



OPINION: IN MY HOUSE! - JOHN STOSSEL

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What if you come home and find strangers living in your house?

I assumed you order the squatters out, and if they resist, call the police, and they will kick them out.

Wrong.

Pro-tenant laws passed by anti-capitalist politicians now protect squatters. If a squatter just lies about having a lease, the police won't intervene.

"It's a civil matter," they'll say. "Sort it out in court."

Great. Court might cost \$20,000. Or more. And courts are so slow, eviction might take years.

In my state, New York, homeowners can't even shut off utilities to try to get the squatter out. That's illegal. Worse, once a squatter has been there 30 days, they are legally considered a tenant.

This month, NYC police arrested a homeowner for "unlawful eviction" after she changed locks, trying to get rid a squatter.

"Squatter rights," also known as "adverse possession" laws, now exist in all 50 states. As a result, evicting a squatter legally is so expensive and cumbersome that some people simply walk away from their homes!

Flash Shelton may have a better idea.

His mom wanted to sell their house after his dad died. But while they were selling it, squatters moved in.

Shelton did what I would have done -- called the police. But the police said there was nothing they could do.

So he tried a new tactic: out-squat the squatter.

"I just felt, if they can take a house, I can take a house," Shelton says in my new video. "I could go in as the squatter myself, (and) gain possession of the property."

When the home invader left for a few hours, Shelton went in and changed the locks. Only then did the squatters leave.

Now Shelton's started a business, SquatterHunters.com, where he tries to help others get their houses back.

"People think of squatters as homeless, destitute," I say.

"They are not homeless," answers Shelton. "They're criminals... people taking advantage of the system."

In fact, one squatter he pushed out was Adam Fleischman, who started the Umami Burger restaurant chain. Fleischman told Shelton, "I'm a victim here." He even called the cops.

"He felt that since he had possession of the house," says Shelton, "That he had the right to call law enforcement and have me removed."

I tried to reach Fleischman to hear his side of the story. No luck.

"Where does he hear that he has this right to squat?" I ask Shelton.

"The city was telling him this," says Shelton.

But now Shelton was a squatter, too, so he was protected by the same pro-"tenant" law.

Still, only when Shelton threatened to bring friends to the house as backup did Adam Fleischman leave.

In Los Angeles, a woman claimed to be a "caretaker" for an elderly homeowner, who said she didn't want the woman in her home. So, she gave Shelton a lease. While the squatter was out, Shelton changed the locks.

"But the squatter is still there?" I ask Shelton.

"Still there," he says, "Climbing through the window because she doesn't have access to the main house."

She's now been there for two years!

Shelton says his team will move in and get rid of the squatter.

"How do you know that will work?" I ask.

"Because once I take possession," says Shelton, "Then she'll have to fight in court to try to get back in. Most likely she won't do that."

Why do squatters feel entitled to other people's property?

Probably because people hate landlords. They listen to silly people like Marxist New School professor Miguel Robles-Duran, who calls landlords "parasites" who "provide no social value." Popular TikTok socialist Madeline Pendleton adds that landlords have "guaranteed forever incomes, without having to put in any labor."

No labor? Who does she think buys the land; pays lawyers to decipher the excessive regulations; hires architects, carpenters, plumbers and electricians; pays the taxes; manages the property, etc.?

It's infuriating!

I'm glad people like Flash Shelton fight back.

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