

DISCUSSION GUIDE ON
COMMUNITY ISSUES

Alejandria Fights Back! ¡La lucha de Alejandria!

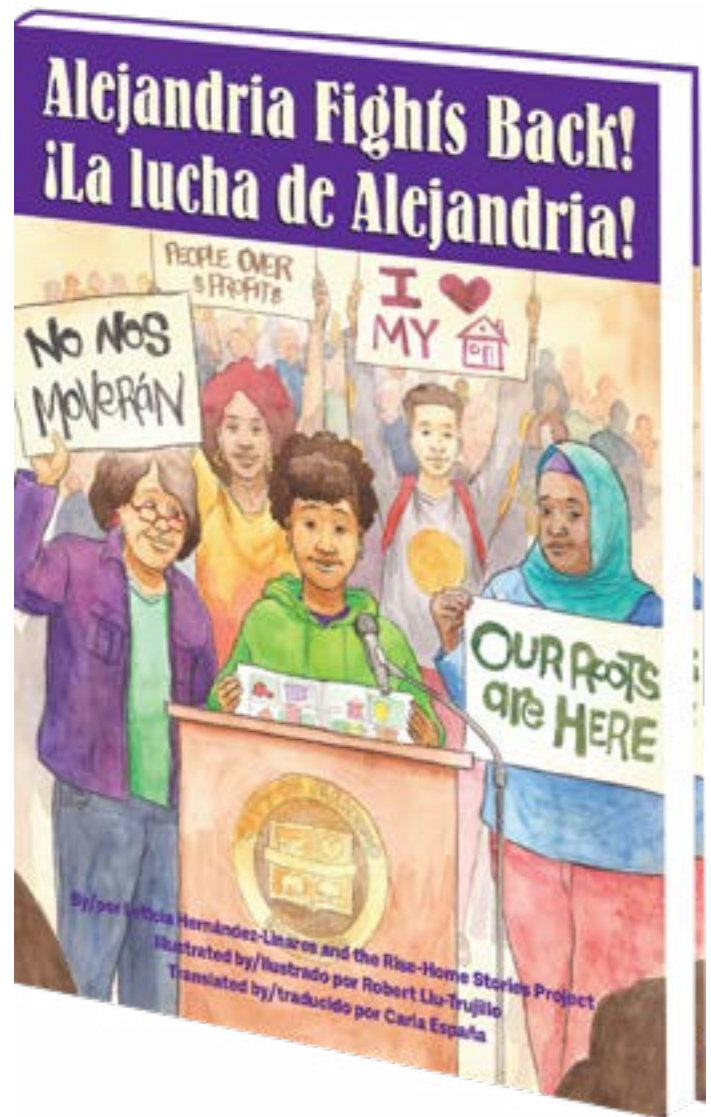
By Leticia Hernández-Linares
and the Rise-Home Stories Project

Illustrated by Robert Liu-Trujillo

Translated by Carla España

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DEAR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS,

We are thrilled you are reading *Alejandria Fights Back! ¡La lucha de Alejandria!* with your families and in your community spaces. In this guide, you will find ways to talk about housing justice with children and engage the community in a discussion of the book and connections with community issues. We encourage you to use this book in different settings, from one-on-one family meetings to community-wide town hall gatherings. You can visit alejandriafightsback.com for more resources.

CREATING COMMUNITY

In Alejandria Fights Back! / ¡La lucha de Alejandria!

Book Cover Conversation

1. What does the illustration on the book cover tell us about the community in this book? What do these community members value?
2. What feelings, images, or memories come to mind as we see a young child take the podium to speak at this meeting?

In your family

Alejandria says “Home isn’t just our apartment—it’s the whole neighborhood” (p. 4). We learn about the people in her family and in the community that are special to her. Consider the people that make up your family and community. Who are they? What significance do they have in your life? How are you all connected? How can those family and community bonds be strengthened?

Alejandria tells us about people and places she likes to draw from her neighborhood (p. 4). Take a community walk as a family and discuss the different places that have a special meaning to you. Are there people and places you would like to get to know better? How can you create new connections to these places as a family?



CREATING COMMUNITY, CONTINUED

In your community

1. Who makes up our community? What can we do to get to know our community better?
2. What do we value in our community? How do we show this?
3. Who has a say in local issues and community change? How are young people involved in our community?

Resources

1. **Creating Community**—You'll find ways to connect to others and consider where people are coming from, how they are feeling, and what they need from a community in this read aloud of *The Day You Begin*, by author Jacqueline Woodson, available on the Netflix Bookmarks: Celebrating Black Voices.
2. **Community Cares**—The “Awesome Alaskan Kids” clips on PBS Kids Molly of Denali website features children in their communities. For example, the clip of this child in Kodiak, Alaska shows how the child uses art to express themselves and later march in their community.
3. **Community Change**—Watch this seven minute video, “Gentrification Explained” by the Urban Displacement Project. It is best for adolescents but can be viewed by middle grade children with adult support.
4. **Community Survival**—Watch the Rise-Home Stories Project animated series, *Mine*.



INFORMING OURSELVES ON HOUSING INJUSTICE

In Alejandria Fights Back! / ¡La lucha de Alejandria!

Following Alejandria's Learning Journey

1. Tita says “Ay, look at this. Another ‘For Sale’ sign!” and Ms. Beatrice, from the bakery, says “There’s a new one every other day” (p. 9). What does Alejandria learn about the changes happening in her neighborhood from her neighbors and family?

In your family

1. Mami says “We’ll do what we have to do to survive. But this isn’t something you should worry about” (p. 15). What does Alejandria learn about Mami’s concerns? What are our concerns as a family? Do we talk about them? How can we communicate our concerns?
2. Through both Mami and Tita’s words, we learn about their experience with injustice. What stories does our family have about injustice and resistance? What is our understanding of how families are impacted by housing injustice? Do we have family stories or experiences like those of Alejandria and her family? If so, how do those make us feel?



INFORMING OURSELVES ON HOUSING INJUSTICE, CONTINUED

In your community

1. Tita and Alejandria go to their local library to search for “tenants’ rights” online (p. 21). What questions do you have about tenants, landlords, and tenants’ rights?
2. What historic conditions or changes impact housing opportunities for families in a community?
3. How does housing insecurity change a community?

Resources

1. **[Impact of Housing Injustice on Children](#)**—See the “Housing is a Racial Justice Crisis: Solutions for Children and Families During COVID and Beyond” by the Children’s Defense Fund. Also, see **[“Housing Discrimination Under the Fair Housing Act”](#)** on the US Department of Housing and Urban Development site. The Urban Displacement Project site has maps on gentrification and displacement for several cities including Atlanta, Austin, the Bay Area, Bogotá, Chicago, London, Los Angeles, New York, and Manila. See “The Eviction Machine and Impact on Everyday People” graphic and speech by Minnie Kim at a press conference with Buffalo’s People for Sustainable Housing (PUSH).
2. Talking About Housing Justice with Children—**[DC-area youth share their learning](#)**.
3. **[Rise-Home Stories Project Dot’s Home](#)**, is a single-player game where we learn through the experience of Dorothea Hawkins, Dot, who travels through time to her grandmother’s home.



RESISTANCE AND TAKING ACTION AGAINST INJUSTICE

In Alejandria Fights Back! / ¡La lucha de Alejandria!

Tita and Alejandria learn that the company that owns their building is also trying to kick people out of other buildings in the neighborhood. Discuss the different ways Alejandria and her community fight back. For example:

1. Some families help one another get information at libraries and community members help others get resources, such as a librarian (p. 20).
2. Some community members share their knowledge of community history, tenants' rights, and strategies for resisting injustice, such as the community organizer. The community organizer recommends that they get their neighbors together "and fight as a group" (p. 25).
3. Alejandria and Tita go door to door in their neighborhood, handing out flyers with information on a tenants' meeting at City Hall (p. 28).
4. Some community members make signs with messages such as "People Over Profit\$"; "No nos moverán"; "Our Roots are Here" and "I love my home" (p. 35).
5. Some community members speak at community meetings, such as Alejandria (p. 34).



RESISTANCE AND TAKING ACTION AGAINST INJUSTICE, CONTINUED

In your family

Revisit some of the moments between Mami and Alejandria to launch family conversations.

1. Mami shows up to the City Hall meeting on tenants' rights and is very proud of Alejandria (pages 34–36). Mami apologizes to Ale and says “I focus on work and worry a lot because it’s hard to be an immigrant. Not everyone likes us” (p. 36). Recall your earlier conversation on concerns in this book and in your own family. Discuss the challenges that different groups of people face, in this case, an immigrant family facing housing injustice.
2. At the neighborhood potluck, Mami thanks Alejandria and Alejandria asks why. Mami responds, “For showing me that if we speak up, we can change things” (p. 43). Have a conversation about people that come to mind who have spoken up and changed things. What was their message? How did change happen? What are some issues that you can speak up about as a family when injustice occurs?

In your community

Discuss the different ways we can each take action against injustice in our community.

1. Can I use my voice to speak against injustices happening in the community? What will I say? Where can I share it?
2. Can I help others get resources? Can I gather a list of digital resources for different groups? Can I create a list of texts for a class, a school library, a community group? Can I collaborate with a local librarian to support families looking for information?



RESISTANCE AND TAKING ACTION AGAINST INJUSTICE, CONTINUED

3. Who are the community organizers in our community? How can we get to know them and their work? How can we help them share their knowledge with families that have questions and concerns about sharing what is happening to them and others in the community?
4. Can I create informational flyers to inform the community? What information do I need? How will I get these flyers to community members?
5. Can I help create graphics with important information? What information do I need to create these (phrases, upcoming event details, ideas for images)? What tools can I use to create my graphics?

Resources

1. **Example of a list of resources**—This “Gentrification 101” list includes video clips, linked readings and organizations.
2. **Community Organizing**—See the case studies, practices, and tools on this expansive list of resources available on the Racial Equity Tools site for community organizing.
3. Housing Injustice **flyer, graphics** or **petition** Samples—See the Right to Counsel NYC Coalition and Housing Justice for All, Rent Strike Toolkit with the “Met Council on Housing Hotline Flyer” (on p. 31). City Life/ Vida Urbana in Massachusetts shares petitions that are helpful to see how to word demands. See the graphics used by the Housing Justice League in Atlanta, Georgia for examples on how to create impacting graphics.
4. Using Art to Respond to Housing Injustice—
 - a. Chicago: The **Peeling off the Grey** exhibition at the National Museum of Mexican Art addressed gentrification in Pilsen, Chicago. **In Focus: The Chicago Freedom Movement & The Fight for Fair Housing** at the Elmhurst Art Museum has videos, interviews, and photography.
 - b. New York City: **Tracing the Legacy of Housing Discrimination in New York City** at the Museum of the City of New York is a resource sheet.
5. Speaking Out Against Housing Injustice—**Watch this video clip** and read the demands of youth from the Kite’s Nest organization at a housing justice rally in New York City.





This community guide was created by Carla España and the Rise-Home Stories Project.

CARLA ESPAÑA is a middle grade teacher, literacy consultant, researcher, author, and co-founder of the En Comunidad Collective. Her love of stories and teaching comes from her roots in Chile and has been nurtured by hundreds of teachers and students across schools in New York City and beyond. She is the co-author of *En Comunidad: Lessons for Centering the Voices and Experiences of Bilingual Latinx Students*.

THE RISE-HOME STORIES PROJECT is a groundbreaking collaboration between multimedia storytellers and social justice advocates from several grassroots organizations who work at the nexus of housing, land, and racial justice in the US. They came together in 2018 to reimagine the past, present, and future of communities by transforming the stories we tell about land and home.

