

# Our Homes, Our Futures:

## 2024 Right to the City All Member Assembly

By Kayla Miranda

The sound of the zipper closing my suitcase shut meant that it was time for me to go. Ready or not, here I come. All the months of planning came down to this. I had mixed emotions as I drove to the airport, so many hopes, so many dreams and so many concerns. It's not the first time I've left town, it certainly won't be the last. There is always a sense of sadness when I have to leave my kids and my home. But also determination. In order to bring about the change we truly need, we must work together in a common cause. Hope for the future begins with us in the here and now.

New Orleans is not a new scene for me. I lived there for two years following Katrina. We had a construction business and that was the place to be. Of course back then, a lot of the tourist attractions were not open. It was a very different sight. Our first stop was the French Quarter, for some beignets. One of the things I love about New Orleans is how so many streets fill up with local artists and vendors. I wish San Antonio would allow more free markets. Then it was back to the hotel for prep. The next day would begin our week-long conference, I wanted to be prepared.

Our conference used the Whova app. There were many mixed reviews. Some people found it hard to navigate, others loved it. I found it useful, but not entirely inclusive. Not everyone is tech savvy. I believe some could have benefited from training on the app throughout. I also found that those using the app constantly were in better positions as the Wellness sessions were first come first serve sign up in the app. I had signed up for a massage session that mysteriously disappeared and never got the opportunity to sign up for another. But for those able to, Wellness sessions were limited but available all week. Massage, reiki, community acupuncture, tarot reading and counseling services were provided free of charge to attendees. It is vital for community workers to practice self-care because burnout is a very real issue. Our schedule was there, live viewing of some of the sessions which was really helpful for those who preferred not to be in the ballroom. A Children's Assembly was available for those traveling with their children. Right to the City took every precaution for the health and wellness of all attendees, from strict covid procedures to en-



2024 Right to the City Member Assembly conference participants. At left the delegation from San Antonio, Texas.

suring that everyone felt comfortable and able to participate in whatever way they needed on an individual basis. There were even fidget toys on all the tables. Those always help me with anxiety. It was truly well thought out and executed. There was a Q&A section, meet up threads, conversation groups with so many topics. We were able to share contact information and upload slides for our presentations. Overall, I feel pretty good about the app.

One of the unfortunate occurrences of this assembly was the technical issues with inter-

pretation equipment. It was planned that all members would have a set, so that live interpretation would be available and seamless. But it is one of those things that takes trial and error. Interpretation was provided, but we needed to take turns. I had planned on presenting Esperanza entirely in Spanish, so all the English and Cantonese speakers would have worn the equipment. It worked out that we took turns on the microphone instead. It did not affect the workshops other than leaving less time for questions. I am proud to say that our Esperanza Cultural Arts and Grassroots Organizing sessions were full of inquisitive people with amazing stories of their own. We did two sessions this conference, both went a little over time and had a full room. Other workshops available were Housing and Climate Justice, Data Strategy for Power Building, Base Building 101, Generative Conflict (resolution), Not an Afterthought: Strategic Infrastructure Praxis to Win, Corporate Target Campaign, Everyone is An Artist: Sign and Banner making, Right to the City Integrated Capital Fund and Collective Songwriting. Attendees were able to choose two workshops to attend.

Another highlight of the week was our hosting member Jane Place. There were six options for members: NOLA(New Orleans, Louisiana) Renter's Bill of Rights Canvassing, Jane Place Community Land Trust Tour, Puppetry 101 Workshop and New Orleans Cultural Tour, Indigenous Peoples History Walking Tour, Geographies of Black Displacement Walking Tour, Black Historical Perspectives in New Orleans bus tour. It is always so amazing seeing and participating in the work of other organizations. As an organizer, I tend to jump right into the next step or next project. I often am too caught up in the work to notice all the wins. It's in moments like these, speaking about our work, talking with other organizers who see what we don't that we are reminded to take



a moment to celebrate. It is an energizing experience. It can be done, and we WILL do it.

The last two days of the conference were spent on moving forward. Committees presented the work we have been doing, what we would like to work on moving forward and of course, our elections for leadership. I am proud to say that I was nominated and elected. There were internal items we voted on that are

not ready to put out in this article but I am happy to say, we had good discussions on. This is the first time we have all been in the room together, many new groups coming in and I feel that we made great progress. The real test will be in the time to come. Will we continue to have these conversations, will we have more opportunities such as organizer exchanges and translocal visits not just within



Puppetry 101 Workshop

#### Get involved:

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[ctj@ctjsa.org](mailto:ctj@ctjsa.org)

#### For more information on

#### Right to the City or Homes for All

<https://www.righttothecity.org/homes-for-all>

#### For more information on Jane Place

<https://jpnsi.org>

our own hubs but nationally? And will Public Housing take its place at the front of housing conversations? For the Esperanza community, two out of the three attendees are public housing tenants and the third is a Section 8 voucher tenant. Those impacted should always lead.

My favorite part of the assembly was not planned. It was the in-between times, when we had breaks or were done for the day. I know that I found my kind of people because the conversations didn't stop in the ballroom. We sought out spots all over the hotel, no matter where you walked you came across small groups deep in conversation. These are the interactions that I came for. Unscripted, unprepared raw conversations that really inspired me. I have a renewed purpose. That is what is so special about these types of meetings. The chance to build relationships unhindered by distance. The connecting of minds, spirits into a massive collective power. We can move mountains. We can change perspectives. We will unite in our shared purpose. Housing is a Human Right. And we will demand and defend that right until it is universally acknowledged and practiced.

It was bittersweet to zip up my suitcase once more. On the one

hand, I couldn't wait to get home. I missed my kids, I missed my bed and I definitely needed a home-cooked meal. But it was also sad to say goodbye. It's indescribable, the feeling of being surrounded by like-minded people. It's something we don't do enough. The ideas flow effortlessly when you get into that vibe with people. I am so grateful for the opportunity. But I was so happy when I



Indigenous Peoples History Walking Tour

finally crossed the Guadalupe Bridge to my beautiful westside. Every time I come back it's like a weight is lifted off my shoulders and my soul knows peace once more.

**BIO:** *Kayla Miranda, a housing justice advocate organizing in the Westside of San Antonio, resides at the Alazan/Apache Courts with her family.*

Hosting member Jane Place Community Land Trust Tour

