



ETHROPHIC BURNETT
Equity Engagement Manager
at NAZ partner, Urban Homeworks &
NAZ family

Home Sweet Home

By: Mariah Mendoza

Thanks to investors, NAZ is able to partner with influential organizations that provide essential supports for families. NAZ partners Project for Pride in Living (PPL) and Urban Homeworks (UHW) play a critical role in stabilizing housing for NAZ families in meaningful ways. Together these organizations provide stable, affordable, and healthy housing so that children can succeed academically.

Ethrophic is a Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ) parent, mother to eight NAZ scholars, and a manager at UHW. Ethrophic’s journey from the southside of Chicago to Minneapolis has influenced her work with displaced families in North Minneapolis, UHW, and her community.

Ethrophic has a deep understanding and lived experience of what it means to be displaced. “As a woman of color, mother, someone who grew up in the

city, someone who has been displaced multiple times, grew up living in Section 8 - living in public housing, living on welfare ... I get it,” said Ethrophic. Her first experience being displaced was in Chicago. “They were tearing down low-income properties there and so I moved to Minnesota,”

she said. “I ended up in Carver county and was the first black family in my neighborhood.”

Ethrophic lived in Chaska for 12 years prior to moving to North Minneapolis. “It was a complete culture shock. It was hard because I was in a place with my kids where nothing represented us — not the schools, stores — nothing.”

Ethrophic’s appreciation and love for working collaboratively stems from her belief that “it takes a village to work.” She explained, “this unique collaboration allows for families to not only receive housing, but to get support in other areas like education, health, and finance.

“I was a single parent looking after eight kids and no one had talked to me about college. No one told me to save money for your kids’ education, to apply for scholarships, or helped me understand what that process looked like,” Ethrophic said. “My oldest daughter was a freshman in high school and I remember attending a college seminar — I left crying. I was the only person of color

and everyone else was talking about investments and how they were going to leverage their homes. And here I was experiencing displacement and living in a public housing unit. I was overwhelmed!”

When Ethrophic moved to North Minneapolis, her life shifted. “I’ll never forget the first time I heard about NAZ. I had just moved to North Minneapolis and I was at a school open house. Two people [from NAZ] in the gallery asked, ‘Do you want your kids to go to college?’ I screamed, ‘yes!’” she said. “The support I have gotten has been tremendous and just knowing there is a village standing behind my family’s success means everything to me.”

The support she received from NAZ has allowed Ethrophic to breathe a sigh of relief. It was the comfort in knowing she had a community behind her. “The support meant a lot to me! I kid you not, I put my kids at specific schools because I knew NAZ staff was there. I chose La Crèche child care for my son because I knew NAZ was there,” she said. “It’s a blessing to know that I have a NAZ village behind me even though I wasn’t born here.”

Recently, Ethrophic has been a significant player in creating the first “Renting Right” tenant education workshop on behalf of UHW and NAZ. Renting Right is a customized tenant education curriculum designed to provide practical education for tenants through honest conversation, and using real-world examples.

The workshop is designed for first-time renters with no rental history, renters with no recent rental history due to homelessness, renters who have screening barriers like evictions and/or poor landlord references, renters who are at risk of losing their rental housing, and renters who want to better understand their rights and responsibilities as a tenant.

Danyika Leonard, NAZ Collaboration Strategy Manager - Family Support, says the workshop, designed collaboratively with anchor partners Urban Homeworks and Project for Pride in Living, Inc, will offer a customized and culturally responsive approach to tenant education. Key curricular components include a personal review of each participant’s rental history, and developing a “rental report card” to build upon their own foundations of stable housing situation.

“We are going to have real and down-to-earth conversations that will hopefully empower parents to take control of their housing in a way they may not have in the past. It’s exciting to think about the possibilities this program holds, and we are grateful for the opportunity to co-create a meaningful way to support family success,” said Danyika.

Ethrophic is a standout example of housing support at work and the power of partnering with parents, according to Danyika. “I would describe her as a community pillar. She has a deep and genuine love for this community and is passionate about the work she puts forth,” Danyika said. “Ethrophic is a guardian around how we need to partner with our families.”

