

# PRRAC

## *Poverty & Race Research Action Council*

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### **THE POVERTY AND RACE RESEARCH ACTION COUNCIL 2006 ANNUAL REPORT**

The Poverty & Race Research Action Council (PRRAC) is a not-for-profit civil rights policy organization based in Washington, D.C. PRRAC's primary mission is to help connect social scientists with advocates working on race and poverty issues, and to promote a research-based advocacy strategy on issues of structural racial inequality. PRRAC's current work focuses on the continuing legacy of government sponsored racial and economic segregation in the U.S., and its consequences for low income families in the areas of health, education, employment, and incarceration. Our substantive work in 2006 focused on research and advocacy in housing, education, and health.

#### **HOUSING AND SEGREGATION FROM OPPORTUNITY**

In 2006, we pressed forward with important research and advocacy work focused on the two largest U.S. housing, the Section 8 voucher program and the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program. We also continued our work in Baltimore, with the regional coalition organized in support of the housing desegregation remedy in *Thompson v. HUD*.

#### **Housing Mobility Initiative**

Housing Mobility Report: this past Spring, we printed 1000 professionally laid out copies of our December 2005 report from the Third National Conference on Housing Mobility. The report, *Keeping the Promise: Preserving and Enhancing Housing Mobility in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program*, has now been widely distributed by PRRAC and the National Low Income Housing Coalition, and to members of the National Fair Housing Alliance, HUD and Congressional staff, and 400 copies were purchased by the Northwestern Law School and distributed to all conference attendees at the Chicago legal conference, "Gautreaux at 40," celebrating and appraising the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the filing of the *Gautreaux v. HUD* case. The report is also available on our website and has been widely circulated in PDF format. Based on feedback we have received, the report has proved to be an important resource for advocates and policymakers.

Bringing Gautreaux to Scale: We have taken the lead in planning for a new joint project with the Urban Institute and Alex Polikoff on "Bringing Gautreaux to Scale" – designing a new national "Moving to Opportunity" type program that will target families living in

the most segregated urban neighborhoods. In the Spring, at a successful book launch that we co-hosted for Alex Polikoff's new book, *Waiting for Gautreaux*, we held the initial meeting of our national steering committee, which includes Sheryll Cashin, Georgetown Law School; Robert Embry, Abell Foundation; Betsy Julian, Inclusive Communities Project, Dallas, TX; Gary Orfield, Harvard Civil Rights Project; Alexander Polikoff, Business and Professional People for the Public Interest, Chicago, IL; John Powell, Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, Columbus, OH; Barbara Sard, Center on Budget & Policy Priorities; Margery Austin Turner, Urban Institute; and Philip Tegeler of PRRAC.

Housing mobility litigation: although PRRAC does not engage in litigation, we have been assisting the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights in an effort to identify denials of Section 8 voucher portability occurring around the country and to provide legal and expert resources to legal aid attorneys who may be in a position to bring legal challenges. To date, we have helped circulate a model complaint in such a case, and we are trying to collect multiple examples of PHA denials of portability and to formally bring these to HUD's attention.

Housing mobility and pending/future voucher legislation: A glimmer of hope for our housing mobility efforts was reflected in the Administration's new Section 8 budget proposal, later included in the House and Senate voucher appropriations bills, which include for the first time a central reserve fund, earmarked in part for portability excess costs – a step we had advocated at last year's Section 8 summit and in our mobility conference report. Looking forward, we also developed an opportunity-oriented policy statement on Section 8 voucher legislation for the new Congress, which includes a detailed menu of policy options.

### **Civil Rights Mandates in the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program**

We released two important reports in 2006 focusing on civil rights, housing mobility, and voucher access in the LIHTC program, the nation's largest low income assisted housing production program: The first, commissioned by PRRAC and the National Fair Housing Alliance, is titled *Are States Using the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) to Enable Families with Children to Live in Low Poverty and Racially Integrated Neighborhoods?* This report, prepared by Abt Associates, looks at state by state and individual metro area data on concentration patterns in the LIHTC program. The second, a joint report with the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights, is titled *Building Opportunity: Civil Rights Best Practices in the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program*. This report analyzes state LIHTC plans from all 50 states to identify practices that promote racially integrated housing in areas of opportunity. After the midterm elections, we also began meetings with a coalition of advocacy and industry groups to try and reach common ground on proposed reforms in the LIHTC program to be proposed to the new Congress.

## **Baltimore Regional Housing Campaign**

Our work in Baltimore to help create a regional political coalition in support of the *Thompson v. HUD* public housing desegregation case has been very successful. The Baltimore Regional Housing Campaign, led by Baltimore-base Citizens' Housing and Planning Association, is doing important work integrating housing policy, urban-suburban church organizing, housing policy design, media analysis and messaging, and a regional inclusionary zoning campaign. The coalition is a good example of PRRAC's model of integrating research, organizing, and advocacy (including litigation) to attack the mechanisms of structural inequality. PRRAC has helped to liaison with the *Thompson* litigation team (NAACP Legal Defense Fund and the ACLU), and facilitated coalition input into the plaintiffs' proposed remedy before it was submitted to the court. Final arguments were held in the *Thompson* case on July 11 on the scope of the proposed remedy, and a decision is expected in early 2007.

Much of our recent work in Baltimore has focused on developing a proposal for an "enhanced mobility program" for families participating in the *Thompson* partial consent decree. The emphasis of the proposal is "post move counseling" – connecting families with opportunities in their new communities. We are particularly trying to bring services to families with teenage boys who, the national research and experience in Baltimore suggests, may be having a harder time adjusting to moves than other family members. Other coalition partners, in addition to CPHA, include the Greater Baltimore Urban League, the Maryland ACLU, the Faith Fund, the Innovative Housing Institute, BRIDGE (an urban-suburban interfaith church network).

## **Opportunity Agenda**

We were pleased to partner with the new non-profit organization the Opportunity Agenda in the development of its inaugural report, "The State of Opportunity in America." Working closely with Opportunity Agenda research director Brian Smedley, PRRAC engaged the assistance of outside researchers to provide a comprehensive set of housing data relating to access to opportunity. Specifically, we provided a new analysis of national trends in segregation and poverty concentration (with Nancy Denton and Bridget Anderson, SUNY-Albany); a racial/ethnic/gender analysis of new Home Mortgage Disclosure Act data (with the National Community Reinvestment Coalition); and an analysis of housing cost burden data separated out by racial and ethnic status (provided by research staff at National Low Income Housing Coalition).

PRRAC's Executive Director also submitted a chapter entitled "Housing Mobility: The Next Generation," for the Opportunity Agenda's forthcoming book on Opportunity in America.

## **Hurricane Katrina Rebuilding**

Hurricane Katrina and regional housing mobility in New Orleans: In February, along with Sheila Crowley, colleagues at the Lawyers Committee, and James Perry of the New Orleans Fair Housing Center, we participated in a meeting with HUD Secretary Jackson and his staff on fair housing issues arising in the New Orleans rebuilding process. This meeting was a followup to fair housing meetings we had cohosted in D.C. and Baton Rouge in late 2005. At the meeting, we highlighted the importance of guaranteeing the tens of thousands of families who had been given “Disaster Housing Vouchers” their full rights to “portability” – the ability to freely cross jurisdiction lines (for example, from Baton Rouge to New Orleans) and move with their vouchers.

At the end of March, we hosted an all day meeting at PRRAC titled “Mapping the displaced families of New Orleans: a research agenda,” which brought together advocates and researchers from across the country studying patterns of education, health, housing, employment, and criminal justice interaction in the Katrina diaspora. Our focus at this meeting was the housing counseling needs of displaced families, and the lack of data on the levels of poverty and segregation in displaced families’ new communities.

This past summer, in spite of the HUD Secretary’s earlier assurances, a group of families who had found apartments in the predominantly white suburb of Jefferson Parish were denied the right to move there. We drafted a letter to HUD and helped attorneys in New Orleans successfully intervene with the HUD Secretary’s office to ensure that housing voucher families in New Orleans had full “portability rights” to move in and out of Orleans Parish.

The experience in Jefferson Parish led us next to prepare a policy memo on options for regional administration of Section 8 vouchers in the New Orleans area – to avoid this problem for other families as thousands of families return to the area with their vouchers over the next 12 months. .

## **HEALTH DISPARITIES**

Regional health disparities meetings: With the support of the Health Policy Institute of the Joint Center for Political & Economic Studies, we hosted an extremely successful June meeting in New Orleans of national and local groups working on issue of environmental justice, health care access and the rebuilding process in post-Katrina New Orleans. The work of the “New Orleans Health Disparities Initiative” will continue with a conference report that is scheduled to be released in early 2007.

Our next regional focus is Newark, New Jersey, where a progressive new mayoral administration is expected to expand the boundaries of what is possible in addressing the root causes of health disparities. In the fall of 2006, we began the planning and organizing process for a possible meeting in the Spring of 2007.

Our partners in the planning of these regional meetings, in addition to the Health Policy Institute, include the Alliance for Healthy Homes, the NRDC, the Center for Social Inclusion, and legal services lawyers from New York, Cincinnati and Providence.

NLADA trainings: Working with PRRAC board member Camille Holmes of the NLADA and our working committee of environmental justice lawyers from legal services and public interest organizations in Cincinnati, New York and Providence, we helped set up a series of training sessions on minority health disparities at the three major NLADA conferences in 2006 – including tracks on science and public health, organizing, and litigation.

PRRAC's Health Policy Fellow: We were pleased to welcome our new Health Policy Fellow, Nkiru Azikiwe, supported by a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

## **EDUCATION**

The Louisville/Seattle voluntary school integration cases: We organized and submitted an amicus brief on the impact of housing segregation on school patterns in these two cases challenging the use of race in voluntary school integration plans. Our brief emphasized the need for race conscious school policies to counteract residential segregation, which is significantly influenced by government policies, and the reciprocal effect of school integration on stable integrated housing patterns. We submitted the brief along with the Institute on Race and Poverty at University of Minnesota, the National Fair Housing Alliance, the Center on Cities and Schools, and a number of academic experts who have studied the dynamics of housing segregation. PRRAC was also involved in the public dialogue around the cases – including moderating a major panel discussion and press briefing on the case at the Center for American Progress.

Interdistrict Parents Organizing Project: We have continued to provide technical assistance to a coalition in Hartford seeking to organize and harness the untapped political power of several thousand families whose children participate in voluntary school integration programs in the region. In early December we helped to organize and stage the successful first step in this process – a full day celebration of the “Project Concern” program, which today places about 1100 Hartford students in suburban school placements throughout the region as part of the remedy in the *Sheff v. O'Neill* school desegregation case.

## **CIVIL RIGHTS HISTORY & TEACHING**

Chicago 1966: We completed a comprehensive online chronology of the Chicago Freedom Movement, complete with photos, maps, and old newspaper clippings, which was posted and linked to the Chicago Freedom Movement 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference website. Our special symposium issue of *Poverty & Race* reflecting on the lessons of the

Chicago Freedom Movement was distributed to all (500) participants in the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference in July.

Classroom/Community Workshop: In October, we co-sponsored a large teachers' conference, "Teaching for Social Justice," held at Mission High School in San Francisco on October 14. The conference, also sponsored by Teachers 4 Social Justice and Teaching for Change, drew 600 participants, primarily public school teachers, and also private/parochial school teachers and students, parents, community activists and administrators. The conference, supported through a grant from the Akonadi Foundation, was an opportunity to expand the use of our civil rights curriculum guide, *Putting the Movement Back into Civil Rights Teaching*.

### **PRRAC'S INTERDISCIPLINARY CLEARINGHOUSE ROLE**

A good portion of PRRAC's work is devoted to connecting advocates with social scientists focusing on structural inequality issues at the intersection of race and poverty. This core clearinghouse and convening function is something that PRRAC has done since it was founded in 1990, and we can continue to build on this strength. PRRAC's Director of Research, Chester Hartman, has continued as editor of PRRAC's bimonthly publication, *Poverty & Race*, published six times each year. Highlights of our 2006 issues have included summaries from recent civil rights history research ("When Affirmative Action Was White," "Truth and Reconciliation in Greensboro," and Raymond Arsenault's "Freedom Riders"); a preview of forthcoming research on sexual harassment and violence affecting teenage girls; continuing research on housing mobility; and a year-end symposium issue on Structural Racism.

PRRAC staff have also been active as speakers and participants in conferences and panels on race and poverty issues, and PRRAC has hosted several book events and panels in DC over the past year.

### **PRRAC'S BUDGET AND FUNDING PARTNERS**

In 2006, we were grateful for the support of the Open Society Institute, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Akonadi Foundation, the Morton & Jane Blaustein Foundation, the Taconic Foundation, and a growing number of generous individual donors.

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