

**WATERS, from page 4**

they're going to have the Clippers moving in as well. They will have not only the sports arena but concerts, too.

Because of that economic growth, the landlords can see that it is becoming a very desirable place to live, and they're increasing the rent. And we have people on fixed income who don't have any additional money to pay for rent, so they are basically evicting folks. The eviction issue is becoming a big issue in this country because of gentrification.

**R.B.:** *What hurdles do you see us approaching as we invest more and try to produce more permanent housing?*

**M.W.:** We have been slow in really producing the dollars that are needed to deal with producing this permanent housing. I introduced a piece of legislation called "Ending Homelessness," and it calls for \$13.8 billion. We did that knowing it would be extremely difficult. But at some point, you have to say what it's going to cost and what's the amount of resources that it's going to take.

Will we get that done with Ben Carson in HUD and this president in the White House? That's going to set us back. They're not really interested in helping poor people. Ben Carson's philosophy in general is that if you're poor, you're responsible for it; it's not the government's responsibility. So, one of the main focuses that we must have is changing this administration and fighting to resist this president for all the reasons that you know: He's a liar. He's a crook. He's a con man. He's not a friend to poor people. He's not a friend to the average person.

When you talk about homelessness and what can be done, the first thing we have to recognize is it's going to cost money. And the United States must be responsible for allocating the dollars that are needed, not only for the building of low-income housing, but the supportive services and the permanency that you're talking about. It's going to take a real commitment from people who care about it. I think what has happened is, even with the Democrats, they didn't move fast enough or recognize this problem in a way that made them really dedicate more resources to it.

The Republicans have talked about keeping down the cost of the budget, and whenever you talk about helping poor people and allocating money, they start to talk about how the government should reduce the amount of money that it spends and that it shouldn't cost the taxpayers to have to spend more money, and on and on and on. But we have seen, just since (Trump)'s been here, that the way they have done the budget and the way that they have done tax reform, they've created a bigger deficit themselves! So, when you go back to look at what they have said and what they have actually done, you can see that they were just liars. When they got in charge, they spent the money. Democrats should've done it, too. We should've spent way more money and pushed harder to get more money for the resources that are needed for poor people and for homelessness.

So, I do believe when we take back this government — and we're gonna do it — that there will be a great emphasis on homelessness and spending the money that's necessary to create more (housing)



PHOTO BY RODNEY CHOICE

*Street Sense Media vendor Reginald Black interviews United States Representative Maxine Waters.*

units. We've got to do several things: We've got to maintain public housing, and we've got to invest the money in public housing to fix it up and to make it safe, secure and livable. We cannot let anybody turn that into privatization. We've got to change the policies that basically kick people out of public housing simply because they think you've been in violation with drugs or that you have a background where you've been in prison or jail. I think we've got to change those policies and we've got to be more understanding and more lenient. And we've got to have more counseling and supportive services. The only way that we're gonna get this stuff done is if progressive-thinking legislators, who really care about people having a decent and safe place to live, are willing to step up to the plate, step outside of the box, fight for the money and not be ashamed to do it.

**R.B.:** *What has gotten in the way of passing your Ending Homelessness Act? Has any other legislation taken ideas from your bill or piggy-backed on it?*

**M.W.:** Not really, no. We were fortunate that we didn't get a reduction in the budget this time. We were worried about that, because this administration was so focused on money for defense. This administration is not gonna do anything to substantially increase the resources that are needed in order to create more (housing) units and to have supportive services and permanency. I think the best thing that we could do now is try to make our shelters work a little bit better.

If people are on the street in tents and what have you, we've got to provide some security. Women who are out there, who can't find a bed for the night, they must have some protection. (Not like) what they do in L.A., gathering up people's things and throwing them away and talking about keeping the streets clean.

Some of that police power needs to be used to help people be more secure so they can sleep at least at night and not have fear of rape or robbery. Too much of that goes on in our homeless community because there are people who do nothing but take advantage. We have (drug dealers) in Los Angeles who only want to know whether or

not people are on general welfare, so they can get some of that money by peddling drugs to them. And many of our people who are on the streets will spend some of that money to buy drugs because of hopelessness.

If every community had (specialists) assigned to help them get hooked up with real health care, mental health care, jobs, training, all of that — just dedicated to that section — maybe a few hundred people — it'd be wonderful! But even with some of the resources, elected officials aren't always as wise as you think they are. Sometimes the homeless people need to tell elected officials what they think is needed in order to not only help them in the situation that they're in, but to help them get out of that situation.

**R.B.:** *How can we, as a nation, reflect the value of housing being a human right?*

**M.W.:** We have to elect officials who care about it. Voting is extremely important. This election in 2018 is very important to take back the Congress of the United States, and homeless people have got to get registered to vote. As a matter of fact, the Democratic Party should be putting some money into homeless individuals getting registered to vote.

**R.B.:** *I hear a lot from public housing residents that the agencies can't conduct quality repairs on public housing in a timely manner. Some residents don't even go to complain because they think if their house is in disrepair, then they'll be put out. Do you think there is a solution to the issues of repairs and maintenance in public housing?*

**M.W.:** That takes some community action. We've been through this in Los Angeles. When we got some money for repairs and renovation, we got the young people who wanted jobs and said, "If they can't work, nobody can work." (Before that), developers would bring in their own (workers) from better-off counties. So we said, "No more of that. Don't come in here bringing developers from far and wide to make the money and take it back out of the community."

As a matter of fact, I have two guys in a housing project called Nickerson Gardens.

It's a big one in L.A., and they got hired that way about 30 years ago. They're now retiring. They were gang members, and they got hired, and they did a good job! They stayed with the job and they raised families. I think both own houses, and they're now retiring, all because the people came together to say "we have to have the jobs in our community." It's an organizing effort, and to tell you the truth, it works!

The Civil Rights Movement was about struggle. Anything you could get you had to fight for. But that's changed. Increasingly, the people in decision-making roles are just looking for upward mobility and a career that gives them money. They're not going to make any sacrifices. And until somebody is willing to step outside of the box and draw the people to them because they see what's going on, nothing is gonna change.

You've gotta take 100 people to city hall. It's not like you can convince them from afar and say, "This is what you guys should do." You gotta make believers out of them. And if they turn you away, you keep going back. It's that kind of organizing where elected officials are made to pay attention. Going to city hall is extremely powerful. Most city halls have a little space on their agenda for the public to speak. It's not usually a lot of time, but that's OK. When you're organizing and you're confronting, you don't care nothing about other people's time frames. If they say you got 10 minutes, you decide to take 20. And then when they say they're gonna put you out, they can put you out.

I've always thought that in D.C., if people wanted voting rights, they'd come up on this hill and they'd sit down in the thousands and not move. They can't jail everybody, you know what I'm saying? But it's got to be that kind of determination to fight and confront. That's the spirit of the Civil Rights Movement, revisited for the times that demand it now.

**R.B.:** *I have one more question just to have some fun. Would you ever consider running for president?*

**M.W.:** No, I would not. Because I know who I am, what I have done and how I'm perceived. I'm perceived as a black woman troublemaker who don't know her place and steps all outside of the protocols and the policies. That does not a president make.

You've got to compromise a whole lot to get to be president. And I've not lived my life that way. So no, I would not consider it. What I would consider is putting every inch of time that I can into getting rid of this president. That's it. That's my focus right now. Because I think that he will take us backwards.

**R.B.:** *So, you would actually go for articles of impeachment on him soon?*

**M.W.:** That's my number one focus! I want him impeached! Even to the chagrin of some of my fellow Democrats. He's a crook, he's a criminal and the White House is a criminal enterprise. You see it unfolding every day. But in the final analysis, it's gonna be Stormy that's gonna get him.

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