

The Monthly Voice

July 2017 - ONE DC Newsletter

"Like a cyclone, imperialism spins across the globe;
militarism crushes peoples and sucks their blood like a
vampire."

-Karl Liebknecht

People's Platform Updates

June People's Platform - Right to Transit



On June 29, ONE DC members joined the Save Our System Coalition in organizing DC residents and community members at the Columbia Heights Metro station for a Transit Justice Rally to express our discontent with the Metro system, with the goal of bringing awareness to how the community can fight for People's Platform principle #8, **Access to safe and affordable transportation so that we can travel between our homes, jobs, schools, and recreational spaces.**

In the past two years, construction has hindered the daily ride for many Washingtonians who commute via Metro, and WMATA has done a poor job of providing alternate transportation for those of us who rely on this system. Despite the community's concerns, WMATA has chosen to ignore those who depend on Metro as their primary means of transportation, and has implemented new policies that further restrict our access to safe and affordable transportation. Many Metro riders feel we are "paying more for less" since

WMATA implemented changes such as price increases, less frequent transit, and an end to late night trains.

Starting on June 26, 2017, Metro bus fares increased from \$1.75 to \$2.00. Metro rail added a \$.10 fare increase during peak hours and \$.25 during off-peak hours. Metro has also eliminated or reduced 33 travel routes in the entire DMV area, and cut 25% of Metro rail service during rush hour. When Metro outlined these changes in their budget and service changes, they failed to recognize how these changes will negatively affect thousands of people.

In addition to these flaws in the Metro bus and rail system, Metro Access, a privately contracted van service that provides transportation to disabled people in the District, has continued to disappoint riders. At the rally on June 29, ONE DC member Ms. Jourgette Reid-Sillah explained how Metro Access ensures that they make the maximum profit by taking longer routes and waiting past the 30-minute wait time, proving how they value “[profits over people](#).” She points how this service exists because of a law requiring transportation services for those with disabilities, not “out of the goodness of their hearts.” Once again, Metro will do what they have to do in any given situation to capitalize off of those who use their services out of necessity, making it clear that WMATA’s main agenda is to maximize profit for private companies, rather than provide safe, accessible transportation for those of us who need it.



Moving forward, this fight doesn’t stop with the Transit Rally. The [Save Our System Coalition](#) continues to fight for transit justice by calling the community to action. If you wish to support, here are a few things you can do to help:

1. [Sign the petition](#)
2. [Join an upcoming meeting](#)
3. [Like the campaign on Facebook](#)

July People's Platform - Non-Imperialistic Education

In July, we met at the Brentwood Recreation Center in Northeast DC to explore People's Platform principle #6, **Equitable and equal access to a free, decent, holistic, non-imperialistic education that creates critical, political thinkers and leaders.** Residents broke down the myths & miseducation promoted by the city about housing policies in DC.

To join a ONE DC Housing Education Team, email Yasmina at ymrabet@onedconline.org or call 202.232.2915.

DC'S (MIS) EDUCATION ON HOUSING POLICY
Below are 6 major myths promoted by the city about housing and development.

1. Housing affordability should be measured by the Area Median Income (AMI), which includes 6 out of the 10 richest counties in the United States. The AMI in Washington, D.C. is over \$109,000.
2. New luxury developments = mixed income communities and de-concentrated poverty because 8% of sq. footage has to be set aside as "affordable" at up to 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI), which is over \$109,000.
3. Increased density = more vibrant communities (more density means more concrete, less grass/open space).
4. The city has "limited resources" to deal with affordable housing crisis, homelessness, joblessness, etc.
5. Demolition and privatization of public housing will solve the affordable housing crisis.
6. All development is good; D.C. zoning commission passes everything.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION ON HOUSING POLICY
Below are 6 major points that expose city myths about housing and development.

1. Luxury developments exacerbate the housing crisis. They knock down existing affordable housing. They destabilize land values and raise rents. They are not affordable to people making less than 30-80% of Area Median Income which is over \$109,000.
2. Housing affordability should be based on a reasonable percentage of one's income.
3. It is important for people to have public spaces to meet, relax and build community. It is important for children to have recreation spaces. Nature is key to health and wellness.
4. The city constantly gives away public resources to private entities that are not accountable to the people.
5. The private market exacerbates affordable housing crisis under capitalism, because developers want to maximize profits. For example, at Barry Farm, they are eliminating public housing, giving away public land, and have no relocation plan for current residents.
6. Development that displaces and breaks up families and communities destroys the health, safety and welfare of D.C. residents. For example, Brookland Manor.

Link Up for Black August

Thursday, August 24 - 5:00 - 9:00 PM

411 Arts Collective - 634 Rhode Island Ave NE

Join ONE DC for a Black August event on People's Platform principle #7 Full access for returning citizens to housing, jobs, education, as well as decriminalization, demilitarization, and prison abolition.

[Click here to RSVP!](#)

Dahlgreen Courts

In 2011, Dahlgreen Courts residents exercised their rights under D.C.'s Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (also known as TOPA) to purchase the two-building, 96 unit historic complex in partnership with a Philadelphia-based non-profit developer, Mission First Housing Group. Built in the 1920s, the complex was in dire need of rehabilitation. After almost six years since the completion of this 20 million-dollar renovation, residents are organizing again to hold the city and Mission First, the non-profit developer who "renovated" the complex,

accountable for more than 150 housing code violations the residents are forced to live under.



Tenant Association Vice-President Vaughn Bennett, ONE DC housing organizer Yasmina Mrabet & Tenant Association President Leon Lightfoot

Officials have tried to use the common practice of bureaucracy to avoid the demands of residents and the Dahlgreen Courts Tenants Association. DCRA relinquished responsibility of the housing violations of paint peeling and cracked wall it cited to the DC Department of Energy and the Environment (DOEE). The DC Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), DC Housing Finance Agency (HFA), and Ward 5 council member, Kenyan McDuffie have opted to protect Mission First from claiming responsibility for the mess it has created, rather than answer to the complaints of the residents they have been placed in office to answer to.

These circumstances are why Bennett says the DCTA, ONE DC, and other committed individuals and organizations are seeking justice by demanding an investigation, potentially filing of criminal charges, and a civil suit against Mission First. Furthermore, Bennett says that residents are actively seeking a law firm to represent them in filing a lawsuit against Mission First Housing Group for fraud and breach of contract.

DCTA and residents like Vaughn Bennett show how vital it is for residents to organize in order to preserve livable conditions and affordable housing in the city. Bennett hopes his work “can inspire others and teach our children how to fight oppression.”

Even though, after significant pressure [through a joint tenants action](#), council member Kenyan McDuffie recently sent a letter to the Dahlgreen Courts Tenants Association in response to their demands, it is yet to be determined whether or not Mission First will truly be held accountable. Additionally, the Dahlgreen Courts Tenants Association is concerned over the redevelopment plans at Brookland Manor, and other gentrification projects in the Rhode Island Avenue area. ONE DC members and supporters across the city won't back down until the tenants at Dahlgreen Courts receive the proper renovations they

deserve, and until the various city agencies and the developers they serve are held accountable for their actions against the public.

13th & Savannah SE Residents Exercise TOPA Rights

What started off as an attempt from Solid Properties to attract the community at 13th & Savannah and convince them to sign a document giving up their TOPA rights became a means for tenants to fight for their future. When one member of the community, Muhammad Rasheed, started asking questions on the details of the documents, the representative dismissed him and insisted that his signature wasn't necessary for this to go through. ONE DC, Housing Counseling Services, and attorney Blake Biles joined tenants, including Muhammad Rasheed, to support their work to organize a tenants association in order to exercise their TOPA rights. Several meetings were called to get the message out to the community. Consequently, the newly formed tenants association was able to assign their rights to NHT, a non-profit developer that worked with the residents to reach an agreement.

"We were successfully able to practice our TOPA rights and pick a new owner for our community," says Rasheed when explaining the successful outcome. We hope such successful attempts become a norm as we continue to fight for the right to housing, income, and wellness in DC.



Join ONE DC for Mass Outreach Days

Want to support the housing struggles above and spread the word about ONE DC? Join us for weekly outreach:

- every Tuesday from 4 to 6 PM in Congress Heights
- every Thursday from 3 to 7 PM in various neighborhoods
- weekend & evening events as scheduled



To join the ONE DC Outreach team and receive updates on where and when outreach (and outreach training) will take place each week, whether you can join us for one week, some weeks, or every week, simply send an email to organizer@onedconline.org and we will add you to the list.

Public Land for Public Use, NOT Deals for Developers!

Amidst an affordable housing crisis in the District, politicians have been giving away our public land to private developers. In return, developers have donated large sums of money to campaigns run by those very same lawmakers. Over the past decade, \$2.5 million has been donated to campaigns by groups who received subsidies. DC, an already enticing place to build and develop, does not need subsidies to encourage development agencies. Our taxpayer money is being wasted, rather than spent on programs to improve our quality of life. Politicians have excused their behavior by pointing out that many of the developments promise affordable housing and job creation, but in reality, their promises often don't follow through. For example, the Arthur Capper/Carrollsborg complex in Southeast DC, after 11 years, still didn't have the promised recreation center, only half the public units had been replaced and only a fraction of the former families were moved back. Out of 110 redevelopment sites receiving subsidies, there were problems with half.

Since 2008, DC has turned over at least 20 public properties to developers-almost \$200 million worth of taxpayer money sold for 20 cents to the dollar. Politicians argue that the campaign donations do not influence their actions, but evidence shows that the top 5 development teams that gave the most donations to lawmakers won the 5 biggest land deals. [Stand with ONE DC](#) and low-income DC residents as we fight these injustices, and demand that greedy developers and politicians change their ways and bring truly affordable housing to the people.

[For more information regarding deals for developers, click here.](#)

Resource Generation Hosts House Party Fundraiser for the Black Workers Center



ONE DC is in the midst of raising \$2 MILLION to purchase a building to house the Black Workers Center. We are excited to announce we have received a \$1 million pledge! This means if we are able to raise \$1 million through our 10th Anniversary & Black Workers Center Capital Campaign, a major donor will match every donation up to \$1 million! One way we have been raising funds is through house parties. Thank you to Resource Generation for celebrating & raising funds for ONE DC this month!

Want to host a house party fundraiser for ONE DC? Email Dominic at dmoulden@onedconline.org or call 202.232.2915.

[Donate today to get YOUR NAME on the Black Workers Center Wall of Liberation!](#)

Upcoming Events

Time Banking Orientation for ONE DC Black Workers Center

Wednesday, August 9 - 6:00 PM

United Black Fund - 2500 MLK Jr Ave SE

Come learn what time banking is, why we need time banking as an alternative economic system, and set up your profile in the [DC Time Bank](#) so you can start earning & exchanging time banking credits for volunteer hours spent with the ONE DC Black Workers Center.

[Click here to RSVP](#)

Pack the Room: WMATA Board Meeting

Thursday, August 24 - 9AM - 12 PM

Washington Area Metropolitan Transit Authority - 600 5th St NW

With the next WMATA budget season looming, riders are worried that the system will keep getting worse. Join us at WMATA's August Board Meeting to demand that the WMATA Board holds a public meeting for community dialogue on the next budget at a time that is most convenient for riders. The WMATA Board meetings once a month and while they do allow for public testimony, the meetings are not accessible since they take place on Thursday mornings while many riders are at work.

[Click here to RSVP](#)

Community Announcements

Register for the People's Congress of Resistance

Registration is now open for the September 16-17 People's Congress of Resistance! This event will draw together grassroots resisters and diverse social

movements from around the country for an exciting weekend of strategizing, deliberation and information-sharing. [Click this link to register today!](#) The registration fee covers participation in the two-day event, not including housing, food and other personal expenses. If you cannot pay the registration fee but are eager to attend the People's Congress of Resistance, [please fill out this form](#). We are collectively fundraising so that no one will be unable to come on account of funds.

The People's Congress of Resistance is also looking for local volunteers in DC. [Click here to sign up.](#)

DC Research Collective: Need research to support progressive efforts?

Serving as mutual aid-based, collective resource for the social justice community in the DC-metro area, this collective of volunteer researchers can support progressive efforts with research and data analysis.

[Learn more, submit a research request, or join the Collective here.](#)

Contribute to the Black Workers Center Library

Did you know that ONE DC has an Amazon wishlist? Help contribute to our resources with prices starting at \$1, including the development of a non-imperialistic educational library for the Black Workers Center. Drop by the ONE DC office in Shaw sometime to check out what we currently have in our library!

[Click here to buy an item from our wish list.](#)

A D.C. Neighborhood's Transformation From "Chocolate" to "Cappuccino"

By Claire Cook

To longtime residents of Washington, D.C., the findings presented in Derek Hyra's [Race, Class, and Politics in the Cappuccino City](#)—that gentrifying neighborhoods' racial and economic diversity does not translate into integration—is likely not surprising.

As an organizer with Organizing Neighborhood Equity (ONE DC), a grassroots community organization working for racial and economic equity, and based in D.C.'s Shaw neighborhood, I've witnessed firsthand how a community can be "diverse" in name only.

The Black patrons inside Wanda's Hair Salon or chatting outside Sammy's carry-out do not generally have meaningful interactions and relationships with the young white professionals who are lined up around the same block to patronize the *Game of Thrones*-themed bar. We might all be moving through the same space, but integrated we are not. Hyra's findings in *Cappuccino City* present a needed challenge to the neo-liberal rhetoric that has dominated housing policy for the last few decades—that demolishing public and subsidized housing and replacing it with "mixed-income" privatized housing will combat the concentration of poverty through economic and racial integration.

Based on [years of ethnographic research](#), Hyra's *Race, Class, and Politics in the Cappuccino City* provides an in-depth look at gentrification in the Shaw neighborhood. For those new to either D.C. or to gentrification scholarship, the book should be required reading. The first three chapters lay out the historical and current conditions in D.C. that have contributed to the non-stop growth we

see today. He explores the rise and fall of D.C.'s Black political machine, exposing the differences between the District's Black mayors, their relationships with the Black community, and how they've represented (or more often not represented) the working-class community's interests.

Hyra also presents the complexity of the District's relationship to the federal government and how our lack of home rule and representation has left us to the whims of interfering members of Congress. Hyra documents the transition of Shaw from a "dark ghetto," an inner-city, poor Black community marked by disinvestment, to a "gilded ghetto," a transformed urban space where upscale restaurants, luxury apartment buildings, and trendy bars proliferate through gentrification and decades of pro-development urban policy.

Readers might find Hyra's concept of "living the wire" controversial. A nod to HBO's *The Wire*, a series set in impoverished, high-crime Black neighborhoods in Baltimore, Hyra finds through his interviews and observations that many white newcomers to Shaw were drawn to the neighborhood because of "[Black branding](#)" and its notorious past of prostitution, open-air drug markets, and drive-by shootings.

Wait a minute. Is Hyra really saying white people came to Shaw because they wanted to live in a violent neighborhood? No, of course not. But the motivations behind wealthier, whiter people fleeing the stagnant, "soulless" suburbs in a "return to the city" movement cannot be ignored.

Despite devaluing Black lives, white supremacy has always found a way to capitalize on Black culture. It is this attraction to living in a historically Black neighborhood—to "Black cool," that has drawn residents to Shaw. But although new residents may be consuming Black cool at places like Busboys & Poets, a hip, politically progressive restaurant-cafe on 14th St., for the most part, Hyra finds, newcomers ignore the existence and struggle of their actual poor and working-class Black neighbors.

[Click here to continue reading the review on Shelterforce.com](#)

ONE Bit of Good News - ONE DC featured on the Presbyterian Peace & Justice Monthly

On June 27th, ONE DC received a shout-out by the Presbyterian Committee for partnering with them on the Self-Development of People movement:

ONE DC is working to improve social and economic equity by organizing, training and educating housing residents in Shaw and the District.

"We are community organizers, working with longtime low-income residents," said Dominic Moulden, resource organizer for [ONE DC](#). "This organization has been around in one form or another for 20 years now and we've been connected with SDOP the entire time."

Moulden says the organization was built around three main goals; involving grassroots people in the decisions that affect their lives, minimizing hierarchy and professionalism in the organizations working for social change, and engaging in direct action to resolve social problems.

[Click here to continue reading](#)

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