

The Monthly Voice

July 2014 - ONE DC Newsletter

Greetings From ONE DC, Friend

ONE DC Members Attend Ella Baker Institute In Chicago

By Nkechi Feaster



I became an advocate, not because of my idealistic heart and character; but because I saw how the low income community was highly discriminated against in DC. Stereotyped, held back, dismissed, and diminished further than just being black, or single parents, or low-income. It was tragic. Speaking out against the wrongs against my community was easy for me. I have learned how to channel the voice my mother always said I used too much growing up to speak against these wrongs, so advocacy came easy for me.

Organizing, I found, was a different breed of the same fight, however. I had to learn to quiet my own voice and help others either find theirs, learn how to use theirs, or give them the proper avenue to use it. I had to learn to build my political analysis, learn the lingo of the field, and learn how to fight the good fight. And I am still learning.

I started learning with ONE DC as an organizer. ONE DC, in my opinion, gains much respect from me for not only fighting the good fight, but HOW they fight it! They put the needs of the community above all else, to the point that it's not until they go out to hear the voices in the community that they even design their campaigns and fights. A community-based organization that is actually about the community!

So when ONE DC asked me if I was interested in going to Chicago to attend the Ella Baker Institute's Training, I jumped at the opportunity. I was always interested in visiting Chicago, but only during one of the few warm months of the year, so even the timing was perfect and it ended up being the best trip I have taken thus far!

I, along with a staff member of ONE DC and the president and vice president of the Heritage at Shaw Station Tenant Association that is supported by ONE DC, landed on a Thursday afternoon. Since training didn't start until the next day, we got the opportunity to see a little bit of the city. We were able to attend the Taste of Chicago, sample some of the city's delicacies and even see Janelle Monae perform! As a lover of music and a fan, I wasn't able to stop dancing the whole time! It was the perfect opening to the next 5 days.

The very first day of training, I wasn't sure what to expect. I came in simply ready to learn. I ended up being deeply inspired by [Climbing PoeTree](#); a social justice poetry group that was selected to open the training. As a writer and poet, this touched me in more than one way. Climbing Poetree not only put beautiful words to the fight that we all were fighting, but also served as a muse to everyone in the room to keep on fighting.



The next five days were filled with speakers on many social justice issues; from racism to feminism; from colonialism to reparations. We even had the honor of hearing from two women from Palestine speak on the tragedies that have been going on in their homeland. There was so much information to cover that even two weeks after the trip, I am still neck deep in research and reading. I wasn't expecting to get answers on how to end the fight for justice, but I did not expect to get so much information on those who have already been fighting.

[Read more about Nkechi's experience](#)

Ella Baker's Legacy Continues to Influence Community Leaders

By Nadia Johnson

Being a young president of a tenant association one faces many challenges, such as the people you are fighting for don't see a reason worth fighting anymore. I was starting to feel like these challenges and many other challenges yet to come was unique to me and vice president Kimberly because of our age and our inexperience of being a part of a tenant association.



However, that was all before we went to a community organizing and leadership development institute in Chicago. Not only did we discover that there are many people who are going through the same struggle we are going through when it comes to public housing and organizing tenants, but that it is a struggle that crosses racial, sexual orientation, class, religion, and educational borders. We also saw how there are so many young people who are fighting for the same beliefs and principles that we are fighting for and that was refreshing to both see and hear. What was the name of this great leadership conference where we got all this new inspiration from? Well, if you really want to know, it was the Ella Baker Institute.

ONE DC members & other EBI participants
visit local Chicago muralist Hector Duarte

Ella Baker founded an organization called the Student Nonviolent Coordination Committee (SNCC) which was a civil rights organization that combated racial inequality and segregation during the 1960s. In developing SNCC, Ella decided that this organization should hit two fronts-- direct action and voter registration. Ella believed in "participatory democracy," meaning each person should get involved individually and have a voice in the organization. She also argued that "people under the heel," referring to the most oppressed sectors of any community, "had to be the ones to decide what action they were going to take to get (out) from under their oppression."


In learning this at the retreat, I have decided to take the [Heritage at Shaw Station Tenant Association](#) into a different direction. This direction is going to be broken down into two pieces: direct action by the tenant association and the tenants; and to have every tenant on the property, both new and old, to see their place in this fight and to commit fully to participating.

All in all, I am glad that we attended this retreat about leadership. I not only learned about Ella Baker, but I also got to see the sights of Chicago and be revived spiritually, emotionally, and mentally by the culture of Chicago, the common sisterhood and brotherhood of other leaders in the struggle, and the wonderful and inspirational poetry that we heard. It is my hope that along with vice president Kimberly, we can take the necessary steps forward and bring the tenant association into new heights.

[Click here for more info about Heritage at Shaw Station, formerly Lincoln Westmoreland II](#)

Mount Vernon Plaza Residents Take a Stand!

By Mount Vernon Plaza Tenant Association

We are residents of Mount Vernon Plaza.  Some of us have lived in Mount Vernon Plaza since the affordability program, the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, began. When we moved in, we were never told that the affordability program would expire this year. We only found out two months before we were asked to either sign a new lease paying up to \$600 a month more or move out!

We have families and some of us are on a fixed income. But our backs were up against the wall and many of us felt we had no choice but to sign the new lease. We were shocked to learn that there is no affordability provision after the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit expires. This means thousands and thousands of residents in the District will soon be in the same position that we are in today.

There's no point in having an affordability program if after it expires residents are forced to be homeless or imprisoned in sky-high rents! But we have ideas about how we can fix this.

First, we need immediate relief now; we need the council or DHCD to start subsidizing the expired LIHTC buildings like Mount Vernon Plaza now. We want subsidy for all of the expired LIHTC units, even the units that were forced to start paying market-rate rent.



Second, we need legislation passed that compels tax-credit owners to enforce at least a year notice before any rent increase. But this legislation must also say that any expired LIHTC buildings immediately revert to rent control.

[Read More Here & Take Action to Support Mount Vernon Plaza](#)

Please also visit savemuseumsquare.com for more info about the tenant struggle to resist displacement at Museum Square, a sister property of Mount Vernon Plaza.

ONE Bit of Good News - Affordable Housing Preserved at Bass Place

Linda Leaks, a ONE DC member and long time DC organizer, is supporting the Bass Place tenants in an effort to purchase their building and convert it into a limited equity cooperative. University Legal Services and Martha Davis asked ONE DC to provide cooperative housing education and organizing for 5100 Bass Place Tenants Association. The Department of Housing and Community Development signed a commitment letter to approve financing for the tenants to purchase their building.

Equitable Development Moves Forward In The Nation's Capital

"Tell me your zip code and I'll tell you your expiration date."

-Angela Glover Blackwell at the Equitable Development Symposium in March 2014

[Check out the article featured in *Social Policy* written by ONE DC members and staff Gregory Squires, Dominic T. Moulden, and Kalfani N. Ture](#)

The second annual Equitable Development Symposium will take place March 26, 2015.

The People's Platform Builds Momentum

The People's Platform is a grassroots effort to change the way politics is done in the city. Instead of fighting for the truly important issues (like creating **truly** affordable housing, ending homelessness, fighting for living-wage jobs, quality healthcare, etc), politicians continue to ask us to support their efforts to bring poorly paid jobs in the city, give away public land for pennies on the dollar, and support the closing of the DC General without the serious investment in quality, family-friendly, affordable housing!

We believe the only way we change DC for the better is to fight for what's right, and we believe you have the voice and power to make it happen. Will you join us?

Email organizer@onedconline.org for info about the next meeting.

Summer in the City Film Series

[The Garden](#) - Wednesday, August 6 at 6:00PM

Emergence Community Arts Collective 733 Euclid St. NW

A rose that grew out of the 1992 LA Riots, the community garden in South Central Los Angeles was a testament to community resilience. However, when the land is sold to a



wealthy developer, the South Central Farmers are forced to show a different sort of resilience in their battle with city hall. Join us for a screening and discussion.

[My Brooklyn](#) - Wednesday, August 20 at 6:00 PM

Salvation Army/SOME Center for Employment Training

This film follows the director, a self-described gentrifier, on her journey to peel back the complex layers of a changing city. Focusing on the closing of a popular and profitable African-American and Caribbean mall, the movie explores how migration into cities, city planning and racial divides come to a head in an all too familiar story about change in American cities.

[Visit CNHED for more info about the series](#)

Attend A Mindfulness Retreat This Weekend

Honoring our Pain, Nourishing our Joy: Coming Home to Peace

A non-residential mindfulness retreat for People of Color

Friday, August 1st 6:30pm to 8:30pm & Saturday, August 2nd 9am to 5pm

For People of Color - Please plan to attend both Friday and Saturday \$50-\$80 sliding scale.

Sacred Activism: Creating Justice through Peace and Understanding

A day of mindfulness for social justice activists

Sunday, August 3rd 9am to 4pm \$35-\$60 sliding scale

Notes: Please give at the highest level you can afford so others can attend. No one will be turned away for lack of funds. Please bring a dish (vegetarian preferable) to share for a potluck lunch on Saturday and Sunday. Email socialhealthconcepts@gmail.com for more information.

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