

The Monthly Voice

February 2017 - ONE DC Newsletter

America is Black. It has always been. It is a man twirling at 3AM under colorful lights, sweaty and in love with his boyfriend. It thrives with disabilities. It is migrant. It is a tongue that unapologetically only speaks Spanish. It is a self-regulated womb. It is Native. It has been here before any White foot touched its soil. It is traumatized. It is hungry. It is a woman. It has always been.

It translates for its parents. It transcends borders. It transcends binaries. It is dodging violence on the streets. From men. From the police. It wears a hoodie. It wears a hijab. It has kinky hair that smells of coconut oil. It is trans. It's a kiki with friends and nights slept on a park bench.

It's a fist in the air and a fiery demand for justice. It has always been. It prays in a New York City mosque. It prays in a South Carolina church. It is my Black mama and my Persian, immigrant daddy. These are not exceptions. These are not Others. These are not descriptions in contrast to what is normal.

This is it.

It is here. It has been here.

AND IT IS NOT GOING ANYWHERE.

[-Tatyana Fazlalizadeh](#)

Say No! to Displacement

On February 23, ONE DC members stood with Brookland Manor residents in their struggle against displacement at the hands of Mid-City Financial and the District of Columbia. We were joined, in force, by SURJ-DC, IWW DC, Metro DC DSA, the Black Workers Center Chorus, Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless, Housing Advocacy Team, GW Young Progressives Demanding Action, Black Lives Matter DC, API Resistance, DC Jobs with Justice, Fair Budget Coalition, DC for Reasonable Development, Americans for Transit, Georgetown Solidarity Committee, Justice First, DC Right to Housing Initiative, MLOV, the Washington Lawyers Committee on Civil Rights & Urban Affairs, and many more partners and supporters. Simply put, our presence was undeniable. Before we could even begin, security mandated we move a paltry distance from where we had set up to the red brick sidewalk behind us (even though much of our comrades were already occupying it). Separated by the empty space of the courtyard nothing was more clear: The power of the people terrifies the capitalist class.



[Click here](#) to view more photos. Photo Credit: O. Michael Leslie

Black Workers members Luci Murphy, Ma Krstn, and Eric Sheptock opened the rally by leading the group in song. Brookland Manor residents Yvonne Johnson, Dorothy Davis, Neeka Sullivan, Cheryl Brunson, Valarie Scott, and Serita El-Amin shared stories of their vibrant community. They were joined by spoken word poet Nkechi Feaster and activist-organizers Linda Leaks, Eugene Puryear, and Yasmina Mrabet. "Brookland Manor is a place where families become families," Yvonne Johnson explained, "It's our *home*." Ms. Dorothy Davis reminisced about raising her children in Brookland Manor and how she now has the joy of helping raise her grandchildren there as well. Transforming a space in which one merely *dwells* into a community that one *lives* takes decades of support and compassion; a labor of love that goes beyond the pull of self-interest. Ms. Cheryl Brunson humbly recounted how, during a tumultuous time in her life, it was her neighbors in Brookland Manor who served as a vital support system for her and her family.

In addition, residents provided a deft critique of the repressive measures taken by Mid-City Financial in the struggle for Brookland Manor. For those unaware, Mid-City Financial has fenced off the courtyard, blocking an essential element in maintaining their communal life. "We can't even stand outside and watch our kids," Neeka Sullivan explained. Similarly, Mid-City Financial has hired new security guards whose only purpose is to harass residents and produce an endless proliferation of infractions. These tactics, as well as the overall struggle, are dramatically affecting the quality of life of the residents of Brookland Manor. Painfully, Yvonne Johnson observed that in her 20 years there she hasn't come across this level of depression. Children are weighed down by the possibility that one day they may no longer have a home to come back to.

Despite these realities the residents of Brookland Manor are undeterred. "We haven't seen a gathering like this in a long time," Linda Leaks shouted, passionate yet focused, "We are not going to move and we are going to win." Indeed, the line for those who showed up to support the Brookland Manor residents nearly wrapped around the building and we easily filled the overflow room.

Once inside, Mid-City Financial undertook what appeared to be a rather bizarre testimony. Over an hour long, they fixated on minute details concerning the types of shrubbery they wanted to plant and the hue and crispness of their brick selection. Mid-City Financial is just as comfortable prioritizing aesthetics over the concerns of their residents as they are putting their profits before the community. Here, we are reminded of Walter Benjamin's warning about the dangers inherent in introducing "aesthetics into political life" and the displacement it brings (See the epilogue in Benjamin's [The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction](#)). Yet, despite the absurd performance, the tactic was deliberate. The zoning commission proceeding only allows the cross examiner to question the Defendant based on the testimony given. Presumably, if the testimony is filled with vapid details and dead-ends the cross examiner will be barred from initiating a meaningful line of questioning.



"The essence of the police," writes Jacques Ranciere, "lies in a certain way of dividing up the sensible." That is, it is a power that determines what will be *seen and heard* while simultaneously determining what will be *excluded* from being seen and heard (See theses 7 & 8 in Ranciere's [Ten Theses on Politics](#)). During the cross examination, tenant legal counsel Will Merrifield insisted that Mid-City Financial clarify the difference in available multi-family units between the current Brookland Manor housing complex and Mid-City Financial's proposed redevelopment. The struggle for Brookland Manor is precisely over the question of displacement and, as Will made abundantly clear, Mid-City Financial's redevelopment plan logically can not house the same number of families currently living in Brookland Manor.

However, given the triviality of Mid-City Financial's testimony, Chair Anthony Hood attempted to censure Will's line of questioning as irrelevant. That is, Chair Hood classified Will's speech, which places the question of displacement front and center, as that which does not have the right to be heard. In other words, the Brookland Manor resident's concern about displacement is not relevant to the overall hearing process; their concern could only be heard in a certain

context, i.e. the minutes to the November hearing. By attempting to exclude Will's line of questioning, the Zoning Commission Board was de facto impeding the Brookland Manor resident's ability to fully secure their right to return. Regardless, legal counsel Will Merrifield succeeded in forcing the Zoning Commission Board to yield to his line of questioning.

Towards the end of the night the Brookland Manor residents were given an opportunity to testify and they did not mince words. Ms. Dorothy Davis cut to the heart of the dissymmetry between the two parties. "We don't want to fight," she implored, "We want to work with them but Mid-City Financial is putting profit over our families." Indignant, Miss Elliott commented on Mid-City Financial's frivolous testimony, "You can bring up all the bricks you want but if you aren't bringing up lives you're not bringing up community."

We packed the hearing with so many people ready to testify in opposition to Mid-City Financial's plans, the Zoning Commission needed to schedule a second hearing date. ONE DC members and residents at Brookland Manor request your support at the next stage zoning commission hearing on Thursday, March 16. Momentum is on our side and now is the time to stand together and say No! to displacement. At the rally before the hearing, Linda Leaks emphasized that we need to "know their terms and use it against them and make them use your terms. You have to learn what your power is and speak the same language as they do in order to tell them to get out." "A concept is a brick," writes social theorist Brian Massumi, "It can be used to build the courthouse of reason. Or it can be thrown through the window." The Brookland Manor residents have the right to stay put. Mid-City Financial will fall.

[Click here to RSVP](#)

[Click here for more info & updates on Brookland Manor](#)

Building Black Worker Power in DC





[Click here](#) to view more photos from the evening. Photo Credit: O. Michael Leslie

Community residents from Anacostia and across the District gathered last Friday, February 24th for an evening of music, arts, food, and programming to celebrate the launch of the ONE DC Black Workers Center (BWC), housed at the United Black Fund at 2500 Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE. The BWC is a worker-led space that builds racial and economic justice through popular education, direct action and worker-owned alternatives.

The program included a musical performance by members of the Black Workers Center Chorus, an interactive reading by storyteller, oral historian, and author Candace Wolf, and spoken word by Joseph Green of Split this Rock. Visual art was created and donated for the evening by Chris Bantum and Jeremy Darby. [Rakhel's Live Cuisine](#) provided gourmet vegan food and fresh juice.

The Black Workers Center has been in development since 2014, with regular monthly community meetings held at the United Black Fund building for the past two years. The idea for the project emerged out of community listening sessions following the Washington Marriott Marquis Hotel Jobs Training Program. Troubled by the continued failure of DC's workforce development system to address unemployment, DC workers and residents began to envision an alternative space to address the intersections of race and work in DC. In 2015, emerging Black Workers Center members traveled on a series of Coop Learning Journeys to Baltimore, New York, and Philadelphia to learn about incubating worker-owned cooperatives as an alternative to low-wage work. Along with ONE DC's Cooperation DC project, the Black Workers Center will serve as both a political education and incubation space for worker cooperatives. The space will also serve as a creative hub, where BWC members can time bank volunteer hours in exchange for use of equipment and materials. BWC members are also developing an apprenticeship coding program.

[Click here to sign up with the Black Workers Center](#)

The Black Workers Center Chorus that performed at the launch practices every Tuesday evening at the BWC. To join the chorus and for more info, contact Luci Murphy at 202-234-8840.

Saturday, March 25 - 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM
Thurgood Marshall Center - 1816 12th St. NW

What is the people's vision for 2017 and beyond? What is ONE DC's financial standing? How did we win in 2016? How can you as a member get involved? Join us to find out! All are welcome, but only members who are up to date on their annual dues will be eligible to vote in elections for new members of ONE DC's Shared Leadership Team. Membership dues and donations are used to build a people's movement funded by the people. Join ONE DC and support us in building power with long time DC residents to organize for an equitable city. [Click here to pay your 2017 membership dues](#) and build a stronger ONE DC!

Food will be served - All ages welcome - Please let us know if you need transportation or childcare.

[Click here to RSVP](#)

Cooperation DC's Vision for 2017

Our vision is to establish an ecosystem to launch and support worker-owned businesses in DC in the following ways:

- **Launch NW Childcare Cooperative:** In 2017, we will launch a childcare women-owned business consisting of 15 Latina immigrant worker-owners. A grant award provided by the Meyer Foundation will enable the formulation of the business plan and launch.
- **Organize an African American Women-led Childcare cooperative East of the River:** The efforts and lessons learned while organizing the NW childcare cooperative in 2016 will serve as the foundation to create the support and infrastructure needed to identify and develop the women that will form the worker-owned childcare cooperative business East of the River.
- **DSLBD Cooperative Convenings:** Participating in stakeholder meetings will prove instrumental to creating a cooperative ecosystem by sharing current needs, mapping the current coop infrastructure, setting priorities, and addressing long-term and short-term needs.
- **Issuing the first Working World Peer Network loan to a DC local cooperative:** we will build local and regional capacity through our participation in the Working World Peer Network.
- **Fundraising:** In order to realize these goals we will need to fund raise \$300,000 in calendar year 2017. If you'd like to support the (re)emerging cooperative movement in DC, please consider [making a tax-deductible donation](#). No amount is too big or too small!

[Click here for more info on Cooperation DC](#)

"Smart" Growthers Attack McMillan Park Court Victory

By: Chris Otten, co-facilitator, [DC for Reasonable Development](#)

The McMillan court victory is a huge step forward in the legal and planning realms of the District for the longtime, existing DC families and peoples and communities that we want to preserve and protect. The McMillan Court affirmed very clearly that when large luxury development projects with lots of housing are

proposed to be constructed in already established DC communities, DC planning officials must consider and act to mitigate the subsequent land value destabilization and resultant increase in displacement pressures.

[Click here to continue reading](#)

ONE Right to Wellness - Making the Just City



We're pleased to update members on our research grant through the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's "Culture of Health" initiative, one of 15 projects selected throughout the country. Created in collaboration with Mindy Fullilove, MD and Derek Hyra, PhD (The New School and American University, respectively), our work focuses on gentrification & displacement in two communities, and the community-level initiatives being implemented to improve wellness among long-time residents facing displacement. Dominic Moulden, Resource Organizer at ONE DC, is the third member of this team.

In its 10-year plus history of organizing around the right to housing for DC residents, ONE DC has gained invaluable experience with one of the communities of interest – Shaw, in Washington, DC. ONE DC is uniquely prepared to work with those in the sister community of Orange, NJ who are facing the beginning stages of gentrification as the two participate in a bi-directional transfer of knowledge regarding affordable housing, health in communities, and interactions across economic, racial, and socioeconomic differences. As the project progresses, we are looking for ONE DC supporters to get involved:

1) Two DC residents to be hired as paid research associates. Qualifications:

- Community stakeholder
- Well-versed in the history, geography, politics and culture of the community
- Keen interest in learning about the community's story
- Willing to observe meetings and take careful notes
- Willing to carry out interviews
- Willing to travel for research meetings and participate in regular conference calls
- Willing to participate in a project training

- Full job description to come!

2) Long-time & new members and residents living in Shaw to participate in interviews, focus groups, and other campaign activities

For more information on how to get involved with the Making the Just City project, please email Dominic at dmoulden@onedconline.org or call 202.232.2915.

Monthly People's Platform General Body Meeting

Thursday, March 30 - 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

New Community Church - 614 S St NW

The [People's Platform](#) is a movement of low-income and working class DC residents of color and people who share our values and vision. We seek to organize, educate, fight for and win truly affordable housing, sustaining work, and wellness for all in DC. Our monthly People's Platform general body is a space where we work towards our goals by prioritizing political education and leadership development in our work; centering the leadership of working class black women; being funded by our base; always seeking to build a deeper analysis and assessing our work; building alternative institutions; learning from past movement's successes and limitations; championing non-reformist reforms; and always seeking to be a part of a broader movement that is multi-national, multi-ethnic, multi-gender, and multi-class. This month's topic will be People's Platform Principle #4, a right to health for humans and the earth.

[Click here to RSVP](#)

Upcoming Events & Actions

Healing Ourselves, Healing Our World for People of Color

Friday, March 3 at 5:00 PM to Sunday, March 5 at 3:00 PM

Trinitarians Retreat Center - 8400 Park Heights, Ave, Baltimore, MD

Join Baltimore and Beyond: Mindfulness Community (BBMC) for a mindfulness retreat in the first weekend of March. For the BBMC, "Mindfulness is a path of practice...which helps us to become aware of the moment to moment activities of our minds, our speech and our action. As we become more aware of the activities of our mind, we remember certain principles we want to abide by, virtuous principles of kindness, love, compassion, equanimity." Kaira Jewel Lingo and Marisela Gomez will facilitate the retreat.

[Click here to register for the retreat](#)

[Click here for info about BBMC](#)

Candace Wolf: Shifting the Universe

Thursday, March 9 - 7:30 PM

Red Emma's Coffeehouse Bookstore - 30 W North Ave, Baltimore

Come join us at Red Emma's for a night of story recitations, call & response, participatory readings, and community dialogue with storyteller, oral historian, and author Candace Wolf.

[Click here for more info and to RSVP](#)

May Day!

Planning Meeting - Friday, March 10th - 6:00 PM

ONE DC Office - 614 S ST NW

The International Workers of the World (IWW) & ONE DC are inviting labor and community groups to participate in an international day of action for worker solidarity. We intend to celebrate our past victories as well as find strength to continue the struggle for ending war, racism, while bringing justice to working families everywhere. We look to showcase local and international struggles for economic and social justice by taking our collective voices to the streets and marching through Washington, DC. The May Day 2017 Planning Committee is asking for local and international organizations to bring their struggle and message to this year's day of international working class solidarity in a variety of ways. To get involved, join us at the planning meeting March 10th or contact dcmayday2016@gmail.com or call/text Jason R. at 443-254-8943.

[Click here to RSVP for May Day 2017](#)



People's Climate March

Saturday, April 29 - Washington DC

On Saturday, April 29th in Washington DC, we will come together for one massive march to bring our demands to the streets. We will march for our families. We will march for our air, our water, and our land. We will march for clean energy jobs and climate justice. We will march for our communities and the people we love. And we will be louder and stronger than ever before.

[Click here to RSVP](#)

Wow! Before & After Photos from the Black Workers Center







Thank you to all our members, staff, volunteers, & supporters who helped get the space cleaned, renovated, & ready for community use!

Our next goal is to raise \$20,000 for studio equipment & materials to realize our vision of the BWC as a creative arts space. [Click here to contribute](#) or start a [monthly sustaining donation to support the ONE DC Black Workers Center](#)

How can participating in cooperative economics chisel away the power of capitalism?

In this [podcast](#), Upstream Conversation spoke with Professor Jessica Gordon Nembhard, author of *Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice* (and ONE DC Shared Leadership Team member) about the history of solidarity economics--particularly worker cooperatives--within the African American community:

We travel in time from the era of slavery, through to Jim Crow segregation, share-cropping, and finally within the modern day prison industrial complex, looking at how cooperatives have formed in prisons in Puerto Rico. What can we learn for the United States, where African American's comprise one-third of the prison population? We also spoke about the intersection of capitalism and racism. How do capitalism and racism support each other? And how can the act of participating in cooperative economics can chisel away the power of capitalism?

[Click here to listen to the podcast](#)

Do you want to be a writer, editor, or designer for the *ONE DC Monthly Voice*? Email organizer@onedconline.org

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