

One Year Later – No One Cares About No Games Chicago

The work of No Games Chicago has never been properly credited by the media or civic organizations in Chicago. Their story has never been told.

The No Games story has much to offer Chicago's contemporary civics and reveals lessons to organizers everywhere on taking on entrenched greed and power to stop questionable public projects from steamrolling forward and damaging the public sector while racking up massive public debt.

At first, No Games was a novelty on the civic scene here. But, as the Battle for the Bid waged on, No Games Chicago grew in stature and credibility. Their work was slowly picked up and repeated across the media – especially the media outside of Chicago. The tempo of appearances in the media picked up as it grew closer to Decision Day.

But then, after the improbable victory of derailing an Olympic Bid, the zone of silence descended on No Games Chicago and they disappeared from the public record. The concerted and persistent effort to erase No Game Chicago from the historical record is available on the book web site at "NGC Erased."

In the week immediately AFTER Decision Day, the media was filled with reflection and endless hand-wringing about the loss of the Bid. Besides Rick Telander's column, there was no effort to get the No Games perspective on the record. The No Games Chicago crew disbanded and the organizers moved on with their lives and public work. The No Games bank account was closed. The No Games website at www.nogameschicago.com is maintained by Tom Tresser as an archive of the work and receives occasional updates.

In October of 2010 – one year after Decision Day. No Games thought it would be an ideal time to convene a forum on the Bid and what was learned from it – examining where Chicago was then, and what had been the impact on our civic ecosystem. This was especially important since Mayor Daley announced on September 7, 2010 that he would not be seeking a seventh term. That meant, that in 2011's election for mayor, it would be an open race – the first time that had happened in a generation!

Surely someone would be interested in hosting or co-producing some sort of forum or event to examine this once-in-a-lifetime sequence of civic events. That's what Bob Quellos and Tom Tresser thought in the spring and summer of 2010 as they called around and sought a host or sponsor for a "one year later" type of forum.

THE BATTLE FOR THE BID

ONE YEAR LATER: WHAT HAPPENED & WHAT'S NEXT?

On October 2, 2010, Chicago lost its bid to produce and host the 2016 Summer Olympic Games. For some, the decision was a shattering blow to the ego of the city and a monumental defeat for the city's powerful. To others, it was a triumph of grass roots community organizing in face of the most powerful people on the planet.

The battle for the bid offers telling lessons on a number of fronts. This was a clash of two fundamentally different views of how to make a city prosperous. It was about local politics and who gets to decide the fate of neighborhoods. **It was about democracy, dissent and fear.**

Now, one year later, an examination of the battle will help set up just about every relevant issue that the city will be facing as it picks its next mayor. It is our hope that the story of the battle for the bid will help frame and inform the civic work that will be unfolding in Chicago.

Tuesday, October 12, 2010
7:00 - 8:30pm

Experimental Station 6100 S. Blackstone Avenue
<http://www.experimentalstation.org> Information: 773-241-6044 info@experimentalstation.org

Graphic by Sam Rhee.

The only person willing to revisit the Bid was Jamie Kalven of the Invisible Institute (<https://invisible.institute>) and he hosted a forum on October 12th at their space at 6100 S. Blackstone Avenue. Quellos and Tresser took turns telling the story of the Battle for the Bid.

It was sparsely attended – maybe 30 or 40 people.

It was learned that the Grassroots Collaborative counter-programmed an event at the same time. There was no support or interest from any civic group to join the conversation, to add their voice, or to help with turn-out for the event.



Jamie Kalven, Tom Tresser, Bob Quellos



The only media outlet that covered the event was the Hyde Park Herald that filed this story.

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Activists recall anti-Olympic organizing efforts

By SAM CHOLKE
Staff Writer

At Experimental Station on Oct. 12, activists that opposed Chicago's failed bid for the 2016 Olympics retold the story where they were the underdog group that achieved victory through secret spies, smart messaging and sheer impetuosity.

"The Olympics is not just another project. It would have changed the face of Chicago. ... And yet, there was more conversation about a dog park at the Belmont beach," said Tom Tresser, an organizer in No Games Chicago who is now using his role in opposing the Olympics in a bid for the president of Cook County Board seat.

To hear No Games organizers tell it, the bid failed because Mayor Richard M. Daley was never up front about the city's financial commitments, which protesters used to turn the public against him.

"When Daley said he would sign on the dotted line, that forced the '50 Wards in 50 Days' issue" to assuage rising concern about the public cost of the Olympics, said Bob Quellos, a No Games organizer.

Quellos saw the bid failing because the mayor wasn't prepared for the public criticism, especially in the wake of the city's unpopular lease of its parking meters. No Games played the role of a resource outlet for people looking for answers they weren't getting from the mayor and the press, Quellos said.



Tom Tresser speaking at the event at Experimental Station, 6100 S. Blackstone Ave. Marc Moughan

"The media in Chicago never fully addressed the Olympics during the bid process," he said.

Tresser sees the story as one of overseas espionage that undermined the bid.

"The International Olympics Committee is like a country unto itself," Tresser said. "It's almost as if feudal Europe has survived into modern times."

Tresser and other protesters made several trips to

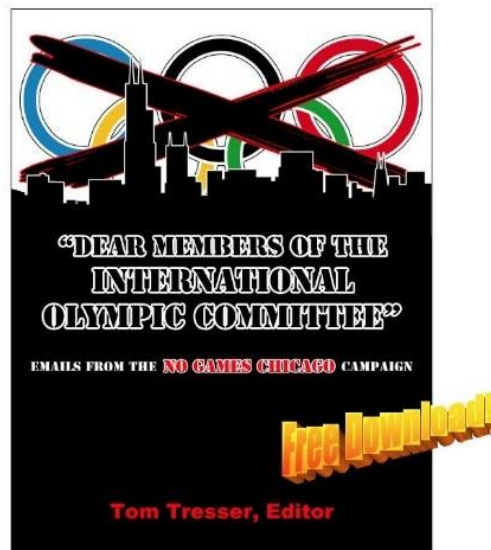
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Audio from the main part of the presentation is at <http://www.tinyurl.com/One-Year-Later-Forum> (49 minutes). The presentation (updated in 2020) may be viewed at <http://www.tinyurl.com/Battle-Bid-Present> (119 slides).

Friends of the Parks sponsors an annual award ceremony for people and organizations that champion public parks.

No Games leaders thought that they would be singled out for some kind of honor in 2010. After all, in defeating the Bid they had saved not just Washington Park from destruction, but parts of Lincoln Park, Douglas Park, Jackson Park, and Grant Park. The award ceremony came and went and there was no mention of the work of No Games Chicago.

The learning moment for Chicago also came and went.



In 2011 Tresser self-published a book called *Dear Members of the International Olympic Committee* – *Emails from the No Games Chicago Campaign*. The book contains essays from several No Games Chicago organizers: Joan Levin, Bob Quellos, Tom Tresser, and John Viramontes. There was a brief article by Kosta Zervas "How a lady, a man and a boy have beaten the world's most powerful man" that reflected his time with No Games, and which would later be expanded into an academic article. The bulk of the publication is the text of all the emails No Games sent the IOC – from July 23 through the morning of Decision Day, October 2, 2009. This book may be downloaded at no charge at <http://www.tinyurl.com/NoGamesBook>

For five years, until 2016, that was the only way people could learn of the work of No Games Chicago.