



# VOICES OF PROTEST

One of the joys of grassroots organizing is seeing people enraged and engaged giving voice to their civic complaints and aspirations.

Here is a small collection of some of the voices lifted in protest to Chicago's Bid for the 2016 Summer Olympics.



[Dwayne Truss](#) is a long-time organizer in the Austin neighborhood, Chicago's West Side. He has been a constant champion for youth, public parks, and grassroots democracy. Dwayne was appointed to the Chicago Board of Education in July of 2019 by Mayor Lori Lightfoot, and served through June of 2022.

Here is public letter from July 14, 2009 calling people to attend the "[50 Wards in 50 Days](#)" community meetings demanded by Mayor Daley during the Summer of 2009. [Letter in author's possession]

Mayor Daley and the Chicago 2016 Olympic Committee (COC) have begun their one-sided “dog and pony” show called community meetings. Their purpose is to buy time and hope taxpayers will forget about the financial guarantees he unilaterally made to the IOC in Switzerland without the approval of the city council.

I encourage residents to attend these meetings and ask serious questions about the budget and finances proposed by the city.

During these meetings, I encourage taxpayers to tell the Chicago 2016 Olympic Committee they do not support the city Olympic bid because the COC intentionally mislead the public about the clear IOC requirement that each candidate city must sign a Host City Contract which guarantees that the host city is responsible for 100% of the financial costs of staging the 2016 Olympics. Go to [Olympic.org](#) and search for the Olympic Charter and read pages 74 and 76 (also posted on [nogameschicago.com](#) home page). Almost all the aldermen failed to do this.

The bid team continues to misinform taxpayers. For example-Mayor Daley and the 2016 Olympic team propose to build an 80,000 seat “temporary stadium” in Washington Park for \$400 million dollars. The city proposes to reduce the stadium to a permanent 10,000 seat outdoor theater after the games are over with no serious plan for utilization after the games. Compare the new stadium projected cost to the city’s initial year 2000 renovation budget of \$350 million for Soldier Field. Per an article from [ChicagoTribune.com](#), the final cost of renovating Soldier Field was \$660 million in 2003. Nearly double the original estimate. Based on this fact how can the city build a new stadium for less than what it cost the city in 2003 to renovate an existing stadium?

Another question to ask the Chicago 2016 COC is why is its’ revenue estimate of \$3 billion (listed as “optimistic” by the IOC) is double than that of Tokyo 2016 (\$1.517 billion)? Both estimates are listed in US Dollars.

Ask the Chicago 2016 COC why haven't private businesses (who will make a lot of money) or a private developer signed on up front to guarantee the cost of the 2016 Olympic bid if it is such a great financial benefit for Chicago? Madrid 2016 actually list its' committed sponsors on its website.

Remember to ask any member of the Chicago 2016 COC if they would issue a blank check from their personal bank account to any taxpayers in attendance and observe their response.



N'Dana Carter is a tireless advocate for public health services for people in Chicago. [She campaigned](#) relentlessly to protest Mayor Rahm Emanuel's closing of six mental health clinics and was arrested for civil disobedience on more than one occasion. On April 5, 2009 she sent this message to the IOC Evaluation Commission visiting Chicago to inspect our proposed Olympic venue sites. [Email in author's possession]

Nawal El Moutawakel  
Chairwoman Team  
International Olympic Committee

Dear Chairwoman Moutawakel:

I do not want the Olympics in Chicago for the following reasons:

- The Olympics will cost more than 10 billion dollars by 2016 - Chicago is BROKE
- The Olympics will take money from households of Chicagoans - Chicagoans are BROKE
- We cannot afford to pay our City workers now - Chicago is BROKE
- Six Chicago Public Schools are being forced to close - \$175 Million deficit - Chicago is BROKE
- Chicago Public Schools can not afford to buy books, computers, paper - Chicago is BROKE
- To save money the Mayor cut athletics from Chicago Public SctDols - Chicago is BROKE
- Chicago Public School children will never be able to participate in the Olympics because they do not have athletic classes or coaches – Chicago is BROKE
- Hospitals and mental health clinics are being forced to close - Chicago is BROKE
- Roads are crumbling we do have money to repair the infrastructure – Chicago is BROKE
- 9% of Chicago's population is unemployed (IL Unemployment Security) - Chicagoans are BROKE
- Over 259,000 house foreclosures, 2008 (Data from RealtyTrac) – Chicagoans are BROKE
- Chicago is the murder capital of the United States (USA Today 10/28/08) - Chicago can be deadly; Mayor Daley is selling our public assets to raise money to pay bills - Chicago is BROKE
- 2008 Chicagoans forced to pay more than \$62 million (city gov. , U.S. Census) in police mis-conduct (torture, murder, theft, etc. ) settlements - Chicago is Broke
- Mayor Daley intends to take taxpayer's homes; give them a nominal amount of money (eminent domain); tear them down and build structures that will increase air pollution.
- African Americans have a 20% higher rate of respiratory diseases in the U. S. (Centers for Disease Control).
- The Olympic construction will occur primarily poor African American communities. Pollution created from construction will endanger hundreds if not thousands of lives and increase Medicaid and hospital costs. Chicago is broke.

- Mayor Daley has made promises to the I.O.C. that he can not keep - Chicago is broke. Illinois is broke we have a \$44 Billion State pension fund debt.

The Olympic Games is not the will of all of the citizens Chicago. We do not want to pay for a \$10 billion - two week celebrity party – we can not afford or attend!

Chairwoman Moutawakel, I would like to invite you to meet with representatives from the No Games Delegation to learn how the taxpayers/people of Chicago feel about the Olympics being in Chicago they can be reached at [nogameschicago@gmail](mailto:nogameschicago@gmail.com) or 312-235-XXXX.



[Michael Volpe](#) is an independent journalist and blogger who has been writing about Chicago for over 13 years. He attended a number of the 2016 community meetings. He wrote this piece on August 17, 2009.

[<https://theprovocateur.blogspot.com/2009/08/reporting-from-44th-46th-and-48th-ward.html>]

### **Reporting from the 44th, 46th, and 48th Ward Olympics Community Meeting**

Now, I went to another [one of these](#) a couple weeks back. At the last one, the Olympic Committee squared off with a group that didn't want the Olympics in Chicago. The difference here was that this particular "town hall" was put on entirely by the Chicago 2016 Olympic Committee. As such, this was something akin to a public propaganda campaign tour. The Olympic committee is holding one in each of the city's [50 wards](#). The presentation was a big dog and pony show. It had two former Olympians, both now local college softball coaches, on the stage to describe the Olympic experience. They put on a quick power point presentation in which the committee assures the city that: there will be \$22.5 billion in economic activity, 315,000 jobs created, and that the city would not pay one single dime to put on the games. It's important to note that these numbers come from a study commissioned from the Olympic Committee itself.

The real fireworks started when the questions started. The questions were about 75-25 skeptical to supporting. The questions ranged from skeptical budgetary issues, displacement of the poor, transparency, to statements of support for how exciting it would be to have Chicago host the Olympics.

One questioner summed up the cynicism of the entire exercise. She wondered why these town halls were being held now a couple months before the bid is decided and not a year and two ago. The bid was officially kicked off in March of 2007. There was little media attention about, it then, and the mayor even snuck in a commitment of \$500 million from the city to pay for the games in 2007. (even though he continues to guarantee that the city will pay no money to host the games) The reason they're doing these dog and pony shows now is because the bid has finally received some serious negative publicity in the last few months. First, the mayor sprung on the city the need to sign a host city contract in May which would hold the city liable for any and all expenses above and beyond that which the IOC would set aside in the beginning. Then, there was the revelation that Michael Scott, a major player in the Olympic Committee, secured a sweetheart land contract near Washington Park, where some of the events would be held. Finally, there have been a series of scandals and the [debacle regarding the parking meter](#). As such, one could call these late scheduled town hall meetings a sort of damage control.

The most probing question came from a member of [No Games Chicago](#). No Games Chicago represented the other side at the previous town hall I was at. As the no implies, No Games is trying to stop the games from coming to Chicago. A member asked about their budget projections for the Olympic Village. According to their

projections, the village would cost about \$1 billion even though that village has about 7000 units while the one in Vancouver will also cost \$1 billion even though it has only 1,000 units. The committee responded by insisting that their budget has been scrutinized by independent sources and the [Chicago Civic Federation](#) will run their own audit later this month.

Speak of the Chicago Civic Federation, one questioner pointed out that the Federation's top award in 2007 went to Pat Ryan. Pat Ryan is one of the top folks on the Olympic Bid Committee. She pointed out that the board and higher ups are full of folks with ties to the Olympic bid. This is very important. That's because [Alderman Flores told me last Friday](#) that the Civic Committee's report will be treated with a great deal of deference. If in fact they aren't objective, that report will have little meaning. I confess that I didn't know about the Federation's ties to the Olympic Committee and will be sure to ask the Alderman about that.

I even got a question in. One individual asked how much was going to be spent for "capital projects". In other words, how much will the budget be for all the stadiums, velodromes, and pools. The moderator said that the budget was \$980 million. This seemed dubious. [Millennium Park](#) cost about \$450 million. That was about three times the original budget. Now, the Olympic Committee is proclaiming that the entire Olympic capital project would only cost twice as much as Millennium Park. This seemed dubious and I asked about this. The moderator went into a song and dance about how Millennium Park was a sort of organic project that changed and evolved over time and that wouldn't happen in the Olympics because as she proclaimed, "a track field is just a track field". In other words, the Olympic Committee would have us believe that building multiple tracks, stadiums, and pools is a less complicated project than Millennium Park. That speaks for itself.

There were concerns about crime, affordable housing, and schools. The questioner that crystallized the issue for me was senior citizen that identified herself as living in the [46th ward](#) for 58 years. She screamed about how an area by Addison and Sheridan (right next to Lake Michigan and about four blocks from Wrigley Field) that was reserved for a green area set aside for birds was going to have 13 Olympic sized tennis courts built near it and thus ruin the green area. She emphatically screamed, "the citizens of the ward weren't consulted and we don't want it" (referring of course to the tennis courts) I had a chance to speak with her afterwards. She believes that her Alderman, Helen Shiller, has made a deal with Mayor Daley. Shiller is a big proponent of low and moderate income housing. She serves a ward with a fairly health population of poor and moderate income folks. It's seen a dramatic increase in high rise and condos during the boom. Now, she's gotten a huge political victory. That victory is a the [Wilson Yards](#) project. The Alderman recently secured construction of this project and this is a major construction of low and moderate income housing in her ward. This lady believes that the Alderman received funding for her pet project (which is listed on her [web site](#)) in exchange for support for the Olympics.

Obviously, we'll never know how deals were made when they were made behind closed doors. The problem is that games have been done entirely without the public's input. These 50 ward by ward town halls were done only in response to public outcry. During the debate, I felt as though the city is on the brink of its own tea party over this issue. The Olympics is all part of a deeper web of corruption and cynicism embedded in Chicago. Most people see the Olympics as nothing more than a boon for Daley and his lackeys. They don't believe the pols and the Committee when they claim that there won't be any tax payer funds used. I feel as though the city is on the brink of critical mass and I'm almost ready to predict a tea party over the Olympics though that might be more wishful thinking than objective analysis.

To Chicago, the Olympic bid is much like health care is to the country. The politicians and the elites tell the rest of us how great it will be, while the public at large doesn't want it. Most [polls](#) suggest the residents aren't terribly excited about the Olympics. The [public definitely doesn't want](#) it if tax payer money is used. There is a level of distrust of city government in Chicago never seen during Daley's tenure. The difference between the Olympics and health care is that Daley rules Chicago in a way that Obama only wishes he could rule D.C. Unlike D.C., whatever Daley wants he gets. As such, even though the public is overwhelmingly against spending all this money for the Olympics, the city will move forward regardless of what the public thinks. There may still be time

and I for one hope that a Chicago Tea Party is formed to take on all of the corruption that surrounds the Olympics bid.

Finally, it appears that I should have gone outside after the town hall because Alderman Shiller was chased out by a group of protesters protesting gang violence.

Many neighbors attended the "dog and pony" shows stages by the Chicago 2016 Committee. Here are some of the comments reported from articles covering those events:

"How do we know?" a resident, Douglas Brown, demanded of leaders of the Olympics bid during a recent neighborhood meeting on the South Side. "We can't take your word for it," Mr. Brown said, adding, "When do we get our guarantees to make us sleep at night?" ["Recession Shadowing Chicago Bid for Games," New York Times, July 26, 2009. <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/27/us/27olympics.html>]

"You all are projecting we're going to make a lot of money," a resident, Robin Kaufman, told Olympics planners at a neighborhood meeting, one in a series intended to shore up support. "But the bankers were projecting they were going to make a lot of money. Bernie Madoff was predicting he was going to make a lot of money." Ms. Kaufman lifted a sign that read, "No Blank Checks." At a high school auditorium on the West Side, where the bid leaders showed glossy Olympics schematics and stood beside toned former Olympians, Stephanie Patton asked, "Why should we trust you?" [Same as above]

"The issue of hosting the 2016 Summer Olympic Games has aroused passionate attitudes in Chicago citizens. Those who picketed were strongly against the \$4.8 billion price tag if Chicago was chosen. On a more practical level, one citizen remarked that attention should be focused solely on the streets full of potholes and closed-down mental health centers and schools instead of hosting the Olympics. Hosting the Olympics means a city overrun with tourists, extra security and the lingering fear of being a target. Therefore, I believe should focus on its internal problems now, instead of offering to host this international event." Olivia Cunningham, Evergreen Park ["Chicago Voices," Chicago Sun-Times, April 26, 2009. In possession of the author]

We met the awesome organizer and environmental steward, Charlotte Newfield, in the chapter covering the Lincoln Park Advisory Committee. She continued to speak out and was covered extensively in the local press.

"Well, you tell the birds. Tell them, 'Sorry, these years we're having Olympic tennis. Wait and come back when we're done.'" Referencing the intent to build the tennis facilities in Lincoln Park adjacent to the Jarvis Bird Sanctuary. She said, "Everybody's talking about going green and the environment. But people only seem to care when it's not in their way." ["Ruffled Feathers - Chicago bid team's proposal to put tennis center near sanctuary riles birders," Chicago Tribune, January 25, 2009. Retrieved from Chicago Tribune Archives. <https://chicagotribune.newspapers.com/image/232536243>]





Charlotte Newfield, steward of the Bill Jarvis Migratory Bird Sanctuary, and other birders oppose plans to put Olympic tennis courts near the lakefront sanctuary. PHIL VELASQUEZ/TRIBUNE

**RACE FOR THE 2016 OLYMPICS**

# Ruffled feathers

Chicago bid team's proposal to put tennis center near sanctuary riles birders

**By Kathy Bergen  
and Laurie Cohen**  
TRIBUNE REPORTERS

Standing ankle-deep in fresh snowfall, Charlotte Newfield gazes at an undulating stretch of woodland and marsh and observes, "We have this nice feeling of quiet here. And they're going to put up an Olympic tennis venue?"

Yes, the Chicago 2016 Olympic bid organization is planning to

erect a \$23.8 million tennis center just north of the lakefront Bill Jarvis Migratory Bird Sanctuary in Lincoln Park, which Newfield and her corps of some 300 volunteers have nurtured over the past dozen years.

The plan for a multicourt complex at the existing Waveland tennis courts, with temporary seating for 17,000, aggravates Newfield, as do assertions by the 2016 team that the plans will not harm the sanctuary.

"Well, you tell the birds," she told bid representatives at a recent community meeting. "Tell them, 'Sorry these years we're having Olympic tennis. Wait and come back when we're done.'"

The bird-sanctuary standoff is but the latest in a series of environmental fights that have dogged the Olympic bid organizers, who, like their rivals, are aggressively touting their bid's "green" attributes to the International Olympic Committee.

The IOC on Oct. 2 will select either Chicago, Madrid, Tokyo or Rio de Janeiro as 2016 host city.

In Chicago's case, the city's green jewels—namely its lakefront and historic parklands—are the setting for many major venues, a route that eliminates the need to tear up neighborhoods. Inherent in such a plan is a natural tension: Can the city showcase its natural charms to

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**Who flies in  
for a visit**

Four notable birds seen at the Bill Jarvis Migratory Bird Sanctuary.  
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Many passionate and articulate people worked with No Games Chicago during the Battle for the Bid. Francesca Rodriguez joined the campaign early and became a key member of the communications team. She was taken on a tour of proposed Olympic venues by Time Out Chicago along with Carrie Balzer, Chicago 2016 Manager for Sport and Venues. Here is the page, from the May 28-June 3, 2009 edition.



## The Bean poll



**To pay for a massive new public-works program, state lawmakers plan to raise taxes on certain items—notably shampoo. Whom do you think this shamp' tax will hurt most?**

**a. The dandruff-afflicted** Is it fair to further punish the dry-scalped among us?

**b. Rod Blagojevich** Does any mop require more shampoo than Blago's? Dude's already in over his head on attorney fees.

To vote, go to [timeoutchicago.com/poll](http://timeoutchicago.com/poll). Replies must be received by 3pm Wednesday 3. Results will be published in TOC 224.

"It was gorgeous—and even more so because we got in for free," says one reader.



**87%** That's how many of you said you were impressed by the masterful Modern Wing (TOC 220).

## Tour of duty

As part of the Great Chicago Places & Spaces tours, Chicago 2016 recently offered a bus trip around planned Olympic venues; we sent a Games hater along to provide a critical eye. By **Jake Malooley**

### MICHAEL REESE HOSPITAL

The hospital will be razed and an Olympic village built, a nearly \$1 billion project that will give athletes access to amenities such as a private beach, a pool, a lakefront fitness area, an open-air live performance amphitheater on the shoreline and four dining cafés.



**Carrie Baizer, Chicago 2016 project manager for sport and venues** "It's the athletes' home away from home...90 percent of the athletes will be within 15 minutes of their competition and training sites. [In] other Olympic cities, athletes are used to driving 30 to 45 minutes to their competition."

**Francesca Rodriguez, No Games Chicago community organizer** "Part of the reason why athletes will be able to get around so quickly is because parts of arterial streets around and between venues, including one lane of Lake Shore Drive, will be blocked off to traffic for the 'Olympic family' [athletes, International Olympic Committee members, press, heads of state]."

### NORTHERLY ISLAND

A variety of venues will be built, including a slalom course for canoes and kayaks (\$40.2 million), a sailing center (\$15.2 million) and a beach volleyball stadium (\$14.2 million).



**Rodriguez** "While I support public-works projects, why do we have to have the disruption of the Olympics to acquire more land for preservation?"

**Baizer** "We're calling it Olympic Island.... After the Games, we will have a kayak and rafting center on Northerly Island. We are planning on developing part of it into a wetland."

### WAVELAND TENNIS COURTS IN LINCOLN PARK

The courts will be shut down and replaced by the \$31 million Lincoln Park Tennis Center, a complex of three competition arenas with a center court that will seat 10,000 spectators.

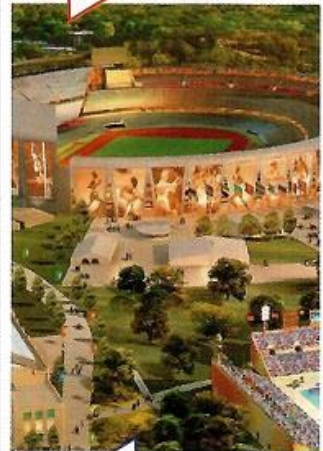
**Rodriguez** "Every time I pass by, those tennis courts are packed. All those tennis players are going to be without courts for a long time.... Construction noise might also impinge on the [Bill Jarvis Migratory] Bird Sanctuary just south of the construction zone."

**Baizer** "We're talking down center court after the Olympics but...there will be more, newer, nicer tennis courts."

### WASHINGTON PARK

The park will be closed to traffic and recreation during construction of the \$397 million, 80,000-seat Olympic Stadium and the \$109 million Olympic Aquatic Center.

**Baizer** "The stadium will be decreased after the Games to a much more reasonable community size. We'll leave the [stadium's] track, and there will be a field for other sporting events and a community amphitheater inside [the stadium].... We're going to have the aquatic center's warm-up pool stay behind for use of [adjacent Dyett High School]. They'll be able to host state and local swimming competitions. The other pools will be moved to other park-district locations to be determined."



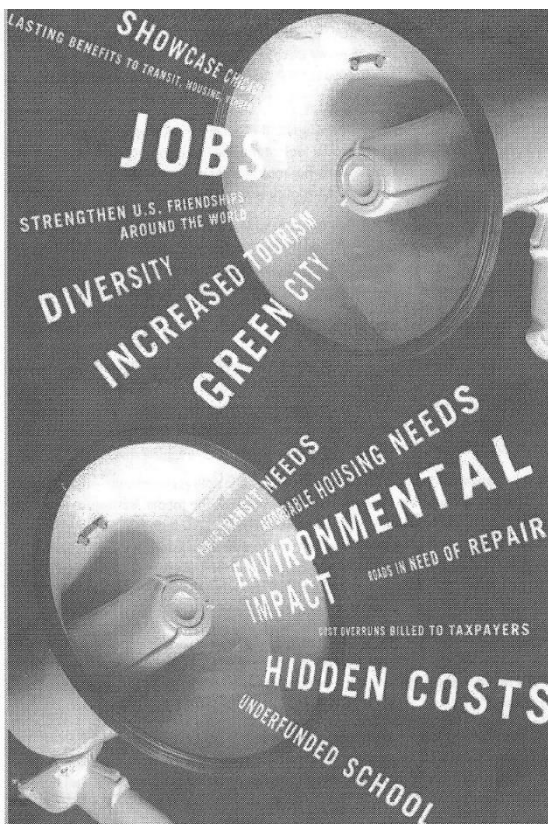
**Rodriguez** "As we went past the park, cricket players dressed in white were everywhere; they're going to be without a field for years.... Washington Park already has two swimming pools, one of them attached to Dyett."

Francesca was studying public policy at the University of Chicago's Harris School at the time. She was profiled in the school's magazine, Harris View, in the Fall of 2009.

"The city of Chicago, having obtained the least number of votes, will not participate in the next round," announced the International Olympic Committee (IOC) president, sending a shock through the stunned crowd of Chicagoans gathered in the Loop. Though many were appalled, some breathed great sighs of relief. Among them was Francesca Rodriguez, a first-year MPP student, who 10 months earlier had joined No Games Chicago, a grassroots protest against the city's 2016 Olympics bid.

"It completely eclipsed my life," said Rodriguez. of the whirlwind experience. "It was such a polarizing issue. if I told I with tangible community organizing and communications skills, equipping her just in time for her foray into formal public policy studies.

Rodriguez first became interested in pursuing a career in public policy after volunteering in 2007-08 at a Chicago charter school where she saw a "depressing" lack of resources. It was this concern for schools that motivated Rodriguez to join No Games, especially after learning that city officials were designating a \$500 million taxpayer-funded cost overrun guarantee to the Olympic bid while Chicago Public Schools were suffering a \$475 million deficit.



No Games initially stunned Rodriguez with their high level of organization. She was likewise intrigued by the varied reasons others had for joining the protest, including concerns about the Olympics' environmental impacts, government corruption, and privatization of public parks. She began to help out with the communications team and before long found herself as a lead writer and editor distributing hundreds of newsletters and posters, contacting IOC members, and eventually giving media interviews. "The guys at Staples got to know me really well, and soon they too were against the bid."

Rodriguez did all this work despite) having no prior experience in public policy, community organizing, or communications. Though initially hesitant to serve as a spokeswoman to the media, Rodriguez appeared several times on live news programs, including WTTW's Chicago Tonight, NBC Nightly News, and Fox Business News Live. CBS even traveled to the University campus to interview Rodriguez on her lunch break. On the morning of the IOC decision, Rodriguez was up before 5am. prepared to represent No Games in back-to-back interviews. "Everyone wanted to get this story," she says. "Somehow No Games became the face of the opposition," in the aftermath of the IOC vote, Rodriguez and her team expressed hope that Chicago leadership can focus on the city's current challenges without the

distraction of the Olympics. And Rodriguez is proud of the effort. "I don't know if No Games really moved the needle, but we did become the alternative voice that needed to be heard."

All in all, Rodriguez said, the experience reinforced her choice of public policy for graduate school. "Having worked on the Obama campaign, I knew that i wanted to explore issue-based, grassroots efforts. No Games certainly dovetailed well with my interests and deepened my goal to [pursue] non-partisan, policy-related communications."



Francesca Rodriguez reacts to Chicago's first round elimination live on MSNBC October 2, 2009

