We are in a time of Robert Moses. A time where massive development with no inclusivity and illegitimate planning has lead to displacement, homelessness and trauma. In the mid-20th century New York City became Robert Mose’s playground, and he hopped around cutting deals with massive developers with a promise to build the City. In that process, he displaced hundreds of thousands of black and brown bodies. Although some may refer to his plan as a legacy to repeat, communities who are facing the brunt of this decision are speaking up.

In today’s century, we are fighting back. We do not have a choice, land is limited and time is of the essence. I am scared for our future and I am scared for our children, because if we do not fight hard enough, we will have no where to go. Homelessness is on the rise. Local politicians are cutting back door deals with private and heartless developers who do not care about local communities. What happened to community engagement and organizing with community. We should be forming community stakeholder groups for housing and developments. We should be planning with communities on the ground and bringing developers into the room at every deal being cut.

The reason for that is because some of those private developers come from the time of Robert Moses and they are trying to maintain his legacy, which is unthoughtful and inconsiderate. We need to start demanding and taking back what is ours — the land. There is a land grab in New York City and entities from all over the country is looking to take from the back bone of the community. Where is the compassion for families and children. Where is the love for community. Power is in the people and that power it is being sold to the highest bidder. Let’s think about what happens when we let gentrifiers into our communities. Let’s think about how that changes votes and pushes the heart and soul out of community.

Private developers are stealing the ground from under our feet and it has been happening for decades. There is a lie being built here in New York City. A lie that states, we will provide affordable housing when we build, but lets look at the facts. Homelessness is on the rise and families are suffering. Skyscrapers and luxury housing is being built and We, the people are being pushed out.

We need to reconnect with our local politicians. There are some who manipulate policies and play politics with people’s lives, but there are others who really fight for communities. Which one are you? Our local politicians are the ones who make decisions about land in the community. We need to work with them to build a plan that works for communities. When I say we, I mean the organizers. Community stakeholder and grassroots organization can bring people together to shake up the City - and in this case Industry City. We need to demand that private developers, no matter how big listen to the plans and ideas of local community members and stakeholders.
And if they don’t they will hear the raft of our young people whose live’s are at the balance. They will come with fire and fury and there will be no stopping the truth. Our young people are speaking up now regardless if you want to hear them or not. But, those who have ears are listening and the memes are coming out. Our youth are screaming “The only Christopher we acknowledge is Wallace” and that is their truth.

The plan for Industry City, did not include young people. It did not consider the voice of the community and they did not come in peace and transparency. They came with manipulation tactics and greed, so we must fight back. UPROSE has been at the forefront of the massive development crisis in Sunset Park. Their intergenerational leadership and organizing has lead to marches that are enlightening and powerful. Which is why I stand in solidarity with them today, because we must fight back.