



Culture and Community: Voices of Washington, D.C.

What aspects of Washington, D.C., make this city “home”? District residents of different ages and cultural heritage, from different walks of life and neighborhoods, some born here and others here by choice or circumstance, offer their insights into the question in this collection of short essays.

They begin with communities of worship. Like extended families who tend to members’ spiritual, social, and material needs, the congregations at the same time constitute communities in a broader sense, having built enduring coalitions that transcend religious denominations and race.

Another group of essays focus on expressive traditions — one, go-go, a D.C. invention — and the institutions that have enabled them to flourish. These also are rooted in particular city neighborhoods or cultural communities, yet may have an impact well beyond them.

While providing D.C. residents an opportunity to display their athletic talent and channel their competitive urges, soccer and pick-up basketball

forge bonds between people of diverse backgrounds that they maintain through the years. Sports have developed their own distinctive traditions here, and games draw friends, family, schoolmates, and neighbors to share in them.

The last cluster of essays are linked by their authors’ active concern with human dignity, freedom, service, and social justice. Washington, D.C., is a place of refuge for those fleeing turmoil, persecution, or poverty in other countries — or other regions of the United States. It is a place of solidarity for those seeking economic independence and equal rights. It is also a city, as the final essay so powerfully argues, in which full democracy for its own citizens has not yet prevailed.

As they reveal values, pursuits, traditions, concerns, and even contradictions that are integral to life in this multi-faceted city, the authors of these interconnected essays leave no doubt as to their pride in being Washingtonians.

— *John W. Franklin and Michael McBride*

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