

# PRRAC

## *Poverty & Race Research Action Council*

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### **2003 REPORT ON PRRAC'S PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES**

#### **An Overview of PRRAC**

The Poverty & Race Research Action Council is a non-partisan, national, not-for-profit organization originally convened by major civil rights, civil liberties and anti-poverty groups in 1990. Our purpose is to link social science research to advocacy work to successfully address problems at the intersection of race and poverty. Specifically, we work to promote the development and implementation of policies and practices that alleviate conditions caused by the interaction of race and poverty.

PRRAC's bi-monthly publication, *Poverty & Race*, covers recent developments in advocacy and research, and our newly upgraded website features over thirteen years of fully searchable and subject-organized resources and articles from *Poverty & Race*, along with introductory "research guides" to give advocates access to current social science research. PRRAC also convenes advocates and researchers to encourage and further their collaboration on race and poverty issues, and provides financial support for social science research linked to local, state and national advocacy strategies.

PRRAC's current projects include the publication and dissemination of *Putting the Movement Back Into Civil Rights Teaching*, an innovative civil rights teaching curriculum; the *Third National Conference on Housing Mobility*, scheduled for December 2004; marketing of our school reform toolkit, *Fragmented: Improving Education for Mobile Students*; and a series of research/advocacy initiatives to address continuing racial and economic segregation in federal housing and community development programs. PRRAC is also exploring possible education and advocacy roles in the ongoing national discussion of minority health disparities.

#### **2003 Organizational Transition**

2003 was an important transition year for PRRAC, beginning with the decision by PRRAC's founding director Chester Hartman, in 2002, to shift to a new role as Director of Research, and culminating in a successful national search for a new executive director, Philip Tegeler, a civil rights attorney with a background in school desegregation law and federal housing policy.

Among the key priorities of the new Executive Director will be to work with the PRRAC Board, the PRRAC Social Science Advisory Board, and other PRRAC partners to reestablish consensus on mission and direction, and to sharpen PRRAC's focus as we

move forward, including a plan for organizational development over the next five years. This strategic planning process will be closely integrated into the other work PRRAC will be completing over the next year.

## **Overview of 2003 project activities**

### **Linking research and advocacy: projects ready to move to implementation**

High Classroom Mobility: Chester Hartman recently edited (with Todd Franke of UCLA) the Winter 2003 issue of *The Journal of Negro Education*, “Student Mobility: How Some Children Get Left Behind.” The 14 articles – by activists, researchers, and school personnel -- offer “best practices case studies (from CA, TX, Chicago, Minneapolis, DoD schools); deal with the implications of welfare reform and the No Child Left Behind Act for classroom transiency; and focus on housing instability as the primary cause of school instability. A followup handbook for education reformers (*Fragmented: Improving Education for Mobile Students*) was published by PRRAC in the fall. We are considering several possible strategies to put these findings and proposals into action, including outreach to school boards, parents, and school administrators, in school districts with high student transiency rates.

“Putting the ‘Movement’ Back Into Civil Rights Teaching”: This K-12 curriculum guide is being carried out with partner organization Teaching for Change, with a distinguished group of Advisors (Clayborne Carson, Charlie Cobb, Bill Fletcher, Danny Glover, Juan Gonzalez, Sylvia Hill, Elizabeth Martinez, Charles Payne, Renee Poussaint, Juan Williams, Howard Zinn et al.). We are on track to complete it by the spring of 2004. Marketing opportunities will be enhanced by coordination with the many 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Brown* activities. Based on previous TFC publications, we anticipate significant sales, including many bulk orders for school district use. Followup activities include teacher institutes to train high school teachers in civil rights history.

### **Ongoing research nearing completion**

Housing Segregation and School Segregation: Government Culpability, Government Remedies: Important and lengthy research papers on the federal government’s role in promoting housing segregation, based on National Archives and presidential library materials, have been produced by Arnold Hirsch and Raymond Mohl, with additional research by David Freund expected by early spring. Funded by a multi-year grant from the Ford Foundation.

“Evictions: The Hidden Housing Problem”: Chester Hartman and co-author David Robinson of Legal Services of NY are doing final work on this commissioned article for *Housing Policy Debate*, the Fannie Mae Foundation journal. The article calls for creation

of a national database on evictions – how many, who, why, outcome – which may lead to further work in this area.

### **Convening social scientists and advocates: possible new directions**

As we have done so successfully in the past, we are looking forward to convening social scientists and advocates to define a research and advocacy agenda in several important new areas in the coming year. Discussion of these potential new initiatives will be closely tied to our strategic planning efforts.

Third National Conference on Assisted Housing Mobility: This project would help to convene a wide range of community activists, housing professionals, civil rights advocates, and government officials to help reassess the promise and potential of regional housing mobility in the Section 8 program. Since 1997, at the time of the second National Conference on Assisted Housing Mobility, the academic consensus has grown on the value of desegregative moves for low income families, but during the same period both the “Moving to Opportunity and the HUD housing counseling program were discontinued, and current HUD policies threaten to undermine the program further. It is time to reconvene researchers, advocates, administrators, and participants to review the latest social sciences findings, hear stories of success and failures from the field, identify best practices and develop a coherent strategy to fund, assess, and improve housing mobility around the country.

Civil Rights Mandates in the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program: PRRAC board member Florence Roisman’s important 1998 law review article (52 Miami Law Review 1011) exposed the lack of meaningful civil rights controls in the nation’s largest housing production program, but efforts to reform the program nationally went no further than the signing of an initial Memorandum of Understanding, among the Treasury Department, Justice Department, and HUD, at the end of the Clinton Administration. Since then, civil rights litigation has begun in New Jersey and Connecticut challenging state administration of the program, and its contribution to racial and economic segregation, but there is no coordinated effort at this time to reform the program at the national level. PRRAC would seek to bring together a strategic group of housing experts and advocates to identify what additional social sciences research is necessary to bring change to the program.

### **Communications strategy**

Enhancement of PRRAC Website: Assisted by PRRAC’s computer consultant, a revised, interactive PRRAC website is being developed and should be ready this winter. Included will be a listing of the approximately 7000 reports, studies, etc. cumulatively listed in the Resources section of *Poverty & Race* since initiating publication in 1992. It is by far the most comprehensive collection of such materials. Crosslisted by subtopic, users (researchers, activists, policymakers, legislators, librarians, foundations, the media, etc.)

will be able to find relevant items, and a further step may be to put text online for the most useful of these studies. We anticipate that the new PRRAC website will be *the* place to come for such materials.

*Poverty & Race*: PRRAC continues to publish this 16-28 page bimonthly (the July/Aug. 2003 issue is Vol. 12, No. 4). *Poverty & Race* is widely recognized as a valuable forum for dialogue on new issues, and an up to the moment compendium of recent research in housing, education, welfare, jobs policy, community development, criminal justice, etc. Plans are to expand circulation to a much wider readership (the current circulation is approximately 1200, mostly academic and legal organizations – we hope to expand circulation systematically to additional community based organizations, state and local union offices, legal services offices, and additional academic programs). Two collections of prior *Poverty & Race* essays have been published – *Double Exposure: Poverty & Race in America* (1997; foreword by Bill Bradley, preface by Julian Bond) and *Challenges to Equality: Poverty & Race in America* (2001; foreword by John Lewis) – and plans are moving forward for a third collection (for 2004 publication), which we expect will be used in college and graduate classes on race and social policy.

(information current as of December 2003)