

Talking Points – Preservation of the PAC – Dan Kiley’s Grove. File # 181570

Honorable Chair Khalif Rainey, and members for the ZND Committee, my name is Bernadette Karanja residing at 3452 N. 46th Street. I appear today as a private Citizen having taken vacation to be at this invaluable hearing.

I was born and raised in Kenya, moved to the United States in the year of our Lord 2000 AD. My international up-bringing gave me the advantage of having a dual-perspective on the value of the freedom of expression - and in my lifetime have learned never to take it for granted. It is for this reason and for the sake of future women leaders that I wish today as a United States Citizen to demonstrate that freedom.

I want to preface by saying I am not an Arborist. I testify from my life experience

I am an avid supporter of environmentally friendly approaches for economic advancement and the preservation of Trees and Green Spaces.

My value for the preservation of trees began as an elementary and high school student watching Professor Wangari Maathai fight ceaselessly and bravely, risking her life and that of her family by engaging in peaceful civil disobedience to combat local national and international inequalities that threatened to destroy trees and green spaces for “economic advancement”.

Professor Wangari Maathai was our 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate. The Norwegian Nobel Committee described her as a person

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who thinks globally and acts locally. I dare say Kiley had the same spirit. A fellow beloved Kenyan and the first Black Woman to win a Nobel Peace Prize, the late Prof. Wangari Maathai left behind an incomparable legacy on the preservation of green spaces and trees.

The Green Belt Movement which she founded grew to a network of hundreds of thousands of men and women who have planted tens of millions of trees as a symbol of empowerment and a way to galvanize people to determine their own future in their own environments.

Perhaps we could borrow from proven experts in other countries to preserve trees and maintain accessibility. Horse Chestnuts will live up to 300 years according to Woodlandtrust.org if they are not infected by fungal disease or scale insects.

Flash-forward to my adult life as a single mother and community leader in my beloved adopted country..... And I watched as my Daughter blossomed from childhood to adulthood | taking moments to be inspired by the late Entrepreneurial Teacher Redonda Rogers under the PAC trees | practicing and honing her skills as a First State Theatre actress under those very trees her key role as Leanora Sutter in the play *Witness – A Broadway production* chronicling the struggle for diversity in which this character brings together a town torn by hostility and hatred to consider standing together for what is right. | It is under these very trees that family and friends and my wonderful work colleagues celebrated mine and my daughter’s Oath Ceremony when we become American Citizens. As one supporter Ms. Stephanie Bartz aptly chronicled: The Grove is an exemplification of the development

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of the cultural, economic, social and historic heritage of the City of Milwaukee, State of Wisconsin and the United States. In Professor Wangari’s words – “self –empowerment and conservation lies in traditional spiritual values: love for the environment, self-betterment, gratitude and respect and commitment to service.

Destroying these trees would tear through the spirit and fabric of these very tenets – and with it countless inspiring and loving memories of the diversity Milwaukee symbolizes and still struggles to maintain.

Honorable members of Zoning and Neighborhood Development, I ask you to vote to recommend approval of the historic status designation for the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts

<https://www.greenbeltmovement.org/wangari-maathai>

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bernadette Karanja', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Bernadette Karanja