



# VOLAR - 2021 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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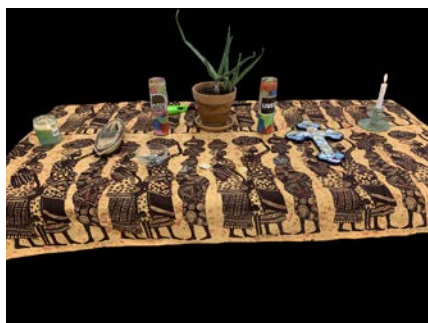
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Own Our Hood  
Lucille Gorham  
Fellowship

## VOLAR in 2021

### Accomplishments

What has VOLAR learned over the last 365 days? We learned that our neighbors love us. While our buildings, acquired in November 2020, are in the process of renovation, our neighbors on Stirling Street stepped in to offer us space for regular meetings as the temperatures dropped. During the warmer months we sat outside on the veranda for meetings, enjoying the welcoming glances of passerbys and responding about how



VOLAR would renovate these long-abandoned buildings. Through our base-building strategies of door-knocking and one-on-ones we learned that our neighbors want more positive activities for their children, better upkeep of their homes managed by the Housing Authority of Baltimore City, access to affordable health care and housing, greater sense of safety. We learned that it takes members committed to the mission of equity for Black people, we have to love the people. We learned that even though the work is urgent, finding time to take good care of our health, is also urgent. We are grateful for all the lessons and continue to lean into our mission of reclaiming land, reclaiming health, and rebuilding communities of justice and healing.

### Board

VOLAR received its federal non-profit tax exempt status in July 2019. It is officially a 501 (c) (3) tax exempt organization.

#### DONATE HERE:

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

#### VOLAR Board 2021

Marisela Gomez, President  
Dominic Moulden  
Lenora Knowles, Secretary  
Pam Jordan



Radical Organizing School.  
Presentation on Uneven Development  
Summer 2021



## Redistributing resources

This has been another generous year for VOLAR in connecting to folks: strategic partners, legal assistance through University of Baltimore Community Law Clinic volunteers and Venroy July at Wright and Dickinson. New volunteer board members for our subsidiary Benefit corporation, China Boak Terrell and Parag Khandar. Financially, our recurring donors increased from 4 to 10 over 2021, ranging from \$10 to \$100 monthly! We had a Go Fund Me Campaign that raised more than \$11,443.00 online and activated another \$2,000 offline. In January 2021 we completed our First Annual Winter Appeal, which raised almost \$1,500.00. We received more than \$320,000 in foundation grants and approximately \$65,000 from individual donors. Whew, what a year!! We are ever so grateful to all those who have supported VOLAR in accomplishing its mission, in small and large ways. We take great pride and joy in knowing that you trust us to continue to practice individual

and collective healing and rebuilding of just communities. We hope all of our resource mobilizers realize that they are members of VOLAR, part of the VOLAR family, not just donors or funders. Because you are there, we are here, we inter-are.

Donate here:

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



Base Building Committee hosts new member orientation.  
Fall 2021

## 2021 in Brief

- Raised nearly \$400,000
- Doubled the number of monthly donors
- Hosted one online and one in-person new member orientations
- Hosted one online and two outdoor ROS political education sessions (p3,4)
- Hosted an in-person wellness gathering
- Hired a part-time community organizer (p4)
- Hosted a organizing and community development fellow (p5)
- Hired an architect for the Community Hub and Coop Housing project (p6)
- Finalized design for the Coop Housing (p6)
- Held bi-monthly CTC meetings
- Increased online and social media presence (p3)
- Created the Own Our Hood Training curriculum (p5)

New Member Orientation  
Fall 2021



## 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

## Organizing for Ensor Street Community Park

In early 2021, VOLAR decided to acquire a short strip of land adjacent to our current property on Monument Street. Because the city government was not forthcoming in how we could acquire the land, we began an organizing campaign to find out from residents what the land should be used for. Read all about our

campaign and the more than 325 community residents who signed our petition advocating for VOLAR to acquire this land and transform it a healing space: a community space for children, walking meditation, labyrinth, outside gym.

<https://www.volar.site/about-1>

## Radical Organizing School

Even with the pandemic VOLAR's Radical Organizing School (ROS) has been hard at work creating spaces for political education among our members and local neighbors. For instance, over the spring and summer we explored the history and current state of uneven development and local Black movements, past and present, organizing to resist and transform it. In September, we explored the history of Black August and why we must continue celebrating the successes and strive for greater equity for Black people in Baltimore and beyond. In November, we hosted a wellness gathering for members

and our neighbors. Most participants received ear acupuncture for the first time and later expressed interest in the next opportunity for this! We know that addressing mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical health are essential for our survival and liberation as Black people. This gathering was a time for members and neighbors to participate in and learn about different healing and wellness practices.

In 2021, VOLAR hired a part-time community organizer to support the work of the ROS and Base building.

## ROS Saturday School



In 2021 we hosted one online and two outdoor ROS political education sessions and a wellness gathering for current members, prospective members, and supporters of VOLAR.



## Building Relationships and Community Presence

Through the work of our Own Our Hood Program, Ensor Street Organizing Committee, and Part-time organizer, we've developed an emerging community presence and regular practice of relationship building through door knocking and one-on-one conversations with residents.

## Base Building

VOLAR is a base-building organization. We are about developing grassroots leaders who are committed to bringing about healing and community control of land and housing.

Two key aspects of our work to build leaders is relationship deep building with and developing leaders among low-income Black folks living in the public housing and complexes and neighborhoods immediately surrounding VOLAR's buildings. Our Radical Organizing School and Base-Building committee teamed up throughout this year to create important opportunities, virtually and in person, for recruiting new member-leaders and building skills and consciousness around key healing and organizing practices.

Building a beloved community in the midst of a global pandemic and in the wake of displacement of historic Black residents and the demolition of public housing hasn't been easy. Nevertheless, we're clear that building grassroots community power of the most vulnerable is key to transforming the status quo of our neighborhoods and this city. We organize and resist with love and joy.



**Welcoming New Members** - This year we hosted one online and one in-person new member orientations. Our new members have gotten involved in the world of fundraising, canvassing, and neighborhood clean-ups.

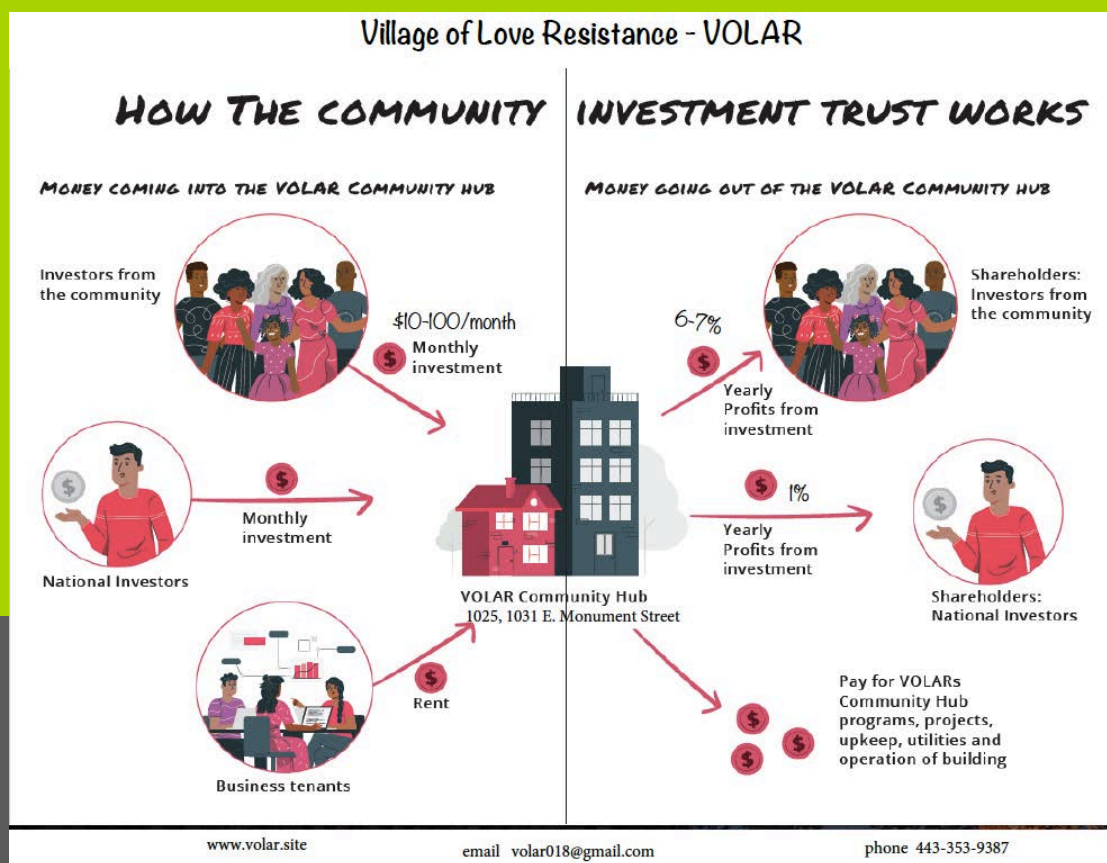


Ensor Street is our latest struggle for community control of land, which includes our organizing efforts to acquire the Ensor Street Green space from the city. Check out our website for more information about our efforts to acquire the Ensor Street Green space to a much needed green space for community gardening, recreation, and meditation.

## CTC Popular Political Education Sessions

We've held three PE sessions for our shared leadership team on the Popular Political Education for Organizing, Grassroots Organizing and Leadership Development and Healing and Love in Organizing. These sessions provided a chance for leadership to build consciousness, consider organizational strategy, and engage in critical self-reflection.





## Own Our Hood

We continued to develop the Own Our Hood Training Program that is required for our local community residents to become small-dollar investors. Our Community Advisory Council helped to assure that the popular financial education curriculum was accessible to residents and helped with recruiting members for the Training. By the end of December 2021, VOLAR would have completed its first Own Our Hood Training - 9-hour training offered over 3 separate workshops- with neighboring residents from Latrobe Housing. We will continue this Training Program every other month throughout the 2022 year to assure that approximately 100 residents will qualify to become co-investors and co-owners of VOLAR's buildings. Thanks to the generous support of donors and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, VOLAR is able to develop and offer this curriculum and guarantee a return on investment during the first year of investment. Once the buildings are renovated and fully occupied, residents will continue to receive a return on their investment and share in decision-making about the Buildings-Housing cooperative and Community Hub. In 2021, the OOH program hired a part-time administrative assistant and is currently interviewing for a full-time community organizer.

## Lucille Gorham Fellowship

VOLAR initiated a community fellow position as part of its community organizing and community development work in East Baltimore. The fellowship is named in honor of Ms. Lucille Gorham, an organizer and displaced Middle East resident. She strategized and organized with her neighbors to resist uneven development and mass displacement. Dominic T. Moulden, who was born and raised in Perkins Homes and Johnston Square, became our inaugural Gorham fellow in 2020. Read more about his fellowship at [www.volar.site](http://www.volar.site) - Lucille Gorham Fellow.



Own Our Hood program providing mutual aid. November 2021

VOLAR's Future  
Community Hub and  
Cooperative Housing



## Community Hub and Coop Housing Update

After the 2020 acquisition of the Centennial Church, VOLAR began the process of transforming the building in a Community Hub and Cooperative Housing. VOLAR hired a development consultant to help guide the Real Estate committee through the endeavor.

An RFP was created and five firms responded. VOLAR reviewed submission and interviewed firms. The Adams Design Group, led by Derrick Adams was selected to work with us to design the project.

Over the last year, the design team has surveyed the site and buildings, has reviewed code requirements of the site

and buildings. VOLAR has final design for the Cooperative Housing building and the architect will be creating construction documents to put out to bid. VOLAR will also raise the remainder of the fund for construction of this for Phase 1. The design of the Community Hub will be finalized in early 2022.

Our Co-operative Living team offered two events on various types of cooperative living. Our invited presenters from the Ella Jo Baker Intentional Community Cooperative and two Zen Residential Communities shared with us about living in community with intention.

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

### Village of Love and Resistance (VOLAR)

Baltimore, MD

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

@volarbmore on IG, Facebook, and Twitter.



To:

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