



Spanish housing activists from the documentary "Segregation Nation." The film will be screened Aug. 2 at the NW Film Festival.

IMAGE COURTESY OF BILL BROWN AND SABINE GRUFFAT

20,000 people, live there. It's this little village that was way out of the loop. The folks who were occupying what looked like a small housing development or condo development. The local politics seemed pretty right wing. The local city council supported the PP (Partido Popular), the right wing party that was in power nationally. So the local city council had zero sympathy and were not interested at all in what the occupiers were doing and were really upset with the occupiers. This particular group of occupiers were these working-class women, for the most part it was women.

They let themselves in and they brought their families into this space. What's interesting about these places is the power and the plumbing was still connected because these were developments that were meant to be occupied.

The local city council, they cut the power, and that didn't get the folks out. And then they cut the water and that still didn't get the folks out. They were living in increasingly difficult situations. But the dignity of these folks – these young mothers were determined to give their children, their families, a life that was sort of a proper, middle-class kind of life.

They were keeping these abandoned, unoccupied buildings incredibly clean. They had adopted this place as their home and they really treated it like their home. No matter how bad the situation got, no matter what the city council threw at them, they were still determined to live as normal a life as they could.

They were interested in having us film them. At a certain point we said, "What do you want to do when we turn the cameras on? It's totally up to you." They said, "Why don't you film us cleaning the house?" We just started filming them as they're sweeping, tidying up the furniture and propping up the pillows on the beds. They wanted the world to see them as normal people, good mothers, good housekeepers living normal lives in this extraordinary situation. It was really moving. It was beautiful in this way.

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we all share as citizens in terms of the right to housing and the right to public space. It was a very different scene in Spain because of that. It did make me despair a little bit about the United States and the much more militaristic, much more aggressive, response to activists in this country.

**J.P.:** *Is there anyone standing up for the homeless there? Anyone in the nonprofit, for-profit or public sectors? Do they have any advocates on their side?*

**S.G.:** There's an organization called PAH, Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca.

It's a nonprofit, a really great network of activists across Spain. There would be a PAH office in all the different cities. And they worked together to help people who were having issues with banks. We interviewed quite a few of the network of PAH representatives in the film. They would look at people's mortgage contracts and say "The bank is not allowed to do this." They had lawyers on hand that people could meet with. They had a lot of documentation to help people. The banks were sometimes committing fraud but also giving them documents that were illegal, forcing them to make payments that they weren't necessarily required to make.

These lawyers were on hand to kind of fight back, to fight with the banks about individual mortgages. That was very helpful. They would also be the ones that would stage the sit-ins at the evictions.

**J.P.:** *Were there any particular family or individual stories that stuck out to you as being a particularly egregious injustice when they lost their home?*

**S.G.:** When we were in Seville in the southern part of Spain, some of the activists we were working with let us know about a little village that was maybe 50 kilometers away called Bollullos. I don't know how many people, maybe 10,000,

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