



Blocks Together Bi-Annual Report

Building Power and Strengthening Communities

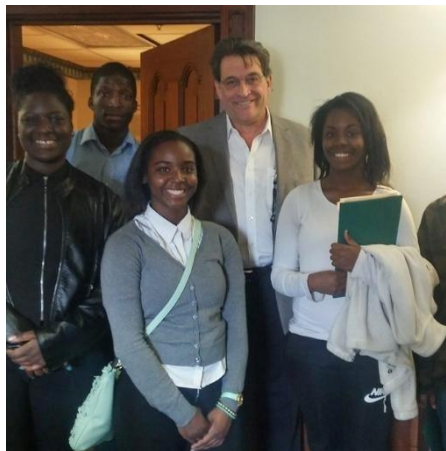
In the last two years Blocks Together has made significant changes for the residents of the West Humboldt Park community.

Blocks Together continues to work alongside the community and develop strategies to combat the issues impacting the communities of color through the City of Chicago.

Moving forward Blocks Together looks to increasing our work with residents and developing key community strategies that support leadership development, capacity building, and policy and institution change.

This report is to inform some our allies and friends of the work we have helped to accomplish together, from our youth organizing work to local education campaigns, and leadership work with West Humboldt Park residents.

You can also keep up with Blocks Together on our website www.btchicago.org or email us at blockstogether@gmail.com. We hope you have a great start to 2018.



Youth Organizing

Blocks Together Youth worked on state legislation to restrict police officer involvement in local schools in partnership with Communities United. Our youth come from the community and many attend local schools addressing the school to prison pipeline and the criminalization of youth from our community.



West Humboldt Parent Network

In the beginning of 2016 Blocks Together restarted the West Humboldt Parent Network and since then each month parents from the community have worked to inform and organize parents around education issues impacting schools in the community. The Parent Network has worked on bringing awareness to issues around the Chicago Public Schools budget crisis, the Special Education crisis, and School building issues.

The Network has created and disseminated new parent tools for bullying, principal evaluation, and student code of conduct information to help parents with their students in school.



CPS reform campaign

In 2016 CPS and the Mayor's office announced the funding of a new Selective Enrollment High School to be built in the 27th Ward with \$100 Million in Tax Increment Financing. The school would be built in walking distance of other selective enrollment schools on the east side of the ward where more affluent families live. Blocks Together collected petition signatures from schools across the community to denounce the building of a new TIF funded selective enrollment school in the 27th ward showing the communities dismay for the use of TIF funds while many schools in the ward need capital repair needs. BT worked to educate residents on how the school would take away from the needs of other schools in the community. Later in 2016 after a direct action in the Alderman's office and meetings with him it was announced the school would not be opening.

Opening of Torrence Shorter Legal Clinic



Blocks Together in partnership with Community Activist Law Alliance inaugurated the Torrence Shorter Legal Clinic in May of 2017. The clinic serves low income residents living in the westside twice a month, the 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month between 4-7 p.m. offering free legal services. The clinic was named after the late Torrence Shorter, former Board President of BT and beloved community leader.



TIF Toolkit Launch

BT launched the TIF Toolkit with a teach in for organizations and residents across the City. The Toolkit serves as a resource guide for groups around the City organizing to hold their elected officials accountable for TIF funds, transparency, and ensuring direct benefit. The toolkit was written in partnership with the Great Cities Institute and can be found on our website.



Building Community

Blocks Together Community Café's feed over 1,000 residents while introducing them to the work of Blocks Together, resulting in over 100 new members.

Blocks Together's Village Keeper's

BT's Village Keepers are youth ages 12-18 and adults being trained as violence prevention leaders in the community. Participants learn trauma informed care, peace circle keeping, and are connected to local resource to support the overall wellness of their peers and family to help reduce violence and create a network of actual "Village Keeper's". In 2016 over 60 youth and adults were trained and they organized peace circles and outdoor events that reached 119 residents on key blocks and schools sharing the awareness and use of conflict resolution tools and improving the quality of life for West Humboldt Park residents.



Blocks Together Peace Ambassadors

Blocks Together Youth Ambassadors helped organize a community meeting with over 100 youth and Police Officers to talk about Police Brutality.

Blocks Together Peace Ambassadors organized a Movie screening for the community to discuss trauma and healing in the community.

The youth also organized an expungement fair for youth in the community and have done community circles to introduce their peers to peace circle keeping.

A Poor People's Campaign

Blocks Together began convening groups across the city to create a Poor People's Agenda for the Chicago area.

Blocks Together was the led convener in the Chicago's Poor People's Campaign Tent Revival with over 300 participants in West Humboldt Park this past May.

Blocks Together led the organizing of the National showing of the Poor People's Campaign with Revered William Barber. Close to 1,000 people attended joining the National efforts this October.

BT looks forward to continuing to build consciousness about a shared Poor People's agenda that supports redistribution of wealth led by the people that harmful national and local economic policies continues to impact.



