2019 & 2020 PEOPLE’S PROGRESS REPORT:
WEATHERING THE STORM

ONE DC
ORGANIZING NEIGHBORHOOD EQUITY
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The MARINERS

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SLT Statement

WELCOME TO
2019 & 2020 PPR

So many storms have rolled in since our last People’s Progress Report, 2017-2018 Book of Fire, Book of Changes. The state-sanctioned piracy of Black lives in the street and in the supposed sanctuary of home (George Floyd and Breonna Taylor are only two of the plundered). The swells of anti-Asian violence and scapegoating, flowing from the highest office in the land and rushing through the body politic. The Groundhog Day of January 6, 2021, the forever-cresting wave of white supremacy. The tsunami of COVID-19 continues to pummel our family and community networks, our supply chains, and our nervous systems—and the pandemic laid bare the lack of structural supports and ballasts in the U.S. A supercell of evictions threatens the most vulnerable in the nation’s capital and beyond.

So the theme of this year’s PPR is Weathering the Storm, a centuries-old figure of speech referring to a ship surviving rough weather. If ONE DC has weathered the storm(s) in our path, it’s only because of the physics of solidarity and community. The safest ship on roiling seas is a fully loaded one, after all—and ONE DC is strong and sea-worthy insofar as we roll deep and don’t travel alone. With our supporters on deck, we are unsinkable.

- Shared Leadership Team

Customs Manifest

REAFFIRMING OUR MISSION AND VALUES

AT ONE DC, OUR MISSION IS TO EXERCISE POLITICAL STRENGTH TO CREATE AND PRESERVE RACIAL AND ECONOMIC EQUITY IN THE DISTRICT.

OUR VALUES

IN THE SPIRIT OF ELLA JO BAKER, we value grassroots, democratic leadership.

IN THE SPIRIT OF MOTHER JONES, we value grassroots organizing and strategic hell-raising for justice.

IN THE SPIRIT OF DENMARK VESEY, we value sharing of power and resources for our collective liberation.

IN THE SPIRIT OF STANDING BEAR, we value people’s right to indigenous culture and stewardship of land.

IN THE SPIRIT OF IDA B. WELLS, we value organizing to expose injustice, raise consciousness, and affirm human dignity.

IN THE SPIRIT OF NANNIE HELEN BURROUGHS, we value education, and collective work and cooperation.

IN THE SPIRIT OF CLAUDIA JONES, we value internationalism and solidarity with liberation movements around the world.

We value our lives, spirits, and our collective personhood. We value our unique human potential to organize for social change and justice. We value the work of the poor, oppressed, and disenfranchised. We value free expression of human love, sexuality, art, culture, and language.

We, the people of ONE DC, as members, supporters, shared leadership team members, and staff stand firm and bear witness to the possibility of a just, fair, and equitable District of Columbia. We share our values with you to build a caring society and community for all!
At our annual retreat in July 2018, members, staff, volunteers, and Shared Leadership Team members sat under the shade of a large oak tree reflecting on work of the previous years. 2018 marked the 12th year of ONE DC’s organizing efforts for racial and economic equity in the District. As with every annual Shared Leadership Team retreat, we reflected about the state of our organization. As we did so, a recurring question arose from the group. What would it look like for ONE DC to turn our work inward for a time of deep learning and reflection?

SLT Member Ka Flewellen reflected on the process, “Creative Reconstruction was an intentional space to look inward, to address challenges and identify areas of growth. We reaffirmed our core values and movement ancestors to inspire us and recommitted with determination to the long journey of transformative organizing starting with ourselves.”

We heard feedback from our members during our shared leadership listening sessions in the spring of 2018, and took these conversations into account while wrestling with questions about prioritizing the direction of our work for the coming year. At the end of our discussions, dialogues, and through a process of consensus building, it became clear that there was energy in the room to take on this internal work of reflection and transformation.
EMANCIPATION DAY 2019

To commemorate the 157th anniversary of the day that slavery was abolished in DC, ONE DC partnered with We Act Radio and held an Emancipation Day Freedom School in Southeast, focusing on elements of DC history not taught in schools. Residents of all ages participated in workshops and discussions. Dr. C.R. Gibbs, spoke on the history of slavery in the District. Breathologist Ayo Handy-Kendi, led a community meditation session to honor our ancestors and find peace with their memory, and Mignote Kebede discussed her documentary, “What Happened 2 Chocolate City.”

LEAP 2019

In 2019, ONE DC reinstated LEAP (Leadership Education for Action and Power), our unique political education and leadership development curriculum designed to create a cohort of member-leaders who have a shared understanding of ONE DC’s Mission, Vision and Values and are equipped with the skills needed to be successful organizers. Through LEAP, ONE DC members deepen their political analysis by learning the histories of displacement and resistance, outreach and facilitation techniques, effective and ethical leadership practices, how to plan and execute People’s Assemblies and how to develop cooperative economies and alternative systems of political and economic organization.

PEOPLE’S ASSEMBLY 2020

In February 2020, over 140 D.C. residents participated in ONE DC’s first ever People’s Assembly in order to craft our campaign priorities for 2020. Ta’Lisa Turner, ONE DC member and Outreach Coordinator, noted that the People’s Assembly was held on the first day of Black History Month. In this spirit, we began the program by calling out our movement ancestors, such as Fannie Lou Hamer, Claudia Jones, Nannie Helen Burroughs, and others. Designed to build power among D.C.’s Black working-class and engage longtime D.C. residents in our campaigns, this all-day event was a resounding success. After introducing ourselves and reflecting on ONE DC’s past victories, we watched several skits about how politicians, large corporations, and developers work together to exploit and displace working-class Black Washingtonians in the interest of making profits. Through discussing these skits and our own experiences living in the city, we thought about how we could build campaigns around housing and workplace justice in 2020. However, these campaigns were put on hold as we shifted to respond to the pandemic’s impact on our base.
RIGHT TO HOUSING COMMITTEE

Long-time DC residents gathered at Thurgood Marshall Academy on October 5th to tackle the issues of landlord neglect and displacement by force in the District.

On Saturday, April 25, thousands of people across 40+ cities mobilized car protests demanding a cancellation of rents and mortgages for the duration of the pandemic. ONE DC members joined the 30+ car protest in Washington, DC. The caravan made its way first to Mayor Bowser’s house, calling on her administration to cancel rents and mortgages for renters, homeowners, and small businesses and landlords in DC. The car protestors honked their way past the White House before arriving at DC Jail, calling for the immediate release of incarcerated people at risk of infection.
BLACK WORKERS & WELLNESS CENTER

BWWC Learning Circle

Throughout 2019, several members came together in a monthly Learning Circle to learn about the legacy of progressive action that we are carrying forward. By engaging with text, media, and storytelling, we learn from one another and our predecessors about guiding principles and ideals of racial equity, cooperative economics, and community building. The Learning Circle also held a talk with Jessica Gordon Nembhard, a member of ONE DC’s Shared Leadership Team and author of Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice. The discussion ranged from the history of cooperative efforts among African-Americans to the present and future efforts of ONE DC to build cooperative enterprises in D.C.

September 2020: ONE DC’s Right to Income Committee co-sponsored a webinar, “Worker Cooperatives and the Movement for Socialism,” with the Claudia Jones School for Political Education. The program featured panelists Jessica Gordon Nembhard, Richard Wolff, and Camila Piñeiro Harnecker, as well as a performance by the Black Workers Chorus. The National Reentry Network for Returning Citizens, hosted the first cohort of its “Ready to Work Program” at the Black Workers and Wellness Center. The program is designed to assist returning citizens in their transition back into the workforce. Members learned how to write a resume and deliver a 30-second pitch, and then participated in mock interviews to prepare them to find work. Since its introduction last year, 60% of the participants of the cohort were hired within two weeks of starting the program.

Coming Home Coop also found a home in the BWWC. The Coming Home Coop is a new project whose purpose is to empower returning citizens and other justice-involved persons to work together to create financially stable futures for themselves and others. The Coop is operated by Haul Masters LLC, a local business owned by returning citizen entrepreneur Willie M. Hill, and is currently funded by the District of Columbia Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD).

 Partners:


2019

$100,000 Donation

In January, $100,000 thousand donation has been received for renovations of the buildings

SHARE FUND PLEDGED to match all donations

In February, Share Fund pledged to match all donations made towards BWWC renovations

500+PEOPLE visited the BWCC

In June, 500+ people (DC residents and people from all over) visited the BWCC for our Juneteenth in DC Festival, which included a wellness activity for children and adults

In July, Capital Construction Group tapped to be general contractor

In August, Held a funder site visit at the BWWC

October 2019, Received $500,000 gift and three years of commitment of $100K per year for operating from Kataly (Chrysalis Fund)

2020

$10,000 Raised

In February, $10,000 was raised for renovations

$25,000 Received

In February, $25,000 was received for commitment of renovations

In March, Interior demolition begins

In April, Basement masonry begins

In May, Interior demolition completed; basement structural work begins

In June, New BWCC organizer hired

$20,000 Funding Received

In July, $20,000 received funding commitment from LISC

In August, Partnered with two community artists to design murals for the center

In October, Concrete pour for elevator shaft begins

$25,000 Exceeded Goal

In December, $25,000 fundraising goal was exceeded for Giving Tuesday
In spring of 2019, with the support of ONE DC, 16 people from the Cofamilia Childcare Cooperative enrolled in courses at Montgomery College, which will help qualify them for childcare development licenses. The 16 students are a mix of worker-owners and several newer recruits that are starting to learn about the benefits of joining a worker cooperative.

The Dulce Hogar Cleaning Cooperative, a worker-owned cleaning cooperative supported by ONE DC, became operational in 2019. The seven worker-owners participated in a yearlong training process, which included logo and brand development, governance, financial literacy, and cooperative principles. Dulce Hogar has now begun taking on clients across DC and in the immediate Virginia suburbs.

ONE DC organized with nine residents to develop testimony and show support for the REACH Act, which was legislation introduced to assess the impact of government practices on racial equity in the city. ONE DC joined with Empower DC, Bread for the City, SPACEs, Jews United for Justice, Working Families, and several other organizations to hold educational sessions for community members about racial equity, the DC Initiative, and the Act itself.

In October 2020, the first reading of the REACH Act passed in the council by a unanimous vote! This latest version of the REACH Act reflects a great deal of input by the DC Initiative, of which ONE DC is a member. Many of the coalition’s priorities made it into the final bill thanks to tremendous turnout at hearings a year and a half ago, and multiple meetings held with the council chairman. The community needs a larger say in how DC advances racial equity. The REACH Act would form a Race, Equity, and Social Justice Commission, with commissioners who have real, lived experience with injustice to oversee the District’s racial equity efforts.
Dominic’s Transition Statement:

As the Resource Organizer for ONE DC, I’m writing to make an important and joyful announcement. This year, 2019, marks a truly unique year for ONE DC. It is year 13 since we began our journey as a community organizing collective organizing for racial and economic equity in Shaw and the District. We are also in a period of Creative Reconstruction, ONE DC organizers, members, and shared leadership team are healing and learning together. This process also includes critiquing ourselves and our organization and doing the work necessary to imagine what our work looks like in the future.

Looking around me, I am honored to stand beside people committed to organizing for liberation and to see the strong and courageous ONE DC movement that we ALL have created. The work I am most proud of is the relationships we have built and sustained. Liberation always requires transformation. For us to grow, something must shift. This shift doesn’t mean anything is wrong, it means that we as an organization are ready to grow in new formations and ways. Shifting is possible for organizations and individuals and I am writing to inform you that at the end of 2019, I am transitioning off of staff as the Resource Organizer for ONE DC.

In the shared leadership structure, no one person is the spoke that keeps the wheel turning. There are many spokes. My transition is an act of solidarity with the movement work of ONE DC. It is rooted in the belief that no one person holds an organization up. I will continue to work closely with our membership and Shared Leadership Team throughout this time. I am committed to working closely with ONE DC to ensure that organizational history and information is transferred. I ask you to bravely support us as we lead this transformation at ONE DC.

Now in my third decade of organizing in DC, I’m reflecting on what it means to be black and fearless. To me, being fearless means evaluating our organizational capacity; it means fostering membership development and healing; it means taking charge of your own political education and your own leadership development. And it means supporting the staff that will continue to redevelop and reorient the culture of ONE DC after my resignation. This one quote comes to mind:

“YOU CANNOT CHANGE ANY SOCIETY UNLESS YOU TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR IT, UNLESS YOU SEE YOURSELF AS BELONGING TO IT AND RESPONSIBLE FOR CHANGING IT.”

—GRACE LEE BOGGS
ONE DC is a strong and a courageous organization. We have a long history of people who have demonstrated a commitment to organizing for a more equitable future. As I look back at the strength we have built as a collective, I am ready to fight with you all into the future and to continue our wins in our Right to Housing, Income and Wellness campaigns. A Transition Committee has been formed and is responsible for identifying knowledge transfer, strengthening staff leadership, and working with me this year and next to ensure a smooth transition for staff and membership. I will continue to work closely with them during this time and in the future. I look forward to joining the powerful membership of ONE DC, and hope you will too.

I want to thank you for allowing me to be a part of this very special organization. I’m committed to working with all of you to bring a life of joy and liberation in DC to fruition. Please look out for other announcements and information in the coming months.

THANK YOU FOR THE MANY SPECIAL MEMORIES AND THE CHANCE TO SMELL THE ROSES.

In solidarity,

— DOMINIC T. MOULDEN

It is important to remember that this is a Black-led organization with an internationalist perspective. We struggle in coalition with other organizations like Right to the City, Rising Majority, and the Movement for Black Lives. It is important that we reflect on struggles and lessons learned in order to move forward with a model to practice open and direct democracy.

We need to change our behavior to create working-class power. We need to acknowledge how destructive power can be. We need healing and wellness and we need to hold one another accountable.

Why is it that when we are in agreement, we burn down our own house? How do we acknowledge our contradictions? If people want to be a part of this, study the Black Panther Party, SNCC and the Civil Rights Movement. We cannot be liberal in resolving this. There are no perfect people and no perfect movements. We must be transformative in our work if we want to work for liberation.

LESSONS:

The most important lesson: In organizing for the liberation of Black people there is a lot of transformative work to confront capitalism and patriarchy because we are so accustomed to it. It makes a shared leadership model harder to accept. We need to create habits and new ways of thinking. In organizing, you need to accept the power and authority of working-class Black women who must make tough decisions and hold others accountable. People are not accustomed to doing this. We do not always accept them making community decisions. There is not enough of this in DC. We won’t get free unless we do what George Jackson talked about.

People need to: **“Study, fast, train, and fight.”** We need to challenge ourselves to do our own study and organize our base. What are we practicing that is connected to black liberation?

**REFLECTING ON VICTORIES:**

ONE DC is putting a lot of resources into LEAP. Consistent commitment to political education amongst our base is key. Campaigns for land liberation and protests against leaders in DC such as occupying offices. Claiming parcel 42 and Temperance Row shows what kind of work we need to do. The government has consistently turned down public housing. More of this is needed. The campaign to control community space through the Black Workers & Wellness Center for the community. It is controlled by the people and it should be in a land trust someday.
Kicking Up a Storm
ON JUNETEENTH

On Wednesday, June 19, 2019 in commemoration of the first observance of Juneteenth, ONE DC held a Juneteenth Community Learning Event with over 230 people in attendance on the history and significance of Juneteenth.

On Friday, June 19, 2020, ONE DC partnered with Serve Your City, Bigger Than Key, Party for Socialism and Liberation, SURJ DC, IWW DC, It Takes Roots, Right to the City Alliance, and the Movement for Black Lives to commemorate Juneteenth with a Defund MPD / Cancel Rent Rally & Protest March. We gathered outside Landlord-Tenant Court in Judiciary Square to call attention to looming mass evictions.
Running a Tight Ship

Administration and Black Workers and Wellness Center expenses accounted for the majority of the expenses at 29.6% (or $154,199) and 25.9% (or $134,625), respectively for 2020. Adjustments were made to move from in-person organizing to virtual organizing during the COVID-19 quarantine. This change increased some of the costs in administration.

During 2020, despite the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting quarantine period, the organization raised 54% of its income or $490,143 from grants and 23% or $205,164 from corporations. Some funds were received to complete the renovations of the Black Workers and Wellness Center while others were received to organize around COVID-related housing and income issues.

Thank you for being our shelter in the storm!
(Any omissions or misspellings: please charge it to the head and not the heart.)

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People’s Progress Report 2019 & 2020

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We are grateful for the support of our donors and allies who have helped us weather the storm. This report highlights the contributions of the following organizations and individuals:

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- Church of the Epiphany
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- Brown University
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Thank you for your support!
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