The Reparations Question

How to make white America comprehend and come to grips with the legacy of slavery? Is this a necessary precondition to dealing with, and perhaps ending, current institutionalized racism, segregated housing, school and employment patterns, and the prejudiced attitudes and behavior of individuals?

A deeply felt strand of thought and strategic thinking in at least a portion of the black community, and among some whites as well, holds that a program of systemic and large-scale reparations is an essential threshold step, for which precedents certainly exist in recent US and world history. On the other hand, the philosophical, political and practical problems of remediating past wrongs on the scale attributable to slavery, an institution that was formally and legally ended well over a century ago, are immense.

We decided to raise the reparations issue and its problems in the form of an interview with one of its leading proponents, economist Richard America. Accompanying our interview is a supportive commentary by Rep. John Conyers of Detroit, sponsor of a bill to study the legacy of slavery and propose remedies; and a strong but friendly dissent, with an alternative proposal, by Temple University sociologist Howard Winant.

In the September/October issue of Poverty & Race we will publish a set of additional solicited commentaries by a range of thinkers and activists. We also will consider publishing additional comments by readers, and so encourage you to add your thoughts on this controversial issue — Chester Hartman.

Chester Hartman: Let's start with a definitional question: How exactly would you define the reparations issue? Who is to be compensated, and for what?

Richard America: Reparations isn't the issue. It's a conceptual framework, a way of looking at a set of related issues. The issues are economic, political and social dysfunction and the management of a large complex multiracial society that's competing internationally less than optimally.

Unjust enrichment based on slavery and discrimination causes this dysfunction. The country will not have a bright future if the problems stemming from past economic injustice and inequity aren't solved.

To improve overall performance, by including people who have been excluded and exploited, we need to provide more than palliatives. We need to invest heavily in them. But the rationale for doing that has been unpersuasive.

The real question is, what is the present value and distribution of the stream of income that has been coercively and wrongfully diverted from blacks to whites through slavery and discrimination to produce lopsided income and wealth distributions by race, and, in doing so, has robbed too many blacks of skills they need to perform effectively?

The top 20%, disproportionately white, receives 42% of earned income. The bottom 20%, disproportionately black, receives 5% of earned income. Wealth is even more maldistributed. A major reason for this skewed outcome is past injustice—slave labor in agriculture, manufacturing, many services and in infrastructure development—followed by exclusion, discrimination and exploitation. Common resource pools, produced by everyone's labor, were maldistributed, by white decision makers, overwhelmingly to whites, primarily in the form of education and training.

CH: Why are reparations so important?

RA: The country faces a set of complex interconnected problems. We label them as urban, racial, underclass, inner-
(Please turn to page 2)
(REPARATIONS: Continued from page 1)

...city problems. We talk about affirmative action, reverse discrimination and quotas. Actually we're talking about wealth and income redistribution, but without a sufficient intellectual and analytical basis.

The primary racial social problems are manifested in poor performance and poor quality in employment, education, housing, health, crime, municipal finance, and also in overall deficiencies in our competitiveness and productivity at a macro level.

Chronic racial injustices over generations help to produce these current defects. To remedy the big problems faced by the whole society, we need to correctly define them. But we haven't. That's why the debate is endless and circular. So reparations is actually a concept that's central to getting to consensus and to successful governance and management of long-term economic performance. It's a key public policy concept, so far unrecognized or unacknowledged. And it's also a tool for conflict resolution in circumstances of deep ancestral grievances between groups.

Ch: How much money might be involved, and how might it be disbursed and used?

Ra: Whites owe blacks $5 to 10 trillion. It should be repaid primarily through investment in human capital—education and training over two to three generations. It should also be repaid through investments in targeted housing, capital formation, and business creation.

Ch: How did you calculate this figure?

Ra: The basis for the estimates are in work done by James Marketti, at the University of Wisconsin, and in an illustrative estimate done under a program at the University of California, Berkeley. The Berkeley work was based, in turn, on Lester Thurow's model, developed in his 1969 book, Poverty and Discrimination. Both were published in my 1990 edited collection, The Wealth of Races.

These estimates add up to over $3 trillion, but they covered limited time series because of data limitations. They don't cover the entire period 1619 through 1994. They were intended to suggest estimating techniques that can be refined and further developed.

The estimates also don't take account of discrimination in investment in human capital in public education, K-12 and college. So $5 to $10 trillion would turn out to be an understatement.

Ch: You've elsewhere suggested that the reparations issue is largely an accounting problem. What do you mean by that, and what accounting system do you propose?

Ra: It's an accounting or auditing problem in the sense that the first order of business is to establish the accuracy of the claim. After that, the conversation will lead to practical constructive outcomes. But first a solid, fairly rigorous analytical basis must be built. Until then, the discussion tends to be rhetorical only.

The case must withstand scrutiny from economists and policy analysts. Then it will be adopted by political leaders and opinion makers in the media. The concept will make that step to broad respectability when the research is done and stands up.

It will then lead to useful results when it is embraced, ultimately, by most people as right and fair and practical. It will stand the same tests of debate in a democracy as any other concept or proposal.

Ch: In May, Denny's restaurant chain agreed to a $54 million settlement with the Justice Department to compensate for and remedy clearly demonstrated patterns of racial discrimination; several thousand victims will receive a hefty cash award. And the State of Florida apparently will be making a large cash payment to a few survivors of racial violence against a black town that occurred over 70 years ago. In what ways do you see these recent events as moving us toward a massive reparations scheme of the type you advocate?

Ra: The Denny's case and the Florida case have nothing to do with the reparations concept. Those are finite judgments based on specific fact situations with individual, identifiable parties. The broad reparations concept is more amorphous. It involves patterns and practices of 15 generations. These are scrutinized and found wanting by current ethical and moral standards that are applied retroactively.

Society in 1994 will say, we cannot in good conscience accept benefits produced by unjust means that we disapprove of. Some of these acts happened long ago, but they produced benefits that were transferred intergenerationally, compounded and bequeathed to us.

I believe society is ready to take that step. But ultimately it is a moral question: is it moral for the top 30—those earning over roughly $45,000, as a class—to accept such unjust enrichments? And, if not, how can we remedy the injustice? Systematic, targeted income and wealth redistribution is the answer.

Ch: Is there any contradiction between characterizing it as a moral issue, and the framework you earlier raised in terms of practical, global competitiveness?

Ra: The concept is moral in the sense that even when it's shown convincingly that there is such a "debt," there is no power that can enforce collection, although creative legal theories may emerge. So it will be up to society to reflect on this new information and collectively agree to respond. It's a moral and practical matter. Practically, paying these reparations will help strengthen the economy and the social fabric. There's no contradiction.

Ch: Another obvious analogy is the reparations payments Congress authorized several years ago to Japanese-Americans interned during World War II. Why was this politically acceptable, and not reparations for slavery?

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The Proposed Reparations Study Commission

by Rep. John Conyers

The lingering effects of slavery have been a continuing issue within the African American community for many years. All of us are painfully aware of the damage racism did to African Americans as it expressed itself through slavery, racial segregation and discrimination. A national movement has emerged in favor of reparations to the descendants of African American slaves, especially among groups such as the Black Reparations Committee and the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America. I am strongly in favor of investigating all of the alternatives to bring this issue to a resolution.

Approximately 4,000,000 Africans and their descendants were enslaved in the United States (and the colonies which became the United States) from 1619 to 1865. Slavery in our country was constitutionally and statutorily sanctioned by the government from 1789-1865. Yet our government has never actively studied the effects of that slavery and possible recompense to its victims.

In 1989, I first introduced a bill, the Commission to Study Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act, which is designed to investigate differing options to resolve the issue of the effects of slavery. I reintroduced it this year as House Resolution 40. While this bill would not directly provide for actual compensation, it would establish the first federally chartered commission to study the impact of slavery on African Americans and recommend a range of appropriate remedies.

Opponents of this commission argue that the transgressions of slavery took place 150 years ago and that we owe nothing to its victims' descendants. My contention is that African Americans are still victims of slavery as surely as those who lived under its confinement. Just as white Americans have benefited from education, life experiences, and wealth that was handed down to them by their ancestors, so too have African Americans been harmed by the institution of slavery. The fruits of their labor were stolen from them; their African culture, heritage, family, language and religion were denied them; their self-identity and self-worth were destroyed by repression and hatred.

There is no question that the federal government has a moral responsibility to investigate the possibility of compensation to those who have been injured by its actions. Reparation payments to Japanese Americans interned by the government during World War II are a similar case. There is no question that African Americans have experienced similarly intense discrimination; the degradation and deprivation which African Americans have suffered did not end with the Emancipation Proclamation or ratification of Constitutional amendments that followed the Civil War.

Racial tensions are high in this country due in part to a lack of understanding about the low self-esteem, lack of cultural identity and economic dependence that are among slavery’s most enduring legacies. America must come to terms with the implications of its history. Fairness and justice for the descendants of slavery, including the question of reparations, need to be dealt with once and for all.


A Friendly Dissent

by Howard Winant

The United States was created out of a group of European colonies located on territory expropriated from native peoples. After 1650 or so, these colonies, north and south, also engaged in widespread enslavement of African people. The distinctions drawn by the end of the 17th Century between Europeans, on the one hand, and Native Americans and Africans, on the other, remain today the hallmarks of the U.S. racial order. Furthermore, the doctrine of natural rights upon which the country was founded in the late 18th Century did not challenge these distinctions. Quite the contrary: they were enshrined in the Constitution. One has to move to relatively recent history—the post-Civil War period—or even to the contemporary era of the civil rights movement, to find serious efforts to challenge the racial injustice that remains constitutive of our social order, of our system of inequality, and of our racist culture.

Let us stipulate all that. Does such a situation support the demand for reparations to be paid by whites to blacks, either on moral or political grounds? My answer to this question is no on both counts. However, I would like to offer a substitute proposal, one that incorporates some but not all the features of the reparations idea.

The Moral Issues

While the enslavement and expropriation of black labor was unquestionably one of the greatest acts of immorality ever carried out, both those who were enslaved and those who enslaved them are dead. There are no people to whom compensation could be paid, and none who can legitimately be called upon or forced to pay, unless we accept the principle that "the sins of the fathers (sic) shall be visited upon the children," which I certainly do not.

There remains the aftermath of slavery, in which a social system based on white (Please turn to page 8)
(REPARATIONS: Continued from page 2)

RA: Likewise, the Japanese case is not analogous. That primarily involved identifiable property owners able to step forward and assert claims to specific property, or to prove wrongs against them as individuals.

CH: How is it possible to make clear, credible connections between what happened generations ago, and was formally terminated 130 years ago, and present conditions?

RA: The connection between the past and the present is clear. It’s not a connection so much between slavery and current conditions. It’s a matter of a continuing process of wrongful, exploitive, coerced, and manipulated income and wealth diversion over 350 years, through various means.

The question is, is it moral to accept benefits produced by means that we now define as wrongful? Society will think it through and reach a consensus that it is not moral. Then a policy of reparations will logically follow.

CH: In a recent book review, Andrew Hacker wrote, “Whites are weary of being lectured about prejudice, and they resent being told that they are responsible for racial segregation and discrimination.” If that’s true—and I think there’s plenty of evidence it is—why is the white majority going to adopt the moral stance you think they will, simply by comprehending the historical patterns of unjust enrichment?

RA: Hacker and others will, in time, and it constructive to look at the racial problems they study and write about through the reparations lens.

CH: Who would receive the reparations? And in what ways do you distinguish between African Americans clearly caught in the intersectional trap of race and poverty—and assuming you can connect their current conditions to previous conditions of servitude—and the Colin Powells, Henry Louis Gates, Clarence Thomas, and Ron Browns, who have been able to succeed wildly in America despite those previous conditions?

RA: Reparations should be paid primarily in human capital investment, along with some investment in hard tangible assets and in business capital formation. These are all benefits that would have been distributed more normally, today, but for the intervention of systematically exploitive and exclusionary practices.

Most of the investment should go to those in the bottom 30%. Some should go to institution building. These institutions, including in higher education and in business, would have grown up except they were consciously hindered in order to benefit competing white institutions and businesses.

CH: Are there ways America can come to grips with its shameful history and the persistent effects of that history other than with cold cash?

RA: The issue is the wrongful diversion of cash. Why would we look for any other remedies other than explicit income and wealth redistribution?

CH: How do you think this will fly politically? Will the majority white community ever accept this idea? And how will other racial minorities—perhaps equally disadvantaged or historically maltreated—react? It’s silly to play games of who was victimized more than whom, but Native Americans’ claims as to unjust historical treatment and current poverty and racial discrimination have to be right up there along with the slavery imposed on African-Americans.

RA: Political acceptability will come as the concept gains intellectual adherents and demonstrates explanatory power. It helps explain why the economy malfunctions, why productivity and competitiveness suffer. It helps clarify the policy choices for remedying all those defects. We should invest in people what is theirs by right to put them in their “rightful place.”

A large portion of the population has been willfully deprived—to the benefit of others—of income and wealth that it ought to have received and would have received in a fairly open and competitive situation. Most Americans will come to acknowledge the debt and agree to practical remedies. Indigenous and quasi-indigenous minorities, that is, Native Americans and African Americans, have a case for reparations.

CH: In a society that seems to have little understanding of or respect for history (“that’s history”) is a current put-down phrase, how realistic is it to expect Americans to deal profoundly and responsibly with something that happened long, long ago—and that most white Americans legitimately can say had nothing to do with them or even with their relatives, since their ancestors arrived in the US well after slavery was abolished? What do you do with the response that in essence says, what’s done is done, we’ve got to look to the future and not to the past?

RA: The issue is not what happened long ago. The issue is the current unjust enrichment flowing from continuing injustices over many generations. All Americans in the top 30% are part of a class that benefits wrongfully from past practices that were instituted, in part, on behalf of future generations of whites.

CH: What kind of role do you see mainstream national civil rights groups, such as the NAACP, La Raza, Japanese American Citizens League, Native American Rights Fund and Urban League, playing in this effort?

RA: The NAACP and the National Urban League should make reparations the central concept in their strategy for the next 40 years. Reparations is about economic development, and civil rights, for the next two generations, should be about economic development.

CH: How would a reparations program fit into a larger civil rights agenda?

RA: Civil rights is, or ought to be, about how to make median black income roughly the same as median white income by the Year 2020. The concept of reparations is an inescapable public policy tool for reaching that objective.

Richard America is a Senior Program Manager in the federal government. His books include Developing the Afro-American Economy (Lexington, 1977), the edited volume Wealth of Races (Greenwood Press, 1990) and Paying the Social Debt: What White America Owes Black America (Praeger, 1993). The views expressed are his own and are not to be taken as representing any institution or organization with which he is affiliated.
The Impact of Court-Ordered Supplementary Housing Subsidies on Homeless Families

by Mary Ann Burg and Lynne Soine

In 1981, Sylvia Sharp and her four children were forced into homelessness when the unheated, unfurnished apartment they occupied in Suffolk County, Long Island, was boarded up by the landlord. At that time, the prevailing fair market rental rate for a two-bedroom apartment in the county was $463; since their public assistance shelter allowance was $277 per month, the Sharp family was unable to locate affordable housing. The family began a three-year odyssey of moves through the county's different welfare motels. In total, Sylvia Sharp and her daughters spent 1,000 days homeless at a total cost to taxpayers of about $58,000. If the Sharp family had received a shelter allowance equal to prevailing fair market rental costs for the same period, the cost to taxpayers would have been approximately $20,000—a $38,000 savings.

Of at least equal or greater significance are the social and human costs. Sylvia Sharp and her children were subjected to a series of destabilizing, dehumanizing, destructive and dangerous situations brought about by the Department of Social Services. A social work intake summary, completed when Ms. Sharp contacted the Nassau-Suffolk Law Services Committee, describes the toll that multiple emergency housing placements had taken: "Ms. Sharp described feeling disoriented, confused and de-established. She said she could not cope with all those moves and described the effect of all the years of instability as being cumulative. ... She simply could not stand being displaced again." The intake summary draws the following conclusion: Ms. Sharp "appears to have done a yeoman's job in holding this family together up to now; the situation's becoming extremely tenuous... There is a very thin thread holding this entire family together and every threat to stability, routine and survival shreds the thread ever finer."

Sylvia Sharp's experience reflects Department of Social Service policies that are clearly in conflict with reality and with each other. Provided with a shelter allowance that was always substantially lower than even the least costly available housing, Ms. Sharp was then "punished" for not finding permanent housing. The Department's records document this "Catch 22" repeatedly. These same records document the Department's insistence that she obtain housing that cost far more than her shelter allowance provided, by using her public assistance grant to make up the difference. One arm of the Department—housing—was causing Ms. Sharp to violate policies of another arm of the same Department—child welfare. From this dilemma emerged a seemingly simple question: Why does the Department of Social Services spend more than $1,700 per month to house these homeless families in welfare motel rooms, but refuse to provide a monthly housing allowance that would pay for adequate and permanent housing at much lower cost? This question became the basis of the class action lawsuit (Sharp v. Perales) brought in 1987 by the Nassau-Suffolk Law Services Committee against the Department of Social Services.

The Sharp lawsuit resulted in a court order to the Department of Social Services to pay a supplementary housing allowance to families with open ADC-U (Aid to Dependent Children/Unemployed Caretaker) cases living in emergency housing. This supplement brought total housing allowances for such families up to the 1987 fair market housing costs, as much as $800 per month, depending on family size. The calculation of the families' basic needs grant, approximately $379 per month for a family of five, would be unaffected by this increase in housing payments. Their Food Stamp allowance was also unaffected by this increase.

In order to become a member of the lawsuit, the public assistance client residing in emergency housing had to first identify rental housing which passed DSS inspection, then go to the Law Services office to sign up for the lawsuit.

At the time of this writing, Law Services continues to add eligible families to the suit as intervenors on an ongoing basis, and will continue to do so until the case goes to the Appeals Court. Membership in the lawsuit means that the ADC-U family's housing allowance goes directly to the landlord (rather than to the family along with their basic needs grant). It also restricts families from moving—the housing supplement is not transferable from one housing unit to a new housing unit (except in extreme cases of need). Therefore, if a family decides to move, they will likely lose the supplement, and, ironically, can only pick it up again if they return to emergency housing and re-apply through Law Services.

Interviewing Class Action Members

Our study was initiated when the authors were contacted by Law Services and asked to conduct a follow-up of Sharp intervenors. Law Services did not have the staffing or the resources to systematically collect data on persons who were added to the suit, but saw the...
opportunities for a unique natural experiment of using housing supplements to increase housing stability among formerly homeless families. The investigators received a PRRAC grant to conduct the research.

At the time the class was certified (November 1988), there were approximately 350 Sharp intervenors, all of whom we attempted to contact by mail or telephone to ask if they would be willing to be interviewed in-depth in person at a later date. The primary purpose of the interviews was to get a detailed housing history and a detailed appraisal from intervenors of the effects of extra rental money on housing location, affordability, quality, and landlord/lessee transactions. The secondary purpose of the interviews was to generate detailed data on intervenors' sources and use of formal and informal supports, including public assistance, paid employment, health care access, and proximity to family and friends. Detailed questions were asked about their children's welfare, including their education histories, learning disabilities, day care utilization, routine health care utilization, and illness histories.

Interviewers were trained by the project investigators. Each of the interviewers had some experience in social service delivery, all were female, one African American and three whites. We attempted to match all African American intervenors with the African American interviewer. Although several of the consenting intervenors had identified themselves as Hispanic on the short survey, we were not able to hire a Hispanic interviewer. All intervenors spoke English fluently. The female heads of families were interviewed in all cases, and all interviews were conducted in the intervenor's home.

Although our research goal was to complete 50 in-depth interviews, we could only complete 31. In some cases, a month elapsed between the time intervenor gave consent to be interviewed and when the interviewer made telephone contact to arrange the interview. Many of the attempted phone contacts resulted in no answer, the remainder of the failed contacts were due to incorrect phone listings and non-returned phone messages.

**Impact of Court-Ordered Rent Supplements**

Clearly, from the point of view of the women interviewed in this study, having the extra rent money, and thereby reducing the gap between housing allowances and fair market rental costs, eased the process of moving from emergency housing to rental housing, since it allowed them to afford available housing, keep up rent payments, and avoid eviction. For the most part, extra rent money meant moving into neighborhoods perceived as safer locations to raise children, mainly because there was less drug traffic. Secondary effects were also evident: most of the women interviewed said that since joining the lawsuit they had been able to pursue job training and further their education. One of the most important secondary effects was that the high rate of school failures among children in these families was reduced, in large part due simply to staying in one place for a longer period of time.

**Department of Social Service policies are clearly in conflict with reality and with each other.**

The limits of litigation-based advocacy for these people are also obvious. From the viewpoint of current lawsuit members, their inability to move without sacrificing the extra rent money is very problematic. Clearly, the lawsuit has not improved on the behavior of landlords in regard to housing maintenance and upkeep; the housing conditions of these families was marginal at best. Several of the women interviewed wished to move because of substandard housing conditions, but could not afford to lose the rent money, and certainly were not willing to move back to emergency housing.

Furthermore, the economic circum-

**Assessing Class Action Litigation Advocacy for the Homeless**

Use of the courts to address the sociopolitical and economic problem of homelessness has been both analyzed and criticized. Courts are an arena wherein weaker parties in a policy dispute can gain some measure of policy change. Historically, the distinct unwillingness of public officials and agencies to address homelessness encouraged legal advocates to use the courts as an authoritative bargaining arena. In states such as New York, where the constitution provides a basis for public responsibility for the impoverished, the courts became the arena in which some assistance for the homeless could be gained. Class action lawsuits became the legal tools by which advocates attempted to secure such assistance.

Critics of class action lawsuits, including lawyers such as Robert Hayes (former of the National Coalition for the Homeless), who has litigated and "won" many class action lawsuits on behalf of homeless people, recognize the limitations of this approach to advocacy. Hayes has characterized legal advocacy for homeless people as: "... slow, god-awful, very ineffective, bull-in-a-china-shop kinds of efforts."

Underpinning much of the criticism of class action lawsuits is the relationship between the issues litigated and social policy advances. The argument is essentially that class action lawsuits address
PRRAC Grantees’ Advocacy Reports

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Alan Meyers has conducted research assessing the relationship between housing assistance and child nutrition. Preliminary findings indicate that children in poor households receiving a housing subsidy have lower rates of iron deficiency and better growth. Empirically, this suggests poor families who do not receive housing subsidies must reduce family food budgets to subsidize overall housing costs, leading to poorer nutrition among children in these households.

In conjunction with Greater Boston Legal Services-Homelessness Unit, Dr. Meyers has presented these preliminary findings in an affidavit in support of pending litigation intended to maintain and expand housing assistance programs specifically targeted for homeless families. In Mass. Coalition for the Homeless v. State Secretary of Human Services, set for trial June 1994 in Suffolk Superior Court, Dr. Meyers has provided an affidavit and will provide expert witness testimony on the incidence of iron deficiency and malnutrition among children in poor households where no housing subsidy or assistance is being received. Dr. Meyers’ testimony and this litigation will provide further impetus to expand and strengthen housing assistance programs, especially for poor families with children.

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Diana Pearce of Wider Opportunities for Women’s (WOW) Women and Poverty Project has been conducting research on the extent to which “doubling-up” disguises poverty and impacts an entire range of issues related to welfare, employment and housing conditions, with emphasis on their effect on the lives of women and people of color.

Preliminary findings, based on analysis of Current Population Survey data, suggest that poor families who share housing with other families often find their poverty hidden within the larger household. Families and households are distinct configurations for determining economic status. WOW has used portions of this research in their current efforts to impact national welfare reform proposals and to create an understanding among policy makers and advocates of the connections between comprehensive welfare reform and housing policy. As an illustration, WOW recently succeeded in encouraging the Department of Health and Human Services to consider amending current regulations to allow states to continue AFDC support to mothers whose children are in foster care. This ensures that the mother will not lose her housing, and the children will have a home to which they can return. Together with a group of housing, women’s and children’s advocacy organizations, WOW has also outlined a series of housing-related recommendations for the Clinton Administration’s Working Group on Welfare Reform.

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Researchers at UCLA have completed two reports: “South Central Los Angeles: An Annotated Bibliography with Accompanying Statistics on Inner City Development” and “The Economic Base of South Central Los Angeles.” The project emanated from a need to identify economic development issues in the aftermath of the Spring 1992 uprising in Los Angeles. The reports found extensive poverty, unemployment and joblessness, a weak economic base, and a small multiplier effect due to a limited internal recycling of income in South Central. The research was used by the Asian Pacific Planning Council in development of the Liquor Store Conversion Project, which had been funded by the City of Los Angeles.

Along with the research, the project provided technical assistance to local community groups in the economic development area. Staff members of the Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment and the Korean Community Youth Center were trained to use Los Angeles County administrative records to trace real estate transactions and identify ownership of properties where liquor outlets were located. This information provided a base from which to consider conversion of business activity from liquor stores to other commercial activities. The project also analyzed and mapped commercial activities based on business licenses from the City of Los Angeles, and the findings were used to help plan and guide the activities of the Liquor Store Conversion Project. The reports are being distributed and used by the Los Angeles Human Rights Commission.

PRRAC ANNUAL REPORT

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supremacy fostered a “superexploitation” or “unequal exchange” from which blacks suffered and whites benefited in innumerable ways, not only economically but also politically and culturally. To the (considerable) extent that this system continues in force today, I believe that a moral obligation exists to overcome it. An initiative of this kind should take the form of a “Marshall Plan for the Cities” or something similar, which I discuss below.

Richard America says, “Whites owe blacks $5 to $10 trillion.” This is obviously some sort of cumulative figure and thus involves the putative obligations of both the living and the dead. But even if applied (presumably in reduced form) only to the living, it raises highly problematic issues of racial stereotyping and treats race and class inequality as if they were interchangeable. It’s hard to agree that all whites owe all blacks, since there are different degrees to which people are implicated in racist practices, either as beneficiaries or as victims. Even such concepts as “white skin privilege” (also problematic for various reasons, though I would not deny its existence) obscure the difference between actual material gain and loss, on the one hand, and symbolic power and powerlessness, on the other. It therefore seems much more morally sound to organize, not “whites” to pay reparations, but rather the state to undertake egalitarian and redistributive policies. Thus we turn from the moral to the political terrain.

The Political Issues

The country has moved significantly to the right in the post-1960s, post-civil rights era. Currently, a strong mainstream consensus exists—Republican neocorporates on the right, Democratic neoliberals on the left—which plays to the vanilla suburbs and not to the chocolate cities. This consensus is resistant to social spending, to tax increases, to the welfare state, in short, to every form of redistribution known. Richard America claims that “society in 1994 will say, we cannot in good con-

science accept benefits produced by unjust means....” There is no evidence for this.

In fact, applying criteria of political realism to Richard America’s strategy on the reparations issue, I can only assume that his idea is to stake out a sort of “pure” position, a benchmark for the achievement of real equality, at least in the economic realm. If we know how much blacks have lost, how much they are “owed” as a result of the whole racist legacy—I impute this logic to him—then we can know how to evaluate the range of social policy options available to us.

Well and good. But the downside to this approach is its potential for racial polarization and antagonism. Richard America is, I believe, wildly optimistic about the reception his proposal would receive, and about the debate that it would generate. My own guess is that it would only create fierce hostility, not only from many whites, but also from many racially defined minorities (Latinos, Asians), and even from a fair number of blacks, for it tends to assume that no mobility, no initiative, no self-empowerment can occur in the black community without a massive infusion of white aid. It is the ultimate in victimology.

An Alternative

As an alternative, we should give up talk of reparations and try to recognize that substantial sympathy for the idea of equality does exist in the United States. This sympathy is at present rather abstract and still filleted by racism. It has also been damaged by the right-wing resurgence which, since 1980, has fought (successfully) to withdraw funding from social programs, from the cities, from what remains of the welfare state. In such a situation, the task is to forge interracial coalitions whose aim is redistribution. In particular, we should argue that the crisis of the chocolate cities now inextricably affects the quality of life in the vanilla suburbs. High unemployment holds wages down; crime and endless spending to contain it forces other types of social spending down; hence education, infrastructure (jobs again!), health care, and even entitlements are threatened, neglected, or ignored.

We should push for the kind of program envisioned by various organizations and analysts (Congressional Black Caucus, Urban League, etc.) as a “Marshall Plan for the Cities” [see item, p. 14]. Such a plan could potentially appeal to blacks and other racially defined minorities, as well as to whites (lots of whom still live in cities). It could garner union support, and could attract many corporate interests that are still deeply rooted in urban settings. Education, transportation, health care, housing, and job creation can all be related simultaneously to the need to address racial inequality and the need to rebuild U.S. society so that Galbraith’s 1958 label “public squalor amid private opulence” would no longer apply. Such an initiative would obviously be ambitious—we would have to join Henry Gonzalez in his effort to democratize the Federal Reserve Bank, just to name one small problem—but it would, I suggest, define a practical political project that was imaginable and unifying. It would avoid the antagonisms and defeatism inherent in the demand for reparations.

Howard Winant is professor of sociology at Temple University, author of Racial Condition: Politics, Theory, Comparisons (Univ. Minn. Press, 1994) and (with Michael Omi) Racial Formation in the US: From the 1960s to 1990s (Routledge, 1994).
Meet the PRRAC Board of Directors (Part 9)

HELEN HERSHKOFF is Associate Legal Director of the American Civil Liberties Union in its New York headquarters. She is a former staff attorney with the Legal Aid Society of New York, and was also previously in private practice at a New York law firm. She is a graduate of Harvard-Radcliffe College and Harvard Law School and holds an MA in modern history from Oxford University. She has taught as an adjunct professor at CUNY Law School and the Columbia University School of Social Work. She serves on the boards of the NYC Coalition Against Hunger, the Food Research and Action Center, and the Legal Action Center for the Homeless.

MARY ELLEN HOMBS directs the Washington, DC-based Legal Services Homelessness Task Force. She is the former National Director and Director of the Washington, DC office of the National Coalition for the Homeless and from 1971-1988 was a key figure with the Community for Creative Non-Violence. She is co-author (with Mitch Snyder) of A Forced March to Nowhere (1980) and Homelessness in America (1982), author of American Homelessness (1990; 2nd ed. forthcoming), and editor of homeless children’s writings for the documentary photo book Shooting Back (1991). She holds an AB from Davidson College, a masters of public health from the University of California-Berkeley and a JD from the University of North Carolina. She is an adjunct professor at the UNC Schools of Law and Social Work. She regularly writes on health issues for Clearinghouse Review.

JANE PERKINS is staff attorney in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, with the Los Angeles-based National Health Law Program. Prior to that she was a legal services attorney in Chapel Hill and an Assistant Attorney General for the State of Maryland. She holds an AB from George Washington Univ. and a masters in city planning from Howard University.

Helen Hershkoff

Mary Ellen Hombs

Jane Perkins
narrow issues. The fact is that social policy goals are long-range in nature and nowhere near realization, despite a decade of increasing homelessness.

An analysis of the arguments made by advocates and critics of class action lawsuits leads to the conclusion that both short-term strategies represented by class action lawsuits and long-range strategies directed at social policy change are necessary. Rather than polarizing these positions, a synthesis is required if change is to occur in the problem of homelessness. Joel Blau, in his 1992 book The Visible Poor: Homelessness in the United States, identifies the importance of creating a social movement that results in a political environment favorable to homeless peoples' rights. In 1987, Robert Hayes wrote about the need for litigation to educate the population and build a consensus about the sociopolitical, economic underpinnings of poverty and homelessness. Until the public climate can be changed to support long-range policy change on behalf of poor and homeless people, short-range strategies such as class action lawsuits are necessary.

Local departments of welfare, charged with the responsibility of assisting homeless families, face conflicting policies and program requirements. Homeless families are provided with emergency shelter, but not for too long, not in one place, and often nowhere near their prior residence. Homeless families are provided with a shelter allowance known by the welfare department to be insufficient to rent any habitable housing unit, and then are held responsible for failing to find housing. Families routinely "raid" their total AFDC grants, calculated to meet minimal needs of the children of these families, and redirect them to rent payments. This redirection of benefits occurs with the welfare department's full knowledge and, as in the case of Sylvia Sharp, full complicity. Clearly, this contradicts child welfare policy.

Overall, the conflicting array of policy and program requirements surrounding homeless families in the welfare system devastates the children in these families. Their benefits are raided and their emotional and educational needs are neglected. Advocacy to establish the primacy of child welfare policy in providing benefits and services to homeless families is essential. These advocacy efforts should focus on achieving residential permanency for children. The detrimental effects of repeated residential changes, especially involving changes in neighborhood, community and schools, have been demonstrated in this study and by others. Advocacy must address program changes that insure decisions regarding homeless families are made in the best interests of the children of those families.

Mary Ann Burg & Lynne Soine are Assistant Professors at the School of Social Welfare, State University of New York at Stony Brook. For more information, contact them at SUNY/Stony Brook, Health Sciences Center, Level 2, Stony Brook, NY 11794-8231, 516/444-3154.

Race & Poverty Syllabi Now Available

We've received the following race & poverty syllabi, in response to our request for such submissions. Please add yours, and we'll publish a supplementary listing. Ordering instructions: The syllabi are of varying length (2-17 pp.); the least complicated procedure all around is to send us a mailing label and $1 for each syllabus ordered, to cover copying and mailing costs. Or—send us a general contribution for P&R (see page 19) and you can have as many as you want—but be sure to enclose a mailing label. PLEASE ORDER SYLLABI BY ITEM NUMBER.

1. "Crime, Race & Public Policy," Samuel L. Myers, Univ. of MN Hubert Humphrey Inst. of Public Affairs
2. "Race, Poverty & Housing," Samuel L. Myers (see above)
3. "Racial Inequality & Public Policy," Samuel L. Myers (see above)
7. "Racial & Ethnic Minorities," Alberto Pulido (see above)
8. "Urban Development: Race, Class & Gender," Anne Shlay, Temple U.
11. "Housing Rights Seminar," Florence Roisman (see above)
12. "Race, Gender & Poverty," Adolph Reed, Northwestern U.
13. "Examining the Costs of Racism & Poverty and the Will to Struggle," R. Jay Allain, Springfield Public Schools
15. Untitled course on race relations, Ralph Gomes, Howard U.

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PRRAC Update

BOARD CHANGES: With sadness and gratitude, we salute four departing Board members: Florence Rommers, Bob Lehrer, Gordon Bonnycastle, and Frances Navarro. With great pleasure and anticipation of their valuable contributions, we welcome three new Board members: Helen Hershkoff, Mary Ellen Hombs, and Jane Perkins—for their biosketches and pictures, see page 9.

Bob Greenstein has been appointed by President Clinton to the Bipartisan Commission for Entitlement and Tax Reform, which is studying the future of entitlement programs and will recommend ways to slow their growth. Jack Bogerd has been granted tenure at the Univ. of N. Carolina Law School. And Heidi Hartmann received one of the MacArthur Foundation “genius awards.” (We know all our SSAB members are geniuses—it was one of the criteria for appointing them—but it’s nice to have that officially certified.) Congratulations, all!

OTHER BOARD/SOCIAL SCIENCE ADVISORY BOARD NEWS: Jim Weill has been elected Board Chair of The Alliance for Justice, the Washington-based association of public interest law organizations that advances social justice issues and strengthens the public interest communities’ ability to influence public policy. Gary Delgado has been named to the Governing Council of the Aspen Institute’s Nonprofit Sector Research Fund.

The PRRAC Roster . . .

. . is now in production and will be mailed out with the September/October issue of P&R.

For those of you getting P&R for the first time:

Previous issues of P&R contained a form for submitting a short biosketch to go with your name/address listing, and also gave you the option of not being listed at all in the Roster. If you do not want to be listed, you must let us know by phone (202/387-9837) or fax (202/387-0764) by July 29.

Resources

SASE = Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope—59c unless otherwise indicated. Prices indicated include the postage/handling charge when this is listed. “No price listed” items often are in fact free.

Race/Racism

9 Civil Rights Div. Head Deval Patrick’s April 14 Sweating In Statement is available from us with a SASE. The Boston Globe report quoted Ralph Neas, director of the Leadership Conf. on Civil Rights, as saying, “I’ve never seen so many hardened Washington veterans with tears running down their cheeks.”

9 “Civil Rights Issues Facing Asian Americans in the 1990s,” an excerpted chapter from a 1992 US Civil Rights Commn. report, was reprinted in the Fall 1992 J. Intergroup Relations. We’ll send a copy of the 22-page article with a (59c) SASE.

9 Crumcurrenr is the semi-annual newsmagazine of the UCLA Asian American Studies Ctr. Available from the Ctr., 3230 Campbell Hall, 405 Hilgard Ave., LA, CA 90024-1546, 310/825-2974.

9 Focus on Racism is a series of training and education programs offered by the Anti-Racism Collective of Community Change, 14 Beacon St. #602, Boston, MA 02108, 617/523-0555.

9 “New Rainbow Warriors: Right Wing Initiatives in Communities of Color” is a special section of the latest issue (vol. 1, no. 3) of Race File. $10 from the Applied Research Ctr., 25 Embarcadero Cove, Oakland, CA 94606.

9 Race & Class is a 17-year old multidisciplinary quarterly, with contributions from scientists, artists, novelists, journalists, politicians and black and Third World activists and scholars. Subs are $22/indivs., $40/insts. from The Inst. of Race Relations, 2-6 Leche St., Kings Cross Rd., London WC1X 9HS England.

9 Race/Ethnicity Data: Two government reports deal with this issue: “Federal Data Collection: Agencies’ Use of Consistent Race & Ethnic Definitions” (GAO/GGD-93-25, Dec. 1992), available free from the USGAO, PO Box 6015, Gaithersburg, MD 20884-6015, 202/512-6000; and “Use of Race & Ethnicity in Public Health Surveillance: Summary of the CDC/ATSDR Workshop” (June 25, 1993), vol. 42, No. RR-10 of Morbidity & Mortality Weekly Report,

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available ($3) from the Mass. Medical Soc., CSPQ Box 9120, Waltham, MA 02254-9120.


- The Diversity Factor, a new quarterly magazine listed in the March/April P&R with a steep $195/yr. sub. price, notes us: that they have an $80/yr. rate for nonprofits, plus special bulk order rates. They're at PO Box 3188, Teaneck, NJ 07666, 201/833-0311.

- The Episcopal House of Prayer (Pastoral Letter on Sin of Racism) (March, 1994) is available from us with a SASE. More info. from the Epis. Church Ct., 815 2nd Ave., NYC, NY 10017, 803/334-7626.


- Correction: Last issue's listing of Rethinking Ethnic & Racial Relations in Philadelphia: Immigrants in a Divided City misspelled one author's name (it's Jo Anne Schneider) and did not make clear it is a book, not a report.

Poverty/Welfare


- "Do Welfare Magnets Attract?" by Russell Hanson & John Hariman (Discussion Paper 1028-94, 1994), is available ($3.50) from IRP (see item above). The paper documents that poor people do not move from one state to another to receive greater AFDC benefits.

- "Ending Poverty As We Know It: The Case for Child Support Enforcement" is a new report from the Ctr. for Law & Social Policy, $12 (6% sales tax for DC residents) from CLASP, 1616 P St. NW #150, Wash., DC 20036. 202/328-5100.

- "On Wisconsin: What's Wrong With the 'Work Not Welfare' Policy," by Mark Greenberg, is available ($8) from CLASP (see item above).

- "The Jury is Still Out: An Analysis of the Forpurged Impact of New Jersey's AFDC Child Exclusion (aka, 'Family Cap') Law," by Michael Laracy (8 pp.), is available with a 98¢ 9" x 11" SASE from CLASP (see two items above).

- "Nets, Ladders & Bridges: Expanding Welfare Reform Options" (18 pp., 1994) is a policy paper from Women's Self-Employment Proj., 166 W. Washington St. #730, Chicago, IL 60602, 312/606-8255; no price listed.

- Profiling NYC Households Receiving Public Assistance: The United Way of NYC is undertaking such a profile, for the City's Human Resources Adm. They are using 1980 and 1990 PUMS data and would like to identify other studies on this topic using PUMS data. Contact Hongook Eu, United Way of NYC, 59 Park Ave., NYC, NY 10016-1503, 212/973-3803.

- "Public Policy/Private Pain: Women & Welfare Reform, '94" is a 64-page study by the Coalition on Human Needs. $10 from the Coalition, 1000 Wisconsin Ave. NW, Wash., DC 20007, 202/342-0726.


- "Public Attitudes Toward Welfare Reform: A Summary of Key Research Findings," by Geoffrey Garin, Guy Molyneux & Linda DiVall of Peter D. Hart Research Assoc. & American Viewpoint (11 pp.), reports findings from a public opinion research project that included a telephone survey of 1020 registered voters and 8 focus groups. It was commissioned by the Ctr. on Budget & Policy Priorities, Ctr. for Law & Social Policy, Jt. Ctr. for Pol. & Econ. Studies, Natl. Council of La Raza and the Children's Defense Fund. Further info. from Susan Steinmetz or Alison Pion at the Ctr. on Budget ..., 777 N Capitol St. NW #705, Wash., DC 20004, 202/408-1080.

- Portrait of Poverty: Community Action of Minneapolis is compiling comprehensive poverty data for the purposes of dispelling myths and supporting public and legal advocacy. They intend to collect data annually and are looking for any ideas...
on how to shape the project and any outstanding models available for their use. Contact Margaret Shulman, CAM, 401 Second Ave. S., Mpls, MN 55401-2307, 612/348-8858.

Community Organizing

• ACORN Tenant Union is a new formation in some 40 public housing projects in 20 cities, including Baltimore, Oakland, NYC, Chicago, KC, Bridgeport, New Bedford and Chester, PA—representing some 30,000 residents in all at the end of February. Inf. from Madeline Talbott, 312/939-7488.

• "Media: What's To It?: An Organizer’s Guide to Press Relations" (51 pp.) is available ($10) from McKinney & McDowell Assoc., 1730 Rhode Island Ave. NW, Wash., DC 20036, 202/833-9771.

• Organizing for Empowerment, by Jacqueline Mondros & Scott Wilson (320 pp., 1994), is available ($22.50) from Columbia Univ. Press, 800/944-8648.

• Organizing in Hard Times: Labor & Neighbors in Hartford, by Louise Simmons, is available ($16.95) from Temple U Press, Phila., PA 19122, 800/447-1656.

• Job Damaged People: How to Survive and Change the Workers’ Compensation System (1993), by Amy Chipp, is a "hybrid of worker rights, civil rights & disability rights organizing," a project of the Environmental Health Network and the Louisiana Injured Workers Union, $22.45 from EHN Books, PO Box 16267, Chesapeake, VA 2328-6267. LIWU provides assistance of various types to injured workers. They’re at 1307 Louisiana, New Orleans, LA 70115, 504/899 4194.

Criminal Justice


• The Natl. Coal. to Abolish the Death Penalty has available a publications list & bibliography. Their most recent publication is "Breach of Trust: Participant in Executions in the US" ($8.05), 918 F St. NW #601, Wash., DC 20004, 202/347-2411.

• The Campaign for Community Safety & Police Accountability has produced a 4-page "Home Run Strategy for Community Safety." Available (probably free) from CSPA, 1218 E. 21 St., Oakland, CA 94606, 510/533-7583.

Economic/Community Development


• Assistance to Native American Indian Entrepreneurs: The Indiana Amer. Indian Manpower Council’s Venture Assistance Program is compiling a directory of all Native American-owned businesses in the state and is undertaking a survey to identify needs for assistance programs. Contact Tom Stephenson at the Council, 6100 N. Keystone Ave. #337, Indianapolis, IN 46220-2427, 800/743-5872.

• Building Hope is a one-hour documentary on the CDC movement, which was recently presented on television. It’s part of a larger CDC oral history project. Inf. on the project and videotape from the Pratt Inst., 379 DeKalb Ave. 2nd fl., Brooklyn, NY 11205, 718/636-3486.

• Capital and Communities in Black & White: The Interactions of Race, Class & Urban Development, by Gregory Squires (185 pp., 1994), is available ($17.95) from SUNY Press, PO Box 6525, Ithaca, NY 14851, 607/277-2211.


• "E.J. Brack: A Misadventure in Candy Land," by Robert Ginsburg (11 pp., May 1994), a study done as part of the campaign to save Brach Candy Co., is available (no price listed) from the Midwest Ctr. for Labor Research, 3411 W. Diversey Ave. #10, Chicago, IL 60647, 312/278-5418. The study was done for the Garfield Austin Interfaith Action Network and Local 738 of the Internatl. Brotherhood of Teamsters (the candy plant workers’ union).

• "Evaluating the Role of Race in Mortgage Lending," by David Horne, appears in the Spring/Summer 1994 FDIC Banking Review. It offers a critique of the Boston Federal Reserve Bank’s study documenting "redlining" practices. We’ll send a copy of the 15-page article with a ($24) SASE.


• "Interagency Policy Statement on Discrimination in Lending" was published for comment (the comment period will be over by the time you receive this issue of P&R) in the April 15, 1994 Federal Register (pp. 18266-74). A free copy of the proposed statement (Circular No. 10702) is available by calling the Fed. Reserve Bank of NY, 212/720-5215.


SEND SASE (52¢) FOR A LIST OF PRRAC GRANTS TO DATE.