

The Monthly Voice

July 2016 - ONE DC Newsletter

"I've never been involved in all that activist stuff, but now I'm dedicated to the cause wherever there's injustice." -Mr. Green, VP of tenant association at Congress Heights, speaking at a rally in front of his slumlord's house

March Against Slumlords and WIN for Affordable Housing in Congress Heights

By Clara Lincoln

Saturday, July 23 at 11am with the temperature pushing 100 degrees, over 40 people gathered around the Cleveland Park metro station to demand an end to the slumlord control of a Congress Heights property.



March Against Slumlords protest

[Read more about the situation from Justice First here.](#)

The protest began as people gathered at the Cleveland Park metro station, crowding into the shade of trees. Eugene Puryear of Justice First and Stop Police Terror Project DC took the mic and riled up the crowd, many of whom held signs about gentrification and slumlords. At least 5 people in the crowd were tenants either from Congress Heights or other buildings organizing to exercise their Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA) rights in order to buy their building.

After Eugene's explanation of where we were going and why, we started our uphill, sticky march to Geoff Griffis' house. Griffis is the developer who partnered with Sanford Capital, a slumlord responsible for letting building conditions deteriorate to the point that there are roaches & rats, flooded basements, and trash sitting for months waiting to be picked up. Justice First retrieved the address through online research on Griffis' donations to Mayor Bowser's 2014 mayoral campaign -- a strategic move on Griffis' part. Griffis is also involved in the wharf development, which received \$95 million worth of waterfront property from the city [for only \\$1.00.](#)



Conditions at Congress Heights building

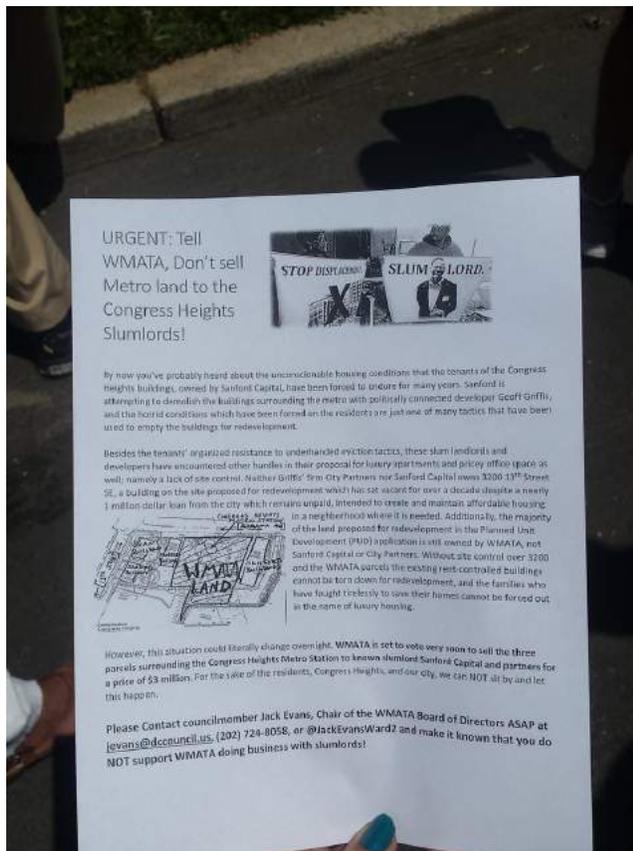
Griffis and Sanford Capital are letting the building deteriorate to try to force the tenants to move out before they can exercise their right to buy the building. But the tenants will not back down. **When we arrived at Griffis' house, three tenants from Congress Heights took the mic to talk about their experiences. They expressed how inspired they were that so many people showed up on such a hot day. One said, "We've been fighting for three years. But what we want Griffis to know is you've got rid of some, but you're not getting rid of us," referring to people who have chosen to move away and stop fighting.** The President and VP of the tenant association both gave inspiring speeches as people cheered and clapped. We assumed the house was empty since we saw no signs of life, but their words were as much for the crowd as for Griffis' neighbors.

After about 20 minutes of chants and testimonies, the slumlord appeared. As Schyla Pondexter-Moore from Empower DC held the mic, Griffis stepped out of his house with a box of cold water bottles. Schyla, the tenants and the crowd all turned around, rushed to the fence, and booed. Schyla said into the mic that he was no better than a slave master for the way he's treated the tenants. One tenant yelled, **"We don't want your water, we want a change of heart!"** Griffis opened the gate, set the box on the ground, closed the gate, gave a curt wave, and walked back inside. [Check out our twitter feed to see a video of the end of the encounter.](#) Needless to say, no one drank the water. We had brought enough of our own.

We marched and chanted back down the hill towards Connecticut Avenue. We were so fired up that we walked straight into the intersection and blocked Connecticut Avenue for a few minutes, telling passersby who Griffis was and why we were marching. Police redirected traffic even though we had no permit to block the intersection-- a testament, in my opinion, to DC police's strategy of causing as little noise as possible during protests to keep media quiet.

The protest displayed layers of solidarity. Community members and organizers came out to support the Congress Heights tenants. *Luchadorxs* in other buildings trying to exercise their TOPA rights showed up for a similar fight across the river. Many individuals and organizations brought water and ice to pass out. And Griffis' neighbors even stopped to listen to what we had to say. It revitalized and inspired the tenants and organizers, educated a crowd and some Cleveland Park neighbors, and left people with a follow-up action step.

Griffis and Sanford Capital want access to even more land near the Congress Heights metro station on which to build luxury apartments. As soon as Justice First found out that the WMATA board was planning to vote Thursday (today!) on whether or not to give even more land to Sanford Capital, they did what they do best-- they organized. At the march this past Saturday, they handed out information sheets like the one below urging the crowds to contact Councilmember Jack Evans, urging him to table the vote. They spread the call to action on social media as well.



Then, Thursday morning, they learned they had won. Many ONE DC members who had emailed Evans got responses informing them of WMATA's

decision. Here is the text from an email Evans sent to a ONE DC intern:

*"Thank you very much for taking the time to share your thoughts on this important issue. Upon further review of the Congress Heights sale agreement item, I agree that postponing the vote is the most prudent option at this time. I am happy to report that the WMATA Board also agree and **the item has been tabled until a later meeting.**"*

Justice First, Congress Heights tenants, and all those who contacted Evans made this happen. Thank you to our members who called, emailed, & tweeted. This is a WIN that proves the power of collective organizing and solidarity.

But the fight isn't over. The vote will come before the board again. And the Congress Heights tenants are still living in slum conditions. Stay involved in the fight for equitable housing by [following Justice First on Facebook](#).
#DefendAffordableHousing #SaveCongressHeights



Black August DC 2016 - A Note from BYP100, Black Lives Matter DC, Movement for Black Lives

DC has a long and well-known history of observing Black August through the exemplary leadership and hard work of the Black August Planning Organization (BAPO).

This August, [Black Youth Project 100](#) (BYP 100) DC and [Black Lives Matter-DC](#) (BLM DC), as part of the [DC Movement 4 Black Lives Steering Committee](#) (M4BL), are calling for a month-long observance and celebration of [Black August](#) as a month of rest from, reflection on, and recommitment to our decades long struggle. It is a call to intensify community education on ending mass incarceration and the prison industrial complex, securing freedom of all political prisoners, resisting police brutality and murder, and re-defining safety beyond policing in Black communities.

The History of Black August

Our comrades in the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement [share](#), “Black August originated in the concentration camps (prisons) of California to honor fallen Freedom Fighters, Jonathan Jackson, George Jackson, William Christmas, James McClain and Khatari Gauden. Jonathan Jackson was gunned down outside the Marin County California courthouse on August 7, 1970 as he attempted to liberate three imprisoned Black Liberation Fighters: James McClain, William Christmas and Ruchell Magee.”

“Black August is a time to study and practice education and outreach about our history and the current conditions of our people.” Additionally, “As the Black August practice and tradition spread, it grew to observe not only the sacrifices of the brothers in California’s concentration camps, but the sacrifices and struggles of our ancestors against white supremacy.”

Black August Events

Volunteer Meeting & Community Outreach Day

The first Volunteer Meeting for Black August will be held in the Large Meeting Room. It is really important to attend the volunteer meeting in person, but if it is absolutely not feasible but you want to volunteer please email April at keepdc4me@gmail.com as soon as possible. **The Community Outreach Day will be this Saturday from 12PM to 4PM.** Details will be discussed at the meeting.

TONIGHT, Thursday, July 28- 7PM to 8:30PM

Benning (Dorothy I. Height) Neighborhood Library Large Meeting Room - 3935 Benning Rd NE

[Click here to RSVP](#)

DC Night Out for Safety and Liberation

Join BYP100 DC, BLM DC, and the Movement 4 Black Lives DC for a conversation on what true public safety looks like in our city. Vendors, performances, food, story-telling, music, and fun for all ages - Night Out for Safety and Liberation is a space for our community to imagine ideas of safety that are not rooted in policing and incarceration - with specific focus on solutions beyond mythic "community-policing". Instead, join us in uplifting a narrative that speaks to investing the appropriate resources and policies needed within our communities to help support and #BuildBlackFutures. To us, #SafetyIs access to healthcare, employment, safe and dignified housing, childcare, and more. What does safety look like to you?

Tuesday, August 2 - 5:30PM to 9:30PM

The Perch- 3400 Georgia Ave NW

[Click here to RSVP](#)

Protest and Shut Down at DC Jail

[Cease Fire: Don't Smoke the Brothers and Sisters](#) are leading a protest at DC Jail. This is a response to the death of "LT" Leslie Irby at DC Jail on July 14, 2016 as a result of the dangerously high temperatures in the jail. Cease Fire and the community have put tremendous pressure on authorities for justice with some success but now they need the whole city behind them to get justice for this death, a full investigation of the jail and its Director, the horrible conditions inside the jail, and the inhumane treatment of those inside. They also demand the immediate termination of the Director.

Wednesday, August 3 - 1PM

DC Jail - 1901 D St SE

If you want to hold your own event as part of Black August, please send an email to wellexaminedlife@gmail.com as soon as possible. Please feel free to share widely and text "KeepDC" to 91990 for updates, alerts, and actions.

[Stay updated on all Black August events here!](#)

Black Workers Center Apprenticeship

Join the ONE DC Black Workers Center Apprenticeship Campaign!!

For the last several months we've come together at ONE DC's Black Workers Center to create a transformative organizing campaign aimed at creating jobs and shifting the way workforce development is done in the city. For too long the District government has invested millions in jobs training programs that don't create jobs. [According](#) to the Economic Policy Institute, the Black unemployment rate in DC is 13.6% - the highest in the country.

History has taught us that the only way to change these dire statistics is to organize. In 2014, ONE DC members organized and successfully got 178 workers hired at the Marriott Marquis Hotel on Massachusetts Avenue NW. We did it before and we can do it again. Join us for our [next meeting Thursday, August 19](#) to learn how to get involved with the Apprenticeship campaign. We demand that the city shift from a failed jobs training model and expand opportunities for paid apprenticeships (on the job training). We'll discuss the campaign plan and timeline, outreach, and specific ways you can get involved.

Thursday, August 18 - 6PM

United Black Fund - 2500 MLK Jr Ave SE

[Click here to RSVP](#)

The Mousai House: A Cooperative Vision for a New Creative Economy

Check out this excerpt from a new piece about cooperative music production in Brookland, DC by local organizer and radio host [Jennifer Bryant](#):

"The Tuesday music lessons turned into all night jam sessions, attracting the cream of the crop of local hip hop, soul, and jazz musicians. Maimouna Youssef,

Tamika Love Jones, and the CooLots were there. It was an informal network of peer-to-peer knowledge sharing that operated outside of the confines of the traditional economy. 'While we were in those early stages it was a value exchange rather than a monetary exchange,' Jones shared. 'And people found value in having a creative space in which to collaborate with other artists.' This reinforces Dr. Nembhard's belief that the next economy must move beyond the price system. 'Of particular importance,' she explains, 'is the fact that resources are not solely financial. It's not just about market relationships.' From the beginning, this has been a core value in the Mousai House culture."

[Read the full piece here!](#)

SoulFiesta! Celebrate a Decade of Cooperative Organizing with 1417 N St Cooperative!

The 1417 N St. Cooperative (Norwood) and the City First Family invite you to **honor the culmination of a decade of community organizing and progress toward creating a 83-unit limited equity cooperative. We are celebrating the renovation of our building with a community block party!**

Date: Sat, July 30, 2016

Time: 4:00-7:00pm (Ribbon cutting ceremony @ 5PM)

Where: 1417 N St. NW Washington, D.C. (between Vermont Ave & 14th St. NW)

Please join us and be a part of the SoulFiesta community celebration. We will share music, art, and tamales!

[Click here to RSVP](#)

Free Books for Kids from DC Library

[Register your child to receive a FREE book every month.](#) All DC kids from birth to 5 years old can now receive free books in the mail once a month. Kids who are signed up when they are born will receive 60 free books by the time they turn 5. To sign up for this completely free program, you must register at dclibrary.org/booksfrombirth.

ONE DC Featured in Consumer Health Foundation Annual Report 2015 Release

"We have a shared responsibility to create a region in which everyone has an equal opportunity to live a healthy and dignified life. Differences in health and life expectancy between whites and people of color — which contribute to thousands of people being ill or dying in our region each year — can be avoided. Our communities can become places of opportunity through equitable public policies that enable people to get the health care they need, earn income, and generate wealth to support themselves, their families and their communities. We look forward to working across sectors in the coming months and years to achieve this vision. this decision in order to balance our

intentionally high spend rate during the years following the 2008 recession (2009-2013), an uncertain and financially challenging times for our grantee partners. Now we are in a new time marked by social upheaval, and while we will continue to carefully steward the foundation's resources, we will also take advantage of every opportunity to deepen our work on racial equity."

[Read the full report here](#)

Upcoming Events

DC Fund in the Sun!

Saturday, July 30 - Hosted by Brigitte Rouson

Two ways to support the grassroots social justice fund for changemakers of color in the nation's capital. All proceeds go to support the [Diverse City Fund](#).
12PM - Purse Swap at Serendipity Jazz Coffeehouse - co-host Lizette Rouson-Benefield - live music and light brunch
7 PM - Dance party at Emergence Community Arts Collective - co-host Sylvia Robinson - DJ and light snacks

Job Fair- Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton

Thursday, August 11 - 10AM to 3PM

Convention Center - 801 Mt Vernon PI NW

[Click here to RSVP](#)

ONE Bit of Good News - Black Workers Center Members Work with Muralist Edgar Reyes on Art Project

Tonight, members of the Black Workers Center will be meeting with muralist Edgar Reyes to continue discussing the design for a mural in the space. This mural will reflect the powerful intersections of organizing and art, of culture and activism. The members will guide the design process until the mural embodies the ideas and beauty in the organizing coming out of that space.



This image is a draft of Edgar's current design for the mural. The people would likely change, as well as the whole design-- depending on what the community thinks tonight in the meeting!

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