

PRRAC

Poverty & Race Research Action Council

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Annual Report 2010-2011

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

PRRAC continued its active coalition leadership role in seeking civil rights reforms in federal housing program regulations and agency policies. We have continued to have regular access to HUD leadership and staff, and have been told that our advocacy has an important impact inside the agency.

Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers

We had numerous meetings with staff and leadership at HUD on an interrelated series of reforms in the Section 8 housing voucher program – focused on removing barriers to mobility for families in high poverty, segregated communities.

We submitted formal comments to HUD on its proposals for reform of the Section 8 “Fair Market Rent” system, and we successfully pushed for early release of the “Small Area FMR Demonstration.”

We met with senior HUD staff (and followed up with detailed coalition comments) on reform of the “Section 8 Management Assessment” regulation, to promote choice and deconcentration of poverty.

Other HUD programs

We submitted a final set of coalition comments to HUD on the upcoming Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing regulation, and we were invited to meet with Assistant Secretary Trasvina and staff for our input on certain aspects of the anticipated regulation.

We submitted coalition comments on HUD’s proposed regulations for the National Housing Trust Fund, an authorized but as yet unfunded program that could provide up to \$1B in support for low income housing development.

We assisted in drafting and joined in detailed comment letters to HUD on language in the planned Notice of Funding Availability for the 2011 Choice Neighborhoods program, and

the upcoming revisions in regulations governing public housing demolition and disposition.

We issued a policy brief critiquing HUD's misleading 2010 "Report to Congress" on the "Moving to Work" program, which releases selected PHAs from a wide range of federal regulations, and we helped submit comments on civil rights reporting requirements in the program.

At the invitation of HUD and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, we participated in a series of negotiation meetings with housing industry representatives on the design of HUD's "Rental Assistance Demonstration" (the latest version of the Administration's proposal to generate project based vouchers to cover public housing operating expenses, which would also give public housing tenants mobility rights for the first time).

We participated in a "Rental Housing Summit" at the White House, with a large number of housing finance and development representatives, and a handful of civil rights and poverty law advocates.

Department of Treasury programs

Following up on a meeting with staff at the Department of Justice, we sent a detailed letter to Assistant Attorney General Tom Perez and Treasury Assistant Secretary Michael Barr at the Department of Treasury on the lack of Title VI and Title VIII civil rights regulations at the Department of Treasury – particularly in three large Treasury housing programs (including the Low Income Housing Tax Credit).

We submitted formal comments to the Department of Treasury on proposed changes to the Community Reinvestment Act's "Community Development" regulatory provisions.

PRRAC is an active participant in a new coalition on fair housing and secondary mortgage market restructuring, sponsored by the National Council of La Raza and the National Fair Housing Alliance. The coalition has developed a detailed statement of principles, met at the White House with OMB Assistant Director Xavier Briggs and a number of other OMB and White House staff, and has been developing a range of dissemination techniques to explain these complex concepts. As part of our work with this coalition, we distributed a detailed policy brief entitled "Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing and the Secondary Mortgage Market: Making the Connection," and also submitted an article for the Kirwan Institute's Race-Talk blog, titled "Learning from the past: How to remake the secondary mortgage market" (highlighting PRRAC's 2004 study on the discriminatory origins of the housing finance market).

Other agencies

We also have been working with the "Social Equity Caucus" of Transportation for America, to ensure that regional fair share housing goals are incorporated in the coalition's agenda for the reauthorization of the federal transportation bill.

HUD trainings

Along with professors Erika Frankenberg and Elizabeth Debray, we gave a lunchtime presentation to about forty HUD staff on the importance of coordinating housing and school policy. This session was followed up by a more detailed roundtable in February for HUD and Department of Education staff, on “Coordinating Housing and Education Policy to Support Racial and Economic Integration”

PRRAC also sponsored and participated in a presentation by attorney Mike Hanley to about 50 HUD staff on racial concentration in the Section 8 voucher program and potential remedies.

Baltimore Regional Housing Campaign:

The coalition has completed work on mapping all Maryland LIHTC developments, in preparation for a possible administrative challenge to Maryland’s exclusionary requirements of local approval and contribution as a threshold requirement for state development applications.

We have also begun the next phase of our work to include K-12 educational counseling in the work of the Baltimore Housing Mobility program (supported by the Baltimore-based Krieger Fund). In this phase, our focus is to connect children with summer and after school activities, and exploring the institution of a peer mentoring program for new families. As part of this project, PRRAC staff helped facilitate and record two focus groups of parents and children participating in the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program, to learn more about the families’ experiences in moving to higher performing middle class schools, and to help improve services in the mobility program. Tina Hike Hubbard and Tammie Nielsen are our consultants in Baltimore on this project.

B. EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

US Department of Education

Along with other members of the National Coalition on School Diversity, we met with USDOE Assistant Secretary Russlyn Ali and other USDOE staff to probe the reasons behind the continuing (over 18 month) delay in the removal of the Bush Administration’s misleading “guidance” on race conscious voluntary school integration programs. Prior to the meeting, we had submitted a detailed letter criticizing the Department’s delay and setting out the necessary elements of a new guidance, in compliance with the 2007 *Parents Involved in Community Schools* case. We followed up these meetings with advocacy and meetings with the Civil Rights Division at the Department of Justice and members of the Domestic Policy Council at the White House. As of this writing, we are the verge of having the prior Administration’s misleading regulatory guidance finally removed.

In December, the National Coalition on School Diversity met with leadership from three separate divisions of the U.S. Department of Education, to discuss how the Department intends to implement its new priority for school diversity (recently adopted as a

departmental priority for competitive grant awards in response to advocacy from Coalition).

We submitted formal comments on proposed regulations and guidance, including the proposed NOFA for the “Investing in Innovation” program, the proposed “Charter School Authorizer Survey”

Other agencies

We submitted coalition comments to the Environmental Protection Agency on its proposed “school siting guidelines,” which simplistically elevate smart growth considerations above civil rights concerns.

Research and capacity building

We have continued to staff and help to lead the National Coalition on School Diversity. We have upgraded the coalition’s website (see www.school-diversity.org), begun a monthly e-newsletter on school diversity, and hired Gina Chirichigno (formerly with the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute) as a part time consultant to assist us with launching of the coalition’s “Research Advisory Panel” and to reconvene and expand the state and local network of integration advocates that first came together in 2009.

The National Coalition on School Diversity released a series of research and policy briefs on the benefits of school integration for student achievement. See www.school-diversity.org. Most recently, we released an NCSA Research Brief entitled “Magnet School Student Outcomes: What the Research Says,” by Genevieve Siegel-Hawley and Erica Frankenberg (May 2011).

State and local outreach

PRRAC joined in a letter of support to the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights in response to a recent Title VI complaint filed against the Wake County (NC) School Board for its efforts to dismantle one of the most successful voluntary school integration programs in the country.

We met with the Superintendent of the Milwaukee public schools and administrators of the successful interdistrict education program there, about threatened efforts to dismantle the program, and how the National Coalition on School Diversity might be able to help.

We helped the Sheff Movement coalition in Hartford organize “parents forum” in January to educate Hartford parents about their school integration choices, and we have continued to help coordinate the work of the coalition to expand support for the voluntary interdistrict school integration program in Hartford – which is currently giving 30% of Hartford Black and Latino children access to high performing, racially and economically integrated schools.

C. HEALTH DISPARITIES AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

We released our updated policy brief, “Prescription for a New Neighborhood,” last fall, and have received a great deal of positive feedback, including suggestions for a pilot research project to test our hypotheses, and we had a productive meeting with senior public health staff in the HUD Secretary’s office on our ideas for testing the health benefits of housing mobility in selected cities.

PRRAC's newest Policy Brief, "Two Simple Changes to Improve Health Outcomes in the Section 8 Voucher Program," explores changes that HUD could make through regulations or regulatory guidance to incorporate public health goals into the Section 8 voucher assessment process, and the Section 8 "Housing Quality Standards" system for inspecting units for suitability for families with children.

D. CERD AND THE UPR

Universal Periodic Review

In 2010, we played an important supporting role with the U.S. Human Rights Network to support the “Universal Periodic Review” process - the UN Human Rights Council’s review of overall U.S. compliance with its International Human Rights treaty obligations, that took place last November.

As part of the UPR review process, we testified on civil and human rights issues in housing and education at two “civil society consultations” at HUD and at the White House Conference Center, coordinated by the State Department in advance of their report back to the UN Human Rights Council.

Preparation for CERD 2012 session

This past year, we have also played an important role in the CERD Task Force of the US Human Rights Network, and in the CERD Subcommittee of the Human Rights at Home Campaign. This work has involved helping to coordinate the shadow reporting process and government consultation process for the upcoming U.N. review of US compliance with the CERD treaty, and engaging with federal officials on the need for a CERD National Action Plan and for a federal interagency task force on CERD.

As part of this work, along with other members of the CERD subcommittee of the Human Rights at Home Campaign, we met with Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Tom Perez, Deputy Assistant Attorney General Julie Fernandes and Professor Catherine Powell (an aide to Secretary of State Hilary Clinton), to explore the possibility of an interagency meeting on implementation of the racial discrimination treaty well in advance of the next UN review of US policy in 2012.

PRRAC was a featured speaker at a Hill briefing on CERD and the UPR, sponsored by the Opportunity Agenda and held at the House Judiciary Committee chambers.

We have recruited a pro bono law firm (Proskauer Rose) to assist us in the preparation of at least one of the upcoming “shadow reports” on CERD compliance that PRRAC is helping to coordinate, in advance of the 2012 U.N. review of U.S. compliance.

We prepared and distributed a policy brief titled “The CERD Treaty and U.S. Civil Rights Law,” on the gap between domestic civil rights protections and the race discrimination treaty’s requirements.

We participated in a joint planning meeting of the US Human Rights Network CERD task force and the Human Rights at Home Campaign CERD subcommittee, to go over the coordination plan and schedule for the next 18 months leading up to the next U.N. CERD Committee review of U.S. compliance.

Other

We participated in a convening at Columbia Law School of the “Economic and Social Rights Working Group” – part of coalition of attorneys working on international human rights law applied to the domestic U.S. context.

Chester (along with representatives of several other DC-area human rights groups), met with Richard Clarke, Human Rights Officer with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and Secretary of the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, and with Mirjana Najcevska, Chairperson of that UN Working Group, to learn about the upcoming International Year for People of African Descent (featured in the Jan./Feb. issue of *Poverty & Race*).

Along with other members of the US Human Rights Network, we met with staff of the Helsinki Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, on how members of Congress on the Commission could assist the Network in its efforts to publicize US CERD treaty obligations.

E. 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.

F. COMMUNICATIONS

In addition to the specific communications and public education efforts described elsewhere in this report, PRRAC began its first e-newsletter in January 2011, which provides biweekly updates on current research and advocacy work of the organization. This has become an invaluable communications tool for the organization. We have also subscribed to Vocus, to provide more targeted access to media outlets.

G. CONFERENCES, PUBLICATIONS, AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

In addition to the specific 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.

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

A presentation on opportunity mapping with John Powell to the DOJ Civil Rights Division housing and education sections;

A major panel with HUD Deputy Secretary Ron Sims at the annual HUD fair housing conference in New Orleans, discussing the subject of Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing;

A workshop at the NLADA litigation directors' conference on the future of Title VI enforcement;

A panel on inclusionary affordable housing goals in transit-oriented development at a smart growth/transportation conference in Denver;

A fair housing planning session in Prince George's County with the Maryland State Housing Secretary and other Maryland officials;

A statewide conference on "affirmatively furthering fair housing" at the University of Texas Law School in October;

An international conference on "Neighborhood Restructuring and Resident Relocation" at the University of Delft in the Netherlands – including a comparative analysis of the U.S. and European experience with public housing redevelopment and revitalization, and efforts in both societies to promote social integration and avoid social exclusion.

A workshop panel at the National Low Income Housing Coalition National Conference as part of "a Guided Conversation on Housing Preservation, Investment and Mobility," moderated by NLIHC president Sheila Crowley.

A panel on "New Frontiers in Fair Housing Litigation" at the 2011 "Rebellious Lawyering Conference" at Yale Law School

Phil and Saba participated in the "America Healing" conference sponsored by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The 4-day conference in Asheville, NC, brought together over 100 grantees in the foundation's new racial justice initiative (in which PRRAC is one of 8 "national anchor groups"). Phil was a speaker on both a plenary panel and a workshop session at the conference;

A national webinar on coordinating housing and school policy, for the Neighborhood Funders Group, a foundation affinity group focused on housing and community development;

A Center for American Progress event, "Speaking of Salaries: What It Will Take to get Qualified, Effective Teachers in All Communities;"

A panel debate on HUD progress on civil rights with Brian Greene, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing at HUD, as part of the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty's annual conference;

The National Fair Housing Alliance's national member training on compliance with HUD's "affirmatively furthering fair housing" requirements.

The annual Wisconsin Fair Housing Conference.

The annual Los Angeles Housing Rights Summit.

A panel on housing policy at the "Baltimore Open City," a civil rights series sponsored by the Maryland Institute of Contemporary Art.

A presentation on "Integration: The Missing School Reform Strategy" at a Communities for Public Education Reform conference held at the Ford Foundation;

The annual Marcia Marker Feld Social Justice in the City Lecture at the University of Rhode Island (Providence campus);

Workshops at the annual Planners Network conference, in Memphis;

Chester Hartman and SSAB member Greg Squires co-authored a chapter ("Katrina and Kids: The Impact, The Sequellae") in the just-published volume: *Rebuilding Sustainable Communities for Children and Their Families After Disasters: A Global Survey*, ed. Adenrele Awatona (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010);

Phil Tegeler authored an article on "Transportation and Fair Housing: We Need a Better Measure of Opportunity" in the March *Shelterforce* magazine as part of a point-counterpoint debate with the director of the Center for Neighborhood Technology;

Chester's writings and activities during his San Francisco years appear in a new book, *Ten Years That Shook the City, 1968-78*, ed. Chris Carlsson (City Lights Publishing, 2011).