



Fall 2017

Utopian

Eleanor Roosevelt's Surprise Visit to Greenbelt, Dec. 1937

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As Greenbelt celebrates its 80th anniversary, we are looking back at some of the community's major milestones. Eleanor Roosevelt's surprise visit on Thursday, December 9, 1937, must certainly count as one of the most exciting! Mrs. Roosevelt, along with Dr. Will Alexander, Farm Security Administrator, arrived in Greenbelt in the morning and toured the administration building, the school, the cooperative store, and, at the First Lady's request, the interior of one of Greenbelt's town homes.



Eleanor Roosevelt toured Greenbelt on December 9, 1937 with Roy Braden, town manager, on the left and Dr. Will Alexander, administrator of the Farm Security Administration on the right. Here, they are seen entering one of the classrooms at Center School, the community's brand new elementary school. Photo by Washington Daily News staff photographer, William C. Beall.

The house Mrs. Roosevelt toured was the home of Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Rider at IK Gardenway. Mr. Rider was president of the citizen's association at the time. Of the home, Mrs. Roosevelt said, "These houses look as though they were places to live in, not display rooms." Dorothy Rider, herself, wrote about the visit in the December 15, 1937 issue of the *Cooperator* and described how she and Mrs. Roosevelt discussed many aspects of

the home including the government-designed furniture, the kitchen, the windows, and even the rugs with them from Arizona. Of the windows, Mrs. Roosevelt said, "You have light, air, and wonderful views..."

Mrs. Roosevelt, who would maintain an interest in Greenbelt, documented the visit herself in her *My Day* column stating that, in contrast to her previous visit during construction of the project, the town was now a "real community."



Join us on Sunday, December 10 or Sunday, December 17 at 5pm at 10B Crescent for a Holiday Twilight Tour! See holiday decorations and twinkling lights, all while learning more about what early Greenbelters did to mark the season. Tour ends at the Museum house with hot cider and gingerbread. \$6/person, children under 12 free! Questions, call 240-542-2066.

Recent Lectures Bring New Audiences



New Deal Utopias, a new book of photographs by Jason Reblando which documents the Green Towns. The book is currently backordered, but will be available in the Museum gift shop as soon as they are reprinted. Watch our Facebook page for updates.

Many new faces were seen at both of the Museum's last two lectures. Most recently, on October 19, photographer Jason Reblando discussed his newly published book, *New Deal Utopias*. A crowd of 80 people attended the lecture and based on an informal survey following Reblando's talk, many had not been to a museum lecture before. The book is a collection of photographs taken by Reblando over the course of several years. It features

informative captions and text about Greenbelt, as well as our sister cities, Greendale, Wisconsin and Greenhills, Ohio. Reblando is an artist and photographer based in Chicago. His work has been published in the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Politico*, *Slate*, *Real Simple*, *Chicago Magazine*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and the *Chicago Reader*. He teaches photography at Illinois State University. Many thanks to our co-sponsors of the lecture, the Department of American Studies at UMD; the Historic Preservation Program, and the Urban Studies and Planning Program both in the College of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, UMD.

The previous lecture, given by educator, poet, and spoken word artist, Ty Gray-EL, took place on July 20. Gray-EL grew up in Washington, D.C. at Langston Terrace, a New Deal-era apartment complex built by the federal government for predominantly African American families. Langston Terrace was designed by prominent African American architect, Hilyard Robinson and opened in 1938 making it contemporary with Green-

belt. Gray-EL speaks across the country, and "confronts the issues of racism and bigotry with poetic compassion, dramatic storytelling, and historical fact while weaving a tapestry of tolerance and hope." ([Ty Gray-EL website](#))

His lecture for the Museum was a mix of scholarship, poetry, and humor and had the audience both laughing, but also seriously reflecting on the challenges we continue to face in terms of racial inequality in the US today.



Mr. Ty Gray-EL (top). Children playing on a frog sculpted by Lenore Thomas Straus at Langston Terrace in Washington, D.C. (below).

A Note from the FOGM President

As we approach the end of another year, I have been marveling at how far we have come. This time last year, we were still cleaning up from the flood at 10B Crescent. At the time, it felt like a set-back, and it did require an incredible amount of hard work (a special thanks to our director, our volunteers, the City and GHI for getting it done). But it also was an opportunity -



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a chance to refresh the historic house - new paint, new artifacts on display, and a more immersive tour experience.

This year also brought the chance to really begin taking advantage of our expanded space at 10A. While things may not look much different at 10A yet, we have already begun using the space for a wide range of functions. Not only were we able to quickly recover from the flood (10A provided a dry storage space), we are now able to host large tour groups on site. Our board holds its monthly meetings in 10A, and we have had public visioning sessions there as well. As a part of our summer camp programs, 10A served as a venue for our hands-on activities. Campers explored the history of the *News Review* and typed stories on manual typewriters. They also learned about Lenore Thomas Straus and created art using rubber stamps. The Retro Town Fair returned this year, and the lawn at 10A proved to be an ideal location

for this perennial favorite (keep an eye out for a new Legacy category at next year's fair where you can share your family heirlooms!).

As we look ahead to 2018, many exciting things are in store. We will begin a space planning process for 10A, and can't wait to show you what the Greenbelt Visitor and Education Center will look like. Once complete, we will be able to consolidate our museum offices into the building, expand our opening hours, and offer new programs (including a children's birthday party program - coming soon!). We could not do any of this without the support of our volunteers, members and donors, and I thank you for your continued support of the Greenbelt Museum. Happy Holidays!
Jennifer Ruffner
President

Greenbelt Museum 2018 Lecture Series

Defending Utopia:

The Greenbelt News Review at 80

A Documentary by Susan Gervasi

Sunday, January 14, 1pm

In lieu of a lecture in January, the Museum is proud to co-sponsor an encore screening of *Defending Utopia: The Greenbelt News Review at 80*. The documentary premiered as part of the News Review's 80th celebration at the Old Greenbelt Theatre on November 16 to a full house, as tickets were completely sold out. To give more people a



Sally Meredith, editor of the paper, at work in the newspaper office.

chance to see the film, the Museum is cosponsoring the screening along with the *Greenbelt News Review* and the Friends of the Old Greenbelt Theatre. In addition to the film, Susan Gervasi, the filmmaker, will speak and answer questions from the audience.

FOGM Introduces New Membership Levels

The FOGM Board has been hard at work revamping and updating membership levels and benefits. We are excited to offer several new options for supporting the Museum. For the first time, there are two main types of memberships. The first type is a standard level which includes basic benefits such as: unlimited admission to the Museum's historic house; a 10% discount on everything in our gift shop (formerly only certain books were discounted for members); our mailed newsletter, *The Utopian*; invitations to lectures, events, and members-only programs; and last but not least, the knowledge that you are helping to preserve Greenbelt's history.

The second type of membership is at a supporting level, for those who feel their budgets allow a more significant contribution. All of the standard benefits are included, in addition to special benefits: recognition on an annual donor roster, a printed WPA photograph, a private walking tour, a behind the scenes experience, and dinner for two in the historic house! The Board has also added a Utopian Legacy level for those who give \$10,000 or more via an estate plan. For information about the Utopian Legacy option or for information about planned giving, please call 301-507-6582 or send an email to director@greenbeltmuseum.org. To join or renew your FOGM membership see the back of this newsletter or visit www.greenbeltmuseum.org. Thank you!

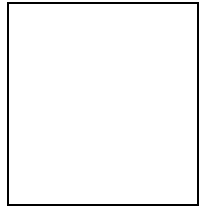
New Staff Member Joins Museum

Lawanna Holland-Moore joined the staff of the Greenbelt Museum in October to become our new office manager. Hired by the Friends of the Greenbelt Museum, Holland-Moore will be kept busy with bookkeeping, maintaining memberships and databases, organizing our offices, and much more as we prepare to expand to 10A Crescent. She has a BA in History and Journalism from The George Washington University and a MA in Historic Preservation from Goucher College, where she won the National Trust for Historic Preservation Mildred Kolodny Scholarship. She is particularly interested in historic preservation and preservation issues, such as diversity and underrepresented groups. She has presented at historic preservation conferences and loves speaking to the public about their community's history and how they can benefit from it. She previously worked at the White House Historical Association and is a member of the Landmarks Committee of the DC Preservation League. A Washington, DC native, she currently lives in Bowie, Maryland.

Lawanna Holland-Moore. Photograph by Matthew D'Agostino



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Greenbelt Museum Calendar of Events

December

- 1 Deco the Halls, Museum open house at 10B Crescent, 7-9pm
- 2-3 Festival of Lights, Comm. Ctr., Room 114, Sat. 10-5pm, Sun. 10-4pm
- 10 Holiday Twilight Tour, 10B Crescent, 5pm, \$6/person, under 12 free
- 17 Holiday Twilight Tour, 10B Crescent, 5pm, \$6/person, under 12 free

January

- 14 Film screening, *Defending Utopia: The Greenbelt News Review* at 80, 1pm, Old Greenbelt Theatre, 129 Centerway, Greenbelt MD

Ongoing Exhibition: *The Knowing Hands That Carve This Stone: The New Deal Art of Lenore Thomas Straus*, Greenbelt Community Center

Would you like to receive our email newsletter? Sign up at www.greenbeltmuseum.org

Join the Friends of the Greenbelt Museum

Membership Benefits: unlimited admission to the Museum's historic house, 10% discount in our gift shop, mailed newsletter *The Utopian*, invitations to lectures and events, members-only programs, and the knowledge that you are helping to preserve Greenbelt's history.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Yes, I'd like to make a gift in addition to my membership \$ _____

Standard Membership

- \$25.00** Student/Senior, all benefits above
- \$35.00** Adult, all benefits above
- \$75.00** Family, all benefits above

Supporting Membership

- Resettler \$250.00** All standard membership benefits plus recognition on an annual donor roster, print of WPA
- Cooperator \$500.00** All standard membership benefits plus private walking tour for 5
- Tugwell \$1000.00** All standard membership benefits plus behind the scenes tour or curator case opportunity
- Roosevelt \$5000.00** All standard membership benefits plus dinner for two in the historic house

Please make check payable to Friends of the Greenbelt Museum, mail to PO Box 1025, Greenbelt MD 20768 or **join securely on-line at GreenbeltMuseum.org**. FOGM is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Thank you!