



VOLAR - 2019 Recap



VOLAR

Village of Love and Resistance

Co-creating a cooperative community in East Baltimore owned by Black and Brown people, to create opportunities for historical residents to acquire, co-own, rehab, and sell/rent property to generate alternative sources of income.

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Community Partners Strategic Plan Web Presence	Building Acquisition Change.org Petition Acquisition Goals Care Taking Council	Funding	Membership Global Pandemic

VOLAR makes strides toward goals in 2019

Who is VOLAR

Village of Love and Resistance (“VOLAR”) is a Black and Brown-led community organizing and community development collective. Together, we have more than 100 years of experience of living, working, worshipping, studying, playing, and praying in East Baltimore.

Our organizing strategy is multifaceted as we are working to recover and transform a former church building into a community wellness center and organizing hub, and to rebuild and reinvest into the surrounding neighborhoods by organizing with and as local, Black residents for neighborhood redevelopment. We are using a community investment trust fund model to assure small-dollar

investment by Black residents within several of the surrounding zip codes of our community hub. Through our organizing we aim for East side residents to become leaders in the process of reimagining and redeveloping the city of Baltimore and co-owners of land and property. We center love and healing in our organizing, knowing that housing and economic self-determination alone will not heal the trauma of 401 years of racialized capitalism and its effect on ourselves and our communities.

501c3 Status

VOLAR received its federal non-profit tax exempt status in July 2019. It is officially a 501 (c) (3) tax exempt organization. This means that any donations made to VOLAR can be deducted from that person’s taxes when they file. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to VOLAR and support us moving forward. We are especially grateful for monthly recurring donations. Thank you for your generosity!

DONATE HERE:

<https://www.volar.site/donate>

VOLAR Board 2020

Marisela Gomez, President

Dominic Moulden

Lenora Knowles, Secretary

Pam Jordan

Katherine Williams, Treasurer

Community Mapping Workshop



Community Partners

VOLAR has been engaged with Neighborhood Design Center (NDC) since 2018. Thanks to their generous support and deep ties in the Baltimore community, several architects joined our VOLAR team to provide concept and spatial designs. NDC, through their Partnership with MICA's Social Design Program brought a MICA social design student to intern with VOLAR's team. She completed a Captstone project with VOLAR while helping us develop our strategic narrative and different informational material. NDC also provided grant writing support and networking with potential resources.

Since 2018 VOLAR partnered with University of Baltimore Community Development Law Clinic. They have provided us with valuable support in drafting legal documents to assure VOLAR remains in good standing in the community. As well, since 2018 we partnered with University of Maryland

Small Business and Community Development Equity Clinic Community Law Clinic who have been helping us develop our community investment trust fund structure.

Since 2019 VOLAR has been supported by one of Miles and Stockbridge partners who is providing pro bono/low bono securities legal support.

From 2017- 2019 VOLAR has been supported by Gilmore and Khandar LLC who has provided pro bono legal support in corporate formation and maintenance.

Web Presence

Thanks to the generous time of students from Professor Worg's Political Science course at Towson University, we were able to come into the present with a website!! Please visit our website and send us feedback. www.volar.site

Strategic Plan

At the end of January, VOLAR began our strategic plan for 2020 in a retreat by the Chesapeake Bay. It was a beautiful weekend of fellowship amongst members of the Caretaking Council, reflection on what we've accomplished so far, and visioning for how we want to expand our work to heal ourselves and our communities, reclaim land through community led development practices, and do equitable community led development here in Baltimore city. We primarily focused our visioning around the work areas of building our base and leadership development, organizational development, our radical organizing academy, fundraising, the building acquisition, and the formation of our cooperative living space to be built at the VOLAR hub. COVID hit as we were finalizing our strategic plans. Now, much of our work over the last few months has been reorienting our work and plans around this new reality of a global pandemic.

Caretaking Council

VOLAR's Care-Taking Council ("CTC") is a nonhierarchical decision-making body that has the powers of making the day-to-day decisions in operating the organization.

- Marisela Gomez
- Dominic Moulden
- Lenora Knowles
- Pam Jordan
- Katherine Williams
- Sabriya Linton
- Kenneth Clemons
- Darnell Ingram



Building Acquisition

Since 2017, VOLAR has had the goal of acquiring a building in East Baltimore to serve as a community hub and provide housing affordable to current residents. In 2019, VOLAR began exploring the possibility of acquiring 1025 and 1031 E Monument Avenue, formerly the Centennial-Caroline St. United Methodist Church. This included touring the building, initiating discussions with the owner, hiring a real estate broker, getting pro-bono legal assistance and soliciting donations for the acquisition and renovation of the building.

Change.org Petition

In the Fall of 2019, VOLAR encountered major roadblocks in acquiring our first property that residents will be invited to co-invest in, The Caroline Centennial Church. Specifically, VOLAR almost lost the building to other buyers, who were deemed a lower economic risk by the owners, The United Methodist Church. This occurred despite VOLAR meeting all requirements for the acquisition. In December 2019, VOLAR established a change.org petition to communicate this issue and garner support from residents in and outside Baltimore, political and clergy leaders, community organizations, and



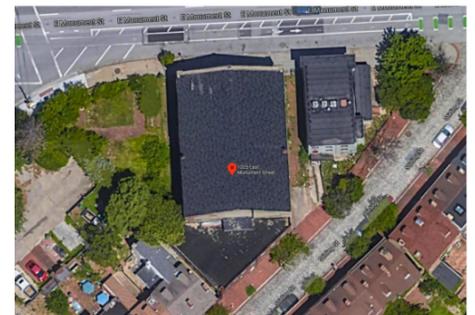
churches. More than 1500 supporters signed the petition and their support was critical in helping VOLAR encourage representatives of the United Methodist Church to meet with VOLAR and learn more about the VOLAR mission, halt the sale of the property to the other buyer, and reconsider VOLAR's offer.

<https://www.change.org/p/baltimore-washington-conference-of-the-united-methodist-board-of-trustees-support-baltimore-residents-in-taking-back-the-land>

Building Acquisition Goals 2020

Currently, we just placed a contract on the Old Centennial Church on Monument Street. We are continuing to plan with local stakeholders (council people, residents in the surrounding area, merchants, churches) to assure all hands on deck. We hired a project manager to manage the acquisition of the building and

continue to sort through the acquisition process to assure we're in good shape to begin renovation once we get the title for the building. This includes meeting with the city planner and zoning folks from the city, develop RFQs and interview architects, etc.





Settle your quarrels, come together, understand the reality of our situation, understand that fascism is already here, that people are already dying who could be saved, that generations more will live poor butchered half-lives if you fail to act. Do what must be done, discover your humanity and your love in revolution. ---George Jackson SOURCE

2019 Funding Received

The year 2019 was a busy year for VOLAR as we started revving up to identify funds to move us into implementing our mission. In early 2019 a generous major donor provided us our first \$20,000 to start operating. This was followed by her and her partner again donating later in that year, the funds necessary to acquire the building we had identified to be VOLAR's Community Hub in East Baltimore. This was a generous lump sum of \$487,500. This is the way to be in solidarity and peaceful warriorship on this path of collective land liberation, wellness, love and people power. We received donations from more than 10 other individual donors, ranging from \$25 - \$7,500, as well one recurring monthly donor. We used Paypal on our website to invite anyone who wanted to donate, any amount, an easy way to do so.

We received donations from two fundraising events in 2019: a Non Violent Communication Theatre of the Oppressed presentation and a White Awareness and Mindfulness presentation. The generosity of these events provided VOLAR with approximately \$2000.00.

In the fall of 2019, we started working with three Robert Wood

Johnson Fellows from the Culture of Health Interdisciplinary Leadership Program. The dollar equivalent of this partnership includes a \$325,000 grant distributed over 3 years to cover a stipend for the fellows and salary for a community organizer. This grant will fund the development and implementation of our Popular Political Financial Education Workshop series for local residents in the four zipcodes surrounding VOLAR's community Hub. Following this series of workshops, participants will receive a certificate that will enable them to become a small-dollar investor in VOLAR's Community Hub in East Baltimore.

Our donor base has been primarily from the Maryland, DC, Virginia base. We hope to expand our individual donor base nationwide in the next year.



Some of the VOLAR caretaking council.



VOLAR membership program.

Membership in VOLAR: The Village of Love and Resistance invites you to join our movement of healing and wellness. VOLAR is a east Baltimore based collective which organizes for community control of land, housing, labor, and wellness. We want you to join our work to co-create healthy and safe spaces to live, learn, and love. We are building a base to practice our values to organize and use our power to grow as community healers to nurture and care for each other in east Baltimore and throughout this city. Please join us and visit our website at www.volar.site

VOLAR and the Global pandemics of a virus and racism

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The COVID19 pandemic broke open the existing cracks of uneven investment and development that have been the reality in our historically under-resourced communities like East and West Baltimore, the Black Butterfly. The legacy of redlining, urban renewal, planned shrinkage, mass incarceration, and gentrification are the structures engineered by government and private partnerships that led to the current gaps between white and rich people and people living in the Black Butterfly. This lack of investment is evident in the lack of land ownership and affordable housing, and disparities in health, income, wealth, education and more. Before the pandemic, VOLAR's mission was to address these growing cracks through land liberation and ownership and grassroots organizing to build a powerful base. Individual and community wellness, respect for each other, and love are the foundational skills we are growing to accomplish our mission.

With the pandemic, our mission remains the same and confirms the urgency of our work. COVID19 continues to disproportionately affect Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, the poor, the under-employed and unemployed, and the 'disposable' arm of the economy-those who are quickly hired and fired at the whim of an extractive capitalist economy. VOLAR lives in the same communities disproportionately affected by COVID19 and sees the impact in food shortage, increased

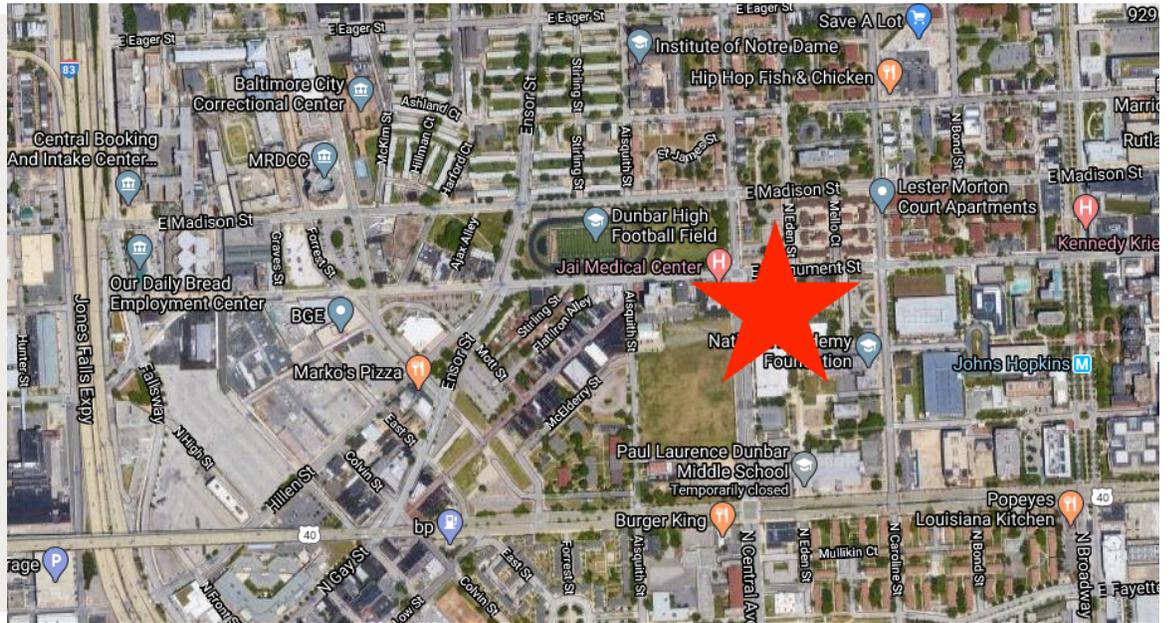
unemployment, lack of access to internet for education and health information, rent challenges, and much more.

Racial and class injustice is not new to the Black Butterfly. Driving across the white L between East and West Baltimore it's clear that we have two Baltimore's. In the aftermath of Freddie Gray's death in Baltimore police custody this became more evident. Five years later, after the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis by police officers, Baltimore again rises to protest this violence and demand justice: for Freddie Gray and Tyrone West and George Floyd, and Breona Taylor, and Sandra Bland, and Korryn Gaines, and Rekia Boyd, Aubrey Ahmad. All Black people killed by a system and structure of racial violence against Black and Brown bodies. Addressing the uneven structures that build segregated communities devoid of decent and safe housing, affordable housing ownership, adequate education, health, recreation, and transportation is what VOLAR is about. We are building villages that will resist with love and wellness all forms of injustice that continue to demonize and marginalize the collective humanity of Black and Brown lives.



Community members attend workshop to discuss equitable community rebuilding that stops gentrification and displacement.

VOLAR's Future Community Hub Location



2020 Black August Campaign

The Village of Love and Resistance - VOLAR celebrates the Black Freedom Movement's season of Black August. During Black August we have a special appeal for the renovation of the community and wellness center. This will be a Black and Brown liberation space essential to our future in East Baltimore.

Black August is a celebration of our history of Black resistance during this month and remembering the legacy of resisters such as Angela Davis, Assatur Shakur, and our ancestor George Jackson. They all fought against the military and police state and structural violence

embedded in the United States racial capitalism system. Our center is a collective liberation space to heal us and practice healthy living. The center is a place where co-housing, daycare, wellness practices and community controlled retail spaces are designed for our health and not to extract our resources.

We ask you to give now to our special liberation zone and share in the vision and renovation of our sacred space where the legacy of Davis, Shakur, and Jackson will be lived out in our radical organizing academy. See <http://volar.site> for more details.

Village of Love and Resistance (VOLAR) is a 501c3 nonprofit.

Village of Love and Resistance (VOLAR)

Baltimore, MD

<https://www.volar.site/>

To:

Are you free enough to resist with love? -Zenju Earthlyn Manuel