

PRRAC

Poverty & Race Research Action Council

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Annual Report 2011-2012

PRRAC supports civil rights research and advocacy on behalf of low income families, bringing a sharper focus on structural racial inequality to government policy deliberations in the areas of housing, education, and health. We are also committed to connecting advocates with social scientists working on race and poverty issues, to providing technical assistance and coalition support to local advocates, and to promoting a research-based advocacy strategy on structural inequality issues. Some of our major activities and accomplishments during the past year are summarized below.

A. HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

POLICY ADVANCES

HUD's new Fair Housing Equity Assessment is an important advance in regional fair housing planning in the Sustainable Communities Initiative, a program that funds coordinated regional housing and transportation planning in over forty metropolitan areas. This new assessment tool, which will be used by all regional planning grantees, moves the SCI program beyond vague "equity" language to a more rigorous and sophisticated civil rights analysis. The Assessment, which is also expected to be the analytic core of the anticipated "Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing" rule, will include detailed analyses of "racially concentrated areas of poverty," "disparities in access to opportunity," and identification of public investments to promote increased integration and access to opportunity. The FHEA contains a number of elements we have been advocating for since the transition.

The Rental Assistance Demonstration: We joined the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the National Low Income Housing Coalition, and several public housing industry groups over the course of three months to develop a consensus position on HUD's proposed "Rental Assistance Demonstration," which would seek to preserve public housing and expand tenant choice by converting public housing units from public housing operating funds into monthly project based voucher funds. The work of this group enabled HUD to obtain authorization for the initial 2012 RAD demonstration, and our participation ensured the inclusion of strong fair housing and housing mobility provisions in the final program guidelines.

HUD's proposed rule on Section 8 Voucher Portability represents an important move in the direction that we have advocated for in our largest low income housing program - reducing barriers and disincentives to family moves across PHA jurisdictional lines.

POLICY ADVOCACY AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

We have continued to press HUD to release its proposed disparate impact regulation, and submitted comments on the proposed regulation with dozens of other civil rights, housing and legal services organizations. We also played an important role in response to the case of *Magner v. Gallagher* in the U.S. Supreme Court, supporting the amicus coordination efforts of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and contributing to two amicus briefs before the case was withdrawn.

PRRAC submitted detailed comments on HUD's proposed response to the 1994 Executive Order on environmental justice, and comments on proposed new rules for the HOME Investment Partnerships Program, described by HUD as "the largest federal block grant to the States and local governments that is designed exclusively to create affordable housing for low-income households." We also contributed to comments on the "Moving to Work" program, the Public Housing Agency Plan process, and proposed new HUD guidance on public housing demolition.

PRRAC was invited to present its fair housing critique of the "Housing + Transportation" index to the HUD H+T technical review panel and to the consultants charged with translating the H+T index into HUD policy. In a similar vein, we were invited to participate in the technical review panel for HUD Section 8 "Administrative Fee Study" being led by Abt Associates for HUD's Office of Policy Development & Research. We have participated in meetings and other advocacy at HUD and OMB to press for release of a wide range of stalled HUD regulations affecting civil rights – including the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule, the Disparate Impact rule, the Section 8 Management Assessment rule, the PHA Consortia rule, and the anticipated rule on public housing demolition. PRRAC is also part of the advisory group for the Chicago Regional Housing Choice Initiative, an innovative collaboration of eight housing authorities in the Chicago region to work cooperatively to pool their project based vouchers for placement in higher opportunity areas, and to inject housing mobility goals into their tenant based voucher programs this. In March, we met with staff and other advisory group members to assess the progress of the overall project plan and methodology.

At the Treasury Department, we have primarily focused on civil rights issues affecting the administration of the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program (our largest low income housing development program). In a series of meetings and detailed position statements over the past 12 months, we have pressed the Department to develop Title VI and Title VIII rules for the LIHTC program (we have engaged NCLR, the National Urban League, and the NAACP as active participants in this process). To support this continuing advocacy, we released a detailed white paper, jointly with the Kirwan Institute and the Opportunity Agenda, titled *Opportunity and Location in Federally Subsidized Housing Programs: A New Look at HUD's Site & Neighborhood Standards As Applied to the Low Income Housing Tax Credit*.

We have also worked with the Treasury Department on the potential re-use of government-owned foreclosed houses: in collaboration with the Kirwan Institute, we urged the federal government to help recycle its vast stock of this "real estate owned" property in a way that opens up new rental housing opportunities for low income families. We also participated in a coalition pushing for a larger redesign of the housing finance market (including Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac), and working with the National

Council of La Raza and other groups active on housing finance reform, PRRAC developed an issue brief for the coalition titled "Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing and Secondary Mortgage Market Reform."

CONVENINGS

In early June, PRRAC co-hosted (with the Urban Institute) a very successful Fifth National Conference on Assisted Housing Mobility. The first day of the conference was a "Knowledge Sharing Day" for housing mobility practitioners from both new and well established programs, and the second day was a national policy conference, attended by about 150 people in dialogue with HUD officials and focusing on research and policy affecting mobility and access to opportunity in the Section 8 voucher program. HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan was our keynote speaker during lunch, and he praised PRRAC for our continuing advocacy on this important issue.

PRRAC also organized numerous other policy meetings with HUD, Treasury, and White House officials during the past year, including, for example, an advocates' meeting with HUD Assistant Secretary Sandra Henriquez and her staff addressing the status of several key reforms in the Section 8 voucher program which have been delayed; we believe that the meeting has helped to move some of these initiatives closer to release during the first term. We also helped to coordinate the messaging around the release of the final panel results for the Moving to Opportunity Demonstration last October, which showed positive improvements in physical and mental health for women and girls who moved to lower poverty areas.

We helped to plan, and are playing an important ongoing role with the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights in a Ford Foundation-initiated project intended to increase dialogue and consensus building between fair housing advocates and community development/affordable housing development leaders. A number of PRRAC Board and SSAB members were involved in the initial convening last October, including Betsy Julian, Xavier Briggs, John Powell, and Ingrid Ellen. Followup has included the development of working groups and a detailed research agenda covering affirmative marketing, site selection, and state and local development barriers to affordable housing development.

PRRAC also participated in a "White House Forum on First Suburbs," at the Executive Office Building, sponsored by Building One America and the White House Office of Public Engagement. In addition to helping plan the meeting, PRRAC drafted a portion of the policy agenda discussed at the meeting.

SUPPORT FOR REGIONAL COALITIONS

We joined the Baltimore Regional Housing Campaign in a fair housing administrative complaint filed with HUD against the State of Maryland, challenging the state's restrictive requirement that Low Income Housing Tax Credit developers obtain both local approval and a local financial contribution to develop in a particular local jurisdiction. The rule has led to the routine exclusion of family LIHTC housing units from low poverty, predominantly white communities. If successful, the complaint will remove one of the more onerous barriers to development of family affordable housing in high opportunity communities in Maryland.

PRRAC has been working closely with HUD, Building One America, the Southest Pennsylvania First Suburbs Project, and several public housing agencies in southeast Pennsylvania to develop a regional housing opportunity plan in the 5-county Philadelphia region. This project began in the Spring of 2012, and we hope to make significant progress in the coming year.

B. EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

POLICY ADVANCES

PRRAC and the National Coalition on School Diversity achieved a policy victory in December 2011, with the final release by the Department of Education (and the Department of Justice) of their “Guidance on the Voluntary Use of Race to Achieve Diversity and Avoid Racial Isolation in Elementary and Secondary Schools.” This document, which the Coalition had been demanding for over 2 years, instructs states and local school districts about how they can legally achieve school integration. The Guidance recognizes that racial diversity and reduction of racial isolation are compelling government interests, and endorses “race conscious” measures to promote school diversity, that do not involve taking into account the race or individual students for admission or assignment purposes (the guidance also lists examples of such measures, including affirmative school siting, redefined attendance zones, geographically weighted lotteries, socioeconomic integration, interdistrict transfer programs, etc). Importantly, the Guidance also clarifies that race of individual students *can* still be taken into account to achieve diversity in situations where “race-neutral and generalized race-based approaches would be unworkable.”

POLICY ADVOCACY AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

ESEA Waivers: In the absence of Congressional action to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Obama Administration announced that it would provide qualified states with waivers of certain provisions of the “No Child Left Behind” provisions of the law. These waivers would exempt states and districts from NCLB's accountability provisions designed to improve low-performing schools and address achievement gaps for identified subgroups. We worked with the Leadership Conference Education Task Force to craft a civil rights position on the waiver process and were pleased to see several important safeguards included in the final Administration proposal.

Charter school reform: PRRAC worked with the Century Foundation to host a Fall 2011 meeting between school diversity advocates and charter school administrators and advocates, to explore the possibility of incorporating school diversity goals into charter school design. The closed-door convening brought together more than thirty participants, and led to the development of a white paper titled *Diverse Charter Schools: Can Racial and Socioeconomic Integration Promote Better Outcomes for Students?* which was released at June 2012 event at the Center for American Progress. The report sets out model policies and describes several charter schools that have successfully maintained both inclusive and diverse student bodies.

School and housing integration: Last fall we published, jointly with the NCSd, a report titled *Finding Common Ground: Coordinating Housing and Education Policy to Promote Integration* (October 2011), as well as an accompanying NCSd Research Brief, “The Reciprocal Relationship between Housing and School Integration.” These reports came out of a training workshop we had run for HUD and Department of Education staff in early 2011.

CONVENINGS AND COALITION BUILDING

PRRAC has continued to take the lead in staffing the National Coalition on School Diversity, a growing, multi-organization national coalition. Last fall, we set up the coalition with its own free-standing website, www.school-diversity.org (previously the coalition was hosted by the PRRAC website), and we have expanded both our network of state and local affiliates and the coalition’s Research Advisory Panel.

In May 2012, over 250 people attended the second national conference of the National Coalition on School Diversity, held at Georgetown Law School (with a smaller meeting of the NCSd’s Research Advisory Panel the next morning). This conference helped to energize and advance the national advocacy agenda of the coalition, connect local school diversity advocates in a more effective network, and renew the research-advocacy links that we have worked to build since the Coalition was founded in 2009.

SUPPORT FOR REGIONAL COALITIONS

Sheff Movement coalition (Hartford): We helped this regional school integration coalition obtain three additional years of funding, posted notices for 2 new staff positions, and helped run the coalition’s monthly stakeholder meetings. In late fall, 2011, we organized a discussion panel of teachers and advocates at the Hartford premiere of the documentary film “American Teacher.” We also hosted a year end meeting for new City Council and School Board members, and weighed in with critiques and suggestions for the Governor’s educational reform proposals. The Hartford school integration plan now includes 30 regional magnet schools and 40 participating towns.

Meeting on school integration in New Jersey: PRRAC co-sponsored, with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, an exploratory meeting with interested parties in New Jersey on adapting the statewide open enrollment law into an inter-district choice program (similar to programs in Hartford, Minneapolis, and St. Louis) to promote racial and ethnic diversity.

Minnesota school diversity guidelines: We helped the NCSd provide expert testimony to the Minnesota commission considering changes to the decades-ole school diversity rules for the state. Our experts were able to persuade the commission not to scrap the program, but to strengthen it.

C. ONE NATION INDIVISIBLE

PRRAC has launched a new documentation and organizing project in collaboration with Harvard’s Charles Hamilton Houston Institute called “One Nation Indivisible.” The project was initially funded through the Connecticut-based Norflet Fund. Project co-

directors are Susan Eaton and Gina Chirichigno. One Nation Indivisible identifies and visits places and talks to people across the country engaged in conscious efforts to create, sustain or improve racially diverse schools, neighborhoods, social institutions and workplaces. We document these efforts in written narratives, photos and short videos, through social media and within multimedia presentations given in venues across the country. The project will also use national convenings and community based strategy sessions to mobilize and connect people on the ground to each other and to thinkers, strategists, researchers and advocates supporting diversity/integration on the national level. By telling and spreading stories about integration efforts, by building stronger and broader coalitions we hope to better harness the potential of diversity and win more support for pro-integration policies and programming on local, state and national levels. One Nation Indivisible will work closely with and support the National Coalition on School Diversity. So far, the project has released four "Reports from the Field," including *Not Your Father's Suburb*, (exploring the political and racial currents underlying the struggle to maintain school diversity in a changing suburban school district in Minnesota).

D. HEALTH DISPARITIES AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

We continued to advance the policy goals set out in our 2010 policy brief, "Prescription for a New Neighborhood," with a plenary address to the Medical-Legal Partnership network annual meeting in San Antonio and a feature article for *Shelterforce* magazine on the health impacts of housing mobility for two low income mothers and their families, who moved out of unhealthy neighborhoods into higher opportunity neighborhoods in the Baltimore suburbs. We also continued to work with a coalition of environmental justice and transportation equity advocates, and joined in submitting comments on a Federal Transit Administration Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for the FTA "New Starts" transit-oriented development program, and [contributed to comments on an EPA draft report](#) on "Creating Equitable, Healthy, and Sustainable Communities."

PRRAC joined the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and other groups in an amicus brief to the U.S. Supreme Court on the "Medicaid Expansion Provision" portion of the challenge to the Affordable Care Act. The amicus brief, drafted by Martha Davis of Northeastern Law School and Risa Kaufman with the Columbia Law School Human Rights Clinic, argues that the Medicaid Expansion Provision, by seeking to mitigate racial disparities in access to health care, is responsive to U.S. treaty obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The brief cites the U.N. CERD Committee's 2008 "Concluding Observations" on health care disparities in the U.S., which echo PRRAC's coalition shadow report submitted to the Committee earlier that year.

E. CERD AND THE UPR

Our work with the National CERD Implementation Task Force continued with meetings and presentations at the U.S. Human Rights Fund Conference in Philadelphia and the annual meeting of the U.S. Human Rights Network. As part of the preparation for the upcoming U.N. review of U.S. treaty compliance in 2013, the State Department has finally brought together a formal "interagency working group" with key representatives from each federal agency. We attended the initial meeting between these representatives and NGOs; additional meetings are planned for the summer and fall. As part of our work

with the U.S. Human Rights Network CERD Task Force, PRRAC is also developing a detailed “report card” on U.S. progress on the 2008 recommendations of the CERD Committee.

F. VOICES OF INTEGRATION

We continued our video interviews of families participating in voluntary housing mobility programs, and we also completed photo shoots of participating families in Baltimore, Westchester County, and Hartford. We have made significant progress on this multimedia project, including securing the services of a local video production company, producing our first slide show from taped interviews in Baltimore and Westchester County, and planning additional trips to tape interviews in Pittsburgh, Milwaukee and Dallas.

G. COMMUNICATIONS

We have made substantial strides this year in our communications capacity. We began a biweekly email newsletter through Constant Contact, which has received very positive feedback. We have seen a substantial increase in the number of individual contacts in the Constant Contact database, as well as a consistently high number of visitors to the PRRAC website.

H. EVALUATION

Working with our Board of Directors and with an outside evaluation consultant (Tanya Coke) in 2011, PRRAC completed an internal “Strategy & Benchmarks Logic Model” to guide and evaluate our work going forward, and an external “Program Evaluation” based on interviews with policymakers and other PRRAC stakeholders. We also conducted a survey of *Poverty & Race* readers.

I. CONFERENCES, PUBLICATIONS, AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

PRRAC publications

A Lost Decade: Neighborhood Poverty and the Urban Crisis of the 2000s: PRRAC contributed to the design and funding of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies’ September report, by Rolf Pendall and colleagues at the Urban Institute. The report found that the number of people living in high-poverty neighborhoods increased nearly 5 million people since 2000, a significant setback compared with progress in the 1990s. Continuing an earlier trend, African Americans, Hispanics, and American Indians continue to be substantially more likely to live in high-poverty neighborhoods than white non-Hispanics, and people who live below the poverty line-especially minorities in poverty-are at special risk of living in high-poverty neighborhoods. The report also includes important analysis on the variations in concentrated poverty trends across different metro areas, the increasing racial/ethnic heterogeneity of many high poverty neighborhoods, and an analysis of the racial and economic trajectories, since 1970, of the original "ghetto" neighborhoods identified in the Kerner Commission report in 1968. The report was released at the Joint Center's “Place Matters Conference” on September 7, 2011.

Finding Common Ground: Coordinating Housing and Education Policy to Promote Integration (October 2011): We published our final report in the housing-schools policy project, with the National Coalition on School Diversity.

Diverse Charter Schools by Richard D. Kahlenberg and Halley Potter (May 2012)

[*Opportunity and Location in Federally Subsidized Housing Programs: A New Look at HUD's Site & Neighborhood Standard As Applied to the Low Income Housing Tax Credit*](#) (October 2011)

Poverty & Race

In addition to the policy documents referenced above, PRRAC continues to publish *Poverty & Race* six times a year. Our circulation is now over 6000 (hard copies) plus a larger email distribution through our e-newsletter.

Conference presentations

PRRAC staff spoke and participated in a large number of conferences and trainings in the past year, including:

PRRAC was a co-sponsor and presenter, along with the National Council of La Raza, the Equal Rights Center, and HUD, of a forum on fair housing issues affecting immigrant communities, July 22, 2011, in Washington, DC.

Phil gave an orientation on the Hartford school integration plan to teachers and staff at the new Thomas Hooker regional magnet school in Hartford

PRRAC co-sponsored a Sept. 20 showing of "I AM A MAN," a new documentary on the 1968 Memphis sanitation workers' strike, at the Economic Policy Institute.

Saba published op-eds in the online journal "The Root" on the Atlanta school cheating scandal and on ESEA reauthorization.

Saba spoke at a forum on "Increasing Teacher Diversity: Strategies to Improve the Teacher Workforce," sponsored by the Center for American Progress.

Phil and Saba both served as discussants at the APPAM Fall Research Conference, a lively annual DC event showcasing new research by graduate students and faculty at public policy and management schools. Phil responded to new research on community economic development, and Saba participated in a research panel on school-based reforms to decrease the achievement gap.

Chester presented at the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning annual conference in Salt Lake City, the National Council of La Raza conference, and the SEIU Local 500 conference in DC.

PRRAC helped to organize two fair housing related workshops and a plenary at an annual convening of legal services and civil rights lawyers working on federal housing issues, including the first in our series of discussions on "Inclusive Gentrification."

White House Rental Housing Conference: We were invited as the only civil rights group at a housing industry stakeholders' meeting at the Executive Office Building.

Phil spoke at a Magnet Schools of America legislative briefing in February, along with Board member John Brittain.

Phil gave a plenary talk on PRRAC's "Prescription for a New Neighborhood" at the national Medical-Legal Partnership conference in San Antonio.

Saba, Ebony and Cara attended the Kirwan Institute "Transforming Race" conference and presented the second in our series of presentations on "Inclusive Gentrification." Social Science Advisory Board member Lance Freeman led off the panel, and we screened two new PRRAC videos (which are also now on our website).

In February, Chester spoke at a Southern Anti-Racism Network meeting in Columbus, Georgia and gave a classroom presentation at Columbus Community College.

We published a series of analyses and commentaries on the Manhattan Institute's controversial "End of the Segregated Century" report.

Phil represented PRRAC as one of seven national "anchor groups" at the second national conference of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's America Healing initiative, as part of a lunch plenary moderated by Melissa Harris-Perry.

Phil presented PRRAC's recent work on healthy housing at a School of Public Health colloquium at the University of Maryland.

Phil represented PRRAC at a U.N. Habitat forum on urban equity and inclusion, comparing current U.S. housing issues with developments in the Europe, South America, and sub-Saharan Africa.

Phil was a panelist and Sheryll Cashin was the moderator at a well attended rollout event for our publication on integrated charter schools (see above), held at the Center for American Progress in June.

We participated in several planning efforts helping to define an agenda for future housing-related research, including a meeting of the "What Works Collaborative," and a research conference sponsored by the HUD Office of Policy Development and Research.