participation in housing authority meetings, working with legal aid attorneys to prevent eviction, voucher termination, and housing discrimination,

Whereas the mission of the National Housing Law Project is to advance housing justice for poor people and communities, and that we achieve this by strengthening and enforcing the rights of tenants, increasing housing opportunities for underserved communities, and preserving and expanding the nation's supply of safe and affordable homes;

Whereas the National Housing Law Project is committed to an environment of inclusion and equitable opportunity and believes that access to safe, decent, and affordable housing is a fundamental human right that should be enjoyed by everyone;

Today the National Housing Law Project hereby recognizes Omari al-Qadaffi with this special commendation for his courageous and sustained work on behalf of tenants and communities of color and for his unflagging advocacy for housing and racial justice.

Awarded this 22nd day of September 2021,



Shamus Roller  
Executive Director