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SEPTEMBER 2023

GERMANTOWN COMMUNITY LEADERS REMEMBERED CHAUNCEY MAY, GAIL EDWARDS, AND BARBARA BURNAM



Chauncey May



Barbara Burnam



Gail Edwards

By Rob “the Gov” Holman

I would like to launch our first issue by honoring three deceased Change Makers from Germantown. Their impact on Germantown neighborhoods will be remembered forever.

Chauncey May better known as Chuck. Chuck was an loving Husband father grandfather & brother. Him and his wife CoCo was

together for over 35 years. Chuck and his brother Andre May had a very strong relationship a bond that couldn't be broken. Chuck wanted to make a change in the neighborhood so he re-birth the David P Richardson committee alongside his brother, Robbie and others in the neighborhood he started the cleaning of blocks painting and helping the elderly giving back as much as could and he was

the reason why the David P Richardson cookout came back.

Barbara Burnam affectionately known as Mom Barbara within the East Germantown neighborhood. Mrs. Barbara career centered around children. She started working at Pastorius School were she would organized bus trips to amusement parks, play street and lunches for the neighbor-

hood kids.

She was a force to be reckon with and was known throughout the political scene in Phila. She helped establish the Germantown Youth Corp. which created the East Germantown picnic in Awbury Park. She was also a recipient of the David P. Richardson award. She is surely missed by her family and community.

Gail Edwards

was an ambitious, multi-dimensional woman who wore many hats she was a loving Mother Wife the President of the Richardson Riley Young Raiders, the Treasure of The David P Richardson committee she worked hard in her community. She took pride in her ability to lead love and show support.

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ANTHONY MOLDEN TRANSFORMS AND ALCHEMIZES THE EVERYDAY OBJECT INTO MULTI-LAYERED ART



was young. And now he's made a home in the Germantown neighborhood of Philadelphia.

Molden moved to Philadelphia after meeting and being in a relationship with Ursula Rucker, a Philadelphia poet well-known in the music and literary scenes in the city. He loved the city immediately.

"I love Philly," said Molden. "I've made the best friends here. I've gotten the most support here. I've made the most money I've ever made on art here. You can build from the ground up here."

However, there were many life and work experiences in all the other cities. Molden worked in food service as a chef, painted houses, did contracting work, and even learned to do scenic design work for music videos and theater. Many experiences involved tangible alchemy, transforming ingredients into platters, wood, and metal into full scenes.

Through it all, Molden had a unique vision and a drive. One of his teachers in high school saw it and entered him into a scholar-

ship program at the Pasadena College of Art and Design—and he won. That was one of the early steps into his combination of a self-taught and guided journey into the art world.

He carried that vision and drive through all his varied life experiences, ending up in Germantown, where his newest exhibit at iMPerFect Gallery shows his prolific expanse of work.

Renny Molenaar, one of the gallery's co-owners, knew they wanted Molden to take over the entire physical space, giving him the room and opportunity to really propel the work. "He's such an installation, environment-activating, creative person. I wanted to push that," said Molenaar. "I love the trajectory of where he's coming from and where he's going."

Molden has pieces in the show he's worked on for over a decade and work he's made just in the past month. They incorporate many different mediums and techniques, using found objects, lighting, and texture to create something completely different from where it started.

Molenaar noted that even though he and Molden use found objects in their art, they have different ways of incorporating them. "We come to the garbage, to the objects, to these things with previous lives, and he (Molden) uses it almost like it was paint. If he finds a rug or weavings, or different fabrics, he uses these objects to create a

texture, light, a bouncing element, to create this visual language."

"These are reconfigurations of stuff that everybody's familiar with, stuff that's laying around, trees, pieces of car reflectors, umbrellas..." said Molden.

The exhibit showcases the spectrum of his work — large sculptured masks, paintings of Grace Jones, explorations of light and texture, and layering. It includes a small sculptural piece he created for Rucker's mother named "Palmina" after her passing. Another large piece was a tribute to his friend who died from cancer over the last few years.

Throughout May, June, and July, the exhibit has had many visitors and multiple events to accompany Molden's exhibit, including a writing workshop with Ursula Rucker.

In August, Molden will still be in the studio, doing live painting and letting folks see the exhibit by appointment. The space will continue to be activated throughout the month and into September with music and other programming. You can check the most updated calendar on the gallery's social media. You can book an appointment to see the show by sending Molden a direct message on Instagram or texting iMPerFect Gallery co-owner Rocio Cabello at (215) 869-1001.

By Maleka Fruean
Germantown Info Hub
A chipped particle board from a piece of Ikea furniture sat on a Germantown heap of trash. Most folks would just walk by. But local multimedia artist Anthony Molden picked it up and saved it. Two years later, he created an artistic piece built out of the im-

perfections in the board. It's just one of the pieces in an exhibit in his summer show in the neighborhood.

Anthony Carlos Molden was born in Iowa, grew up in California, and has lived in New York and Atlanta. He's created different forms of art since he

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AFTER A PUBLIC HEARING ON PERMIT RENEWAL FOR GAS PLANT, NICETOWN AND GERMANTOWN RESIDENTS AND ORGANIZERS REMAIN IN OPPOSITION



By Maleka Fruean
Germantown Info Hub

Philadelphia's Department of Health's Air Management Services (AMS) and SEPTA held a virtual public hearing about new permits for operating their SEPTA Roberts Complex gas and heating plant in Nicetown.

Most of the public hearing included testimonies from residents and organizers questioning the safety of the gas plant's emissions and denouncing the new permit renewal.

"I'm shocked that AMS and SEPTA are still repeating the misguided refrain that the Combined Heat and Power Plant (CHP) reduces greenhouse gasses regionally by 41%," said Lynn Robinson. Robinson lives almost a mile from the plant and is one of the main organizers for Neighbors Against the Gas Plant (NAGP).

Robinson continued her rebuke, stating that neighbors and organizers never accepted this claim, that the United States Environmental Protective Agency (US EPA) did not stand by this statement, and that even Mayor Kenney stopped saying this. She also stated that SEPTA continued to say that toxic emissions would be unde-

tectable at the plant's fence line, and neighbors refuted this.

In the last two and a half years, neighbors who live near the plant have lived experiences that go against this, said Robinson, and she has noticed a decline in air quality in Southwest Germantown, where she lives, and Nicetown. She stated that poor air days used to be a problem in hot weather, but now they happen in colder weather too.

Many organizers who spoke offered recommendations and solutions to how the plant can operate at an intentional and sustainable level, especially around air quality issues, or stop functioning.

"SEPTA definitely does or would be able to add the technology to monitor the air quality around the city daily because we do it at our school," said Musa Wilson. Wilson is a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Ambassador and student at Imhotep Charter School in Germantown.

Wilson said they monitor the air quality in their school's hallways and gym. He says: "If we can do it, then SEPTA can do it too."

Another Imhotep Charter School student and STEM Ambassador, Jeremiah White, noted that air quality issues affect the Black community disproportionately. Nicetown-Tioga is over 75% Black and, according to Census reporting, had one of the most significant drops in the city in median household income.

According to the Center on Society and Health, multiple factors influence health and life expectancy based on zip code. Income and Education is one, while proximity to highway, factories, or other industrial plants is another, saying that "toxic agents [coming from plants] may expose residents to pollutants."

"I'm here advocating for the Black community and for the youth in the Black community as well. We go through a lot of health crises that a lot of other races don't go through ... and I want to see that change. This one meeting can start a whole movement and change much more than we can know," said White.

Testimonies included adding continuous emissions monitoring year round, not just in ozone season, making emissions data more accessible and open to the public, and having regular performance stack tests (tests that monitor specific pollutants being emitted). Folks also suggested planting trees all around the plant for natural air cleaning.

Programs like the PHS Tree Tenders acknowledge the use of trees as a powerful way to enhance health, working with volunteers to plant them around the city, including Germantown.

Hope Feldman is a neighbor and a family nurse practitioner at Abbottsford Falls Family Practice and Counseling near the gas plant. She testified when the plant was originally being proposed and again last week. She says the lack of transparency about the gas plant is concerning.

"I see people in our community affected by it. It didn't seem to have community involvement," Feldman said. "I work at a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC). We have really high rates of asthma and cancer bur-

den, and our mamas are struggling with low birth-weight babies and pregnancy outcomes; and you want to put this in our neighborhood? It just doesn't make sense."

Director of AMS, Dr. Kassahun Sellassie, presented a slideshow at the beginning of the meeting, providing their most recent air quality data in Nicetown from their mobile monitoring system. SEPTA representative David Montvydas also said that the Roberts Complex CHP is a small gas and heating system that helps SEPTA use natural gas instead of power from the grid that uses less clean sources like coal.

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SEPTA GAS PLANT IN NICETOWN STILL FACES OPPOSITION AS CITY WEIGHS PERMIT RENEWAL

A civil rights investigation by the EPA over the city's initial permitting of the facility is still ongoing.

By Sophia Schmidt, WHYY

SEPTA's permit to run a controversial gas-powered generator in Philadelphia's Nicetown neighborhood is up for renewal. Some Philadelphia residents and advocates want the city to impose stricter rules around air pollution monitoring and how much the facility can operate. Some are even calling for the city to reject the permit renewal.

"I'm here advocating for the Black community and for the youth of the Black community," said Jeremiah White, a student-athlete at Imhotep Institute Charter High School, who spoke against air pollution during a public hearing about the permit renewal Thursday. "I really just want to see a change."

The facility, known as a combined heat and power plant, is located between SEPTA's Roberts Yard and Midvale Bus Depot in Nicetown. The company characterizes it as efficient, as it both powers some of SEPTA's Regional Rail lines and heats buildings at the Midvale bus depot. But neighbors and activists fought the city's initial permitting of the facility in 2017, citing concerns about climate change and air pollution caused by burning natural gas.

The advocacy group POWER Interfaith filed a complaint with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, alleging the city's permitting of the facility was an example of environmental racism. More than 87% of residents in the census tract where the facility is located are Black, and the surrounding ZIP code has one of the highest childhood asthma hospitalization rates in the city.

In a rare move, the EPA took up the civil rights complaint in 2021 and launched an investigation into the city's decision. That investigation is still ongoing, with the parties in the process of negotiating an informal resolution agreement.

The operating permit currently up for renewal covers not just the combined heat and power units, but other equipment at SEPTA's Roberts Complex, including oil- and gas-fired boilers and a diesel-fueled emergency generator. A spokesperson for the city's Department of Public Health said officials don't anticipate the pending negotiations over the civil rights complaint to affect the permit renewal. During Thursday's virtual hearing, city officials did not address the EPA investigation, but characterized the gas plant's emissions and

overall air quality in the neighborhood as nothing out of the ordinary.

"So far they've been emitting well below their potential emissions," said Ed Wiener of the city's Air Management Services. Air Management Services Director Kassahun Sellassie shared data from a mobile air monitoring van and a stationary sensor placed near the SEPTA facility which he said showed levels of unhealthy fine particulate matter, ground-level ozone, and NO₂ — which can react with other chemicals to form particulate matter and ozone — in line with air quality standards.

"So still, everything looks good there," Sellassie said, referring to ozone levels measured by the mobile monitoring van in the community near the plant. Philadelphia as a whole is considered to be in "nonattainment" of federal ambient air quality standards for ozone. This was already the case the year the city first permitted the SEPTA gas plant. Ozone and fine particle pollution can make asthma and other respiratory issues worse.

The advocacy groups Physicians for Social Responsibility Pennsylvania and Neighbors Against the Gas Plants are calling for continuous monitoring of several cate-

gories of air pollutants on site year round, a permanent air quality monitor in a residential area within three blocks of the facility, a reduction in gas burned at the facility during ozone season and on poor air quality days, and installation of solar panels on site and at other SEPTA properties, to reduce the need for the gas-fired generators.

Currently, emissions stack testing at the combined heat and power units is required once every 8,760 hours of operation or every three years, whichever comes first. A simpler test is required quarterly to ensure pollution control devices are working, Wiener said. An EPA compliance database shows the SEPTA plant failed an emissions stack test in January 2022, then passed the following month. Advocates worry such violations could go unnoticed for long periods of time without more frequent monitoring.

"We need better transparency of the data," said Walter Tsou, former Philadelphia Health Commissioner and member of the board of Physicians for Social Responsibility Pennsylvania. "We need better rules for [Air Management Services] that favor renewable energy."

State Representative Darisha Parker, whose district includes the SEPTA plant and who lives less than a mile away, also called for continuous air monitoring during Thursday's hearing. She said she suffers from asthma.

"I believe we need to do everything we can to reduce the air pollution that poisons us daily," Parker said. Karen Jackson, who lives in the Fernhill area near the facility, urged SEPTA to plant trees in the surround-

ing neighborhoods. "Because they're natural air cleaners," Jackson said. "SEPTA owns a lot of property around the city, so it shouldn't be an issue to plant these trees."

SEPTA is already planning a tree planting initiative near the facility and currently generates 15 to 20% of its electricity needs from solar energy, said David Montvydas, chief engineer of SEPTA's Engineering, Maintenance & Construction Division, during Thursday's hearing. "SEPTA remains committed to being environmentally conscious," Montvydas said. Montvydas said SEPTA self-reported the stack test violation and noted there are numerous other combined heat and power plants in the city.

But advocates argue SEPTA should move away from burning fossil fuels, which help warm the planet and exacerbate heat waves, wildfires, and floods. "SEPTA has an opportunity to meet the moment of the climate crisis and protect community health at the same time," said Flora Cardoni, field director at PennEnvironment.

The city is accepting public comment on the permit renewal until August 31. "This is very important to the Department of Public Health," said Deputy Health Commissioner Palak Raval-Nelson about Thursday's public hearing. "We have a focus on equity."





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NICETOWN CDC OFFERING A BEACON, LIGHTING THE WAY TO LESS VIOLENCE IN PHILADELPHIA



File photo: Some homes in the 3700 block of North 15th Street, in Nicetown. (Emma Lee/WHYY)

By Tom McDonald, WHYY

The Nicetown Community Development Corporation is looking to a new administration for the help they need to wage a long-term fight on violence.

A community development corporation is optimistic

that the future is bright for Philadelphia, with a new mayor and help from other state and federal resources. Majeedah Rashid of the [Nicetown](#) Community Development Corporation said a multi-layered solution needs to be worked out to successfully fight violence in Philadelphia.

“Mental and behavioral

health supports, fitness, healthier eating, all the things that we left out, starting with families in the schools we work in,” Rashid said. “So that’s why we need all hands on deck to get together and figure out how we are going to restore our village.”

This weekend, the CDC is having a [“Giveback Festival”](#) featuring performances, a fashion show, food, book-bag giveaways, and more. It’s all part of an effort to bring people together and show off the good things the community has to offer.

Zakariyya Abdur Rhaman’s sons were both killed on the streets of Philadelphia, but he’s still optimistic the neighborhood can turn a corner with the right help. “If we put forth the effort to clean up the neighborhood and make it safe by working

with law enforcement, by working with all of our other partners and creating space like we are here in Nicetown, then I do believe we have an opportunity to show the young people that they too, have an inherent right and a responsibility to be stewards of the community.”

Rhaman added that investing in their community is well worth it.

“It’s been 21 years of us trying to unite this community east and west, north and south. This is a good community. It’s a neighborhood hub. You know, you got Wayne Junction to the north and you got Broad and Erie to the south ... It’s transit oriented. You know, it’s our economic engine. And so it is worth the investment and worth all the effort in terms of keeping it, turning it

around.”

Rashid believes the effort has to begin with school-aged children, to give them a value-centered mentality that will stay with them so they can fight off the lure of big money through criminal activities.

“Drugs, guns, violence, robbery and all that kind of thing combined. It’s just a vicious cycle. But that’s why I say we need everybody collaborating and all hands on deck to, you know, address these issues,” he said. “I want to also emphasize this. The community has got to get some skin in the game.”



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News organizations must be able to do their work without fear of punishment or interference. The proper functioning of our republic depends upon it.

**Pennsylvania newspapers stand
with journalism colleagues nationwide
in condemnation of this invasion,
and in support of the Marion County Record.**

