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TEQUILA MINSKY

**Will Kaufman, a musician and professor, sang Woody Guthrie songs that the famed folkie penned about his landlord Fred C. Trump. There was no music attached to Guthrie's lyrics, so Kaufman added his own.**

## Woody Guthrie and the Fred Trump blues

BY TEQUILA MINSKY

Villagers and folk-music enthusiasts recently packed the beautiful Church of St. John's in the Village for a "live documentary" on the life of Woody Guthrie, with a special twist: the singer's battles with his landlord Fred C. Trump, father of President Donald Trump.

Guthrie and his family moved into the Beach Haven apartment complex near Coney Island in December 1950. While conducting research, Will Kaufman discovered writings by Guthrie about his landlord, the senior Trump.

Judy Bell, custodian of Guthrie's archives, also found in files lyrics or song fragments that Guthrie wrote about his landlord. The April 30 event featured songs and spoken word. With no associated music found, Kaufman added his own to the multiverse lyrics by Guthrie, in order to perform "Mister Trump Made a Tramp Out of Me." Mister Trump has made a tramp out of me; Paid him all my bonds and savin's, To move into his Beach Haven; Yes, Trump has made a tramp out of me. "Old Man Trump, Beach Haven Ain't My Home" is another one of the unearthed Guthrie songs. Kauf-



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**Alongside a slide show of archival images of the life of Woody Guthrie, left, images of Fred Trump, right, and Dust Bowl photographs, Will Kaufman presented a song-and-spoken word "live documentary" of Guthrie's life, highlighting Guthrie's battles against Fred Trump, his Brooklyn landlord.**

man spoke about how riled the folk-music icon was at the apartment complex's segregated policies, and also how Fred Trump was able to "work the system," profiting when building his public housing the complex.

Kaufman, a musician and academic, has written three books on Guthrie ("Mapping Woody Guthrie," "Woody Guthrie's Modern World Blues" and "Singing for Peace"). His nearly two-hour presentation, embellished by a slide show of archival photos of Guthrie's life, included many images of landlord Trump, as well as of the Oklahoma Dust Bowl, where Guthrie was raised.

When it comes to folk music, Woody Guthrie is as iconic as it gets. His life and his political, folk and children's songs have inspired decades of folk singers.

Focusing on the life and music of Guthrie seems apt for a fundraiser for the second edition of the upcoming fall local folk-music festival, The Village Trip, founded by Liz Thompson. In addition to Washington Square Park, the festival — which will run Sept. 26 to 29 — will also feature events at six other Greenwich Village venues.