

Dominic T. Moulden



June 27, 2022

The Cooperative Hall of Fame Committee

RE: Application for Induction of Linda Leaks into the Cooperative Hall of Fame

To Whom It May Concern:

Ms. Linda Leaks is the Godmother of Cooperative Housing in the Nation's Capital.

I learned about cooperative housing and organizing at her feet. Ms. Leaks organized several hundred units of housing in DC that became limited equity cooperatives. Some examples are 919 L Street, NW (27 units) where she lived, and the Nehemiah Housing Cooperative Estates (32 units) in now intensely gentrified Columbia Heights, DC.

Here is something that many people do not know: I worked with Ms. Leaks on organizing and educating housing cooperators at 1418 W Street, NW in the U Street community (24 units). We educated and trained cooperative leaders on organizing, governing, and managing their cooperatives.

I have known Linda Leaks since 1986 when we organized together to transform tenant associations into housing cooperative communities and build strong leaders. We worked together while I was the Director of Community Outreach at Saint Augustine Church. Ms. Leaks supported the church's efforts to create housing cooperatives at 1400 block of W Street, NW. We were successful in creating the Spirit of W Street Housing Cooperative at 1418 W Street, NW. Ms. Leaks transferred her skills, knowledge, and power building talents to the Church members.

Once I joined the staff at Project WISH and worked in the same office as Ms. Leaks, I realized her gift of organizing and base-building with long time DC residents was pure Black genius and love. Cooperatives are about building a community, which is love, and her love is heroic.

I am one of many community organizers who learned about cooperatives from Linda Leaks. The process of walking into buildings with tenant leaders afraid of being evicted and then three to five years later walking out of these same buildings as

converted limited equity cooperatives is really dream-making work. The thousands of hours and days Ms. Leaks walked with us to teach, listen, guide, and support us should not be underestimated. Cooperation and cooperative movement work is very much needed in this very uncooperative world we inhabit.

We continue to see each other at cooperative events in DC and a very warm memory of Ms. Leaks is when she helped organize the first "DC Coop Day" conference in 2012. Hundreds of people gathered at the University of the District of Columbia to discuss, learn, and build cooperative communities and enterprises, including solar cooperatives, housing cooperatives and those wanting to build worker cooperatives. The Godmother of DC Cooperatives did not let us down. Linda Leaks is a real inspiration and practitioner of cooperative values and spirit, a true and authentic hero. Similar to many true heroes in the life of Black people, many go unknown and unrewarded because they do not look for awards.

Linda Leaks is a cooperative hero because she taught me like me and support groups like ONE DC, which organized and developed the Martin Luther King Latino Cooperative (74 units) and the Duncan Cooperative (24 units). Besides myself, people like Benito Diaz who worked with me and Linda at WISH. Benito later worked with me at ONE DC organizing cooperatives.

Ms. Leaks' impact and influence goes beyond the organizations she worked directly with in DC. Her guidance provided wisdom and space for her apprentices like me to learn how to organize housing cooperatives. Hundreds of families and people are the direct and ongoing beneficiary of Linda's heroic work and vision.

I have organized and developed housing cooperatives in DC, Baltimore, Houston, Memphis, and Minneapolis over the past 35 plus years and Ms. Leaks' impact on my commitment to cooperative living and cooperative community extends to other cities because of her leadership and witness to the principles of cooperation. I lived most of my life in mutual homes cooperatives and housing cooperatives.

Because of my lived experience and direct work with Linda Leaks, I am humbled and honored to recommend the Godmother of Housing Cooperatives in DC to be inducted into the Cooperative Hall of Fame. Honoring the work of Ms. Leaks is right on time. Her day is here and I hope she is celebrated with dignity and respect.

Please contact me at 202-264-2271 if you would like more information.

Sincerely,

Dominic T. Moulden

Member, ONE DC's Right to Resources Committee www.onedconline.org