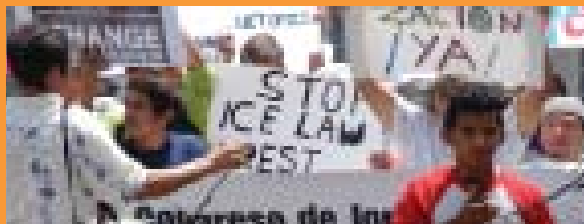
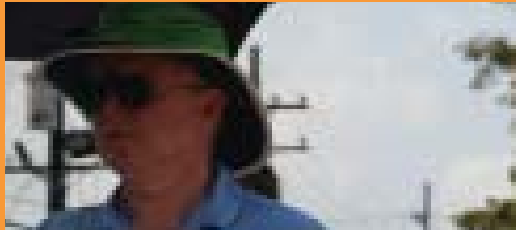


...and Justice for All



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...and Justice for All

Resilience.

More than four years after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Louisiana's longstanding legal and social injustices have only deepened. Louisiana has replaced Mississippi as the poorest state in the nation, and tens of thousands of Louisianans are still displaced.

Katrina and Rita were not the problems; they were simply the lens through which the nation and the world saw the results of years of social injustice in Louisiana.

The aftermath of the hurricanes magnified these injustices, driving many local, national, and international organizations and individuals to call for the reform of failed systems. Far too many Louisianans affected by the hurricanes are worse off now than they were before the storms.

Communities of color and impoverished communities were hardest hit and now face fewer opportunities. Resources were poured into the Gulf Coast and particularly in New Orleans, but these impoverished communities have been largely forgotten and ignored.

While national and international assistance continues to dwindle, the hard work of organizing and advocating for justice continues. Communities and advocates have been forced to continually respond to issues as they erupt, and it has been very difficult to advocate on an affirmative level, with long-term plans for systemic reform and change.

It was against this backdrop that the Louisiana Justice Institute (LJI) was created in the spring of 2007 by several attorneys who wished to see true equity in Louisiana and the human rights of all people upheld in a systematic manner without exception.

Vision + Opportunity

Our Mission Our Work Our People Our Partners

Our Mission:

Louisiana Justice Institute is a nonprofit civil rights legal advocacy organization devoted to fostering social justice campaigns for impoverished communities and communities of color throughout Louisiana. LJI understands that as a local civil rights organization, it can and must serve as an agent for social change.

LJI believes a community-shared vision for social justice, combined with the opportunity and resolve to bring lasting change, will produce genuine, equitable recovery in Louisiana.

Our Work:

Equality continues to elude most Louisianans in the areas of housing access, quality public education, economic justice, voting rights, employment opportunities, and criminal justice. If LJI were to employ only traditional methods of legal advocacy to address these problems, a focused effort in any one of these areas could occupy the full attention of a small staff. Instead, LJI economizes its resources and accomplishes its goals by enlisting existing legal talent within the state and recruiting additional resources to supplement local efforts.

As the social justice campaigns develop in one community, LJI insures that these campaigns benefit from statewide support networks of grassroots groups and legal resources, which comprise the statewide social justice infrastructure for Louisiana. It is through this infrastructure that LJI identifies social justice challenges, responding with legal and political resources.

Five Precepts

LJI bases its work on five precepts, which are integrally related to core principles of social justice. LJI believes a community-shared vision for social justice, combined with the opportunity and resolve to bring lasting change, will produce genuine, equitable, renewal to Louisiana.

* **COMMUNITY-LED ORGANIZING:** LJI incubates and grows community-identified social justice campaigns statewide through a network of partners, including churches and community organizations, corporations, and law firms.

* **STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS:** LJI works to facilitate the networking and sharing resources between community groups, community leaders, legal and other resource organizations locally, statewide, nationally and internationally.

* **SHARED RESEARCH, MEDIA, AND TECHNOLOGY:** LJI provides material support to its networks and partners by employing social science research to produce policy reports and issue briefs that identify barriers to social justice and introduce effective legal and other strategies for adoption and adaptation in Louisiana. Further, LJI supports its partners by working with the local, national and international media –

including both corporate and alternative press – to communicate our community’s realities, struggles, and vision for a better Louisiana. In addition, the LJI office in New Orleans currently makes available its office equipment and office space to community partners.

* **EMPOWERMENT TRAINING:** LJI provides hands-on training regarding voting rights and civic engagement, public education, housing, workers’ rights, health care, and criminal justice. Community members gain knowledge about these specific issues in workshops focused on community-based advocacy. LJI works with community groups to build and train a cadre of leadership, who will then be able to train others, with an eye toward strengthening state-wide social justice advocacy efforts.

* **IMPACT LITIGATION:** LJI attorneys appreciate the power of litigation when grass-roots advocacy fails. The strategic use of litigation can bring about dramatic social change and reform, and LJI will continue its aggressive use of litigation, especially the use of class actions, on behalf of its partners to bring reform to Louisiana’s impoverished communities and communities of color.

Our People

TRACIE L. WASHINGTON is LJI's current Managing Co-Director. Tracie is the former director of the NAACP Gulf Coast Advocacy Center. Since the Hurricanes of 2005, Tracie has engaged in significant litigation on behalf of poor and minority communities in New Orleans. In addition, Tracie has used her skills as an organizer and her network of community partners to provide community training in Education, Housing, Voting Rights, Health Care, Criminal Justice, and Worker Rights.

STEVE JUPITER is LJI's Co-Director, and a life-long resident of New Orleans. Steve has significant experience as a trial attorney, and has served as a health care advocate in the greater New Orleans community, coordinating with Xavier University in outreach on preventative health care for poor and minority residents.

JACQUES MORIAL is LJI's Co-Director. Jacques is a native of New Orleans with over twenty years interdisciplinary professional experience. He developed the nation's first minority-owned and operated public finance enterprise in the deep south; served as an international election observer in Latin America and Africa.

SAIA SMITH, LJI Organizer, is a native of New Orleans Louisiana and graduated cum laude from Tulane University majoring in English with minors in French and African Diaspora Studies. In addition to handling various administrative duties, Saia assists with grant writing, publications, and aiding all of our clients with their myriad of concerns.

SHAENA JOHNSON, LJI Organizer, joined the Louisiana Justice Institute staff in March 2009. A recent graduate of the University of New Orleans, Shaena became the youngest and first African American Managing Editor for Social Policy Magazine. She has also edited many publications, including Citizen Wealth and A Katrina Portrait.

JORDAN FLAHERTY is the newest addition to the Louisiana Justice Institute staff. A journalist and community activist, Jordan was the first writer with a national audience to report on the Jena Six case, and played an important role in bringing the story to worldwide attention. His post-Katrina writing in ColorLines Magazine shared a journalism award from New America Media for best Katrina-related coverage in the Ethnic press. Jordan's most recent publication is *Floodlines: Community and Resistance from Katrina to the Jena Six*.

Our Partners

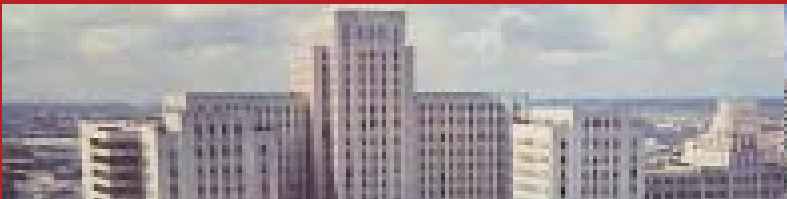
LJI will continue and expand upon the community partnerships developed in the past by the LJI co-founders, including:

Critical Resistance; Peoples Institute for Survival and Beyond; Families and Friends of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children; Loyola University New Orleans College of Law; People's Organizing Committee; New Orleans Workers Center for Racial Justice; Peoples Hurricane Relief Fund; ACORN; Second Good Hope Baptist Church; Mary Queen of Vietnam Catholic Church; The Algiers Group; The Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana; Sixth Baptist Church; Watson Memorial Teaching Fellowship; the Principals Association of New Orleans; Pyramid Consulting; the Hispanic Apostolate; Juvenile Justice Project Louisiana; Downtown Neighborhood Improvement Association; Common Ground; Katrina Action/Katrina Information Network; Children's Defense Fund; Every Child Matters; SCLC; Fourth World Movement; Survivor's Village; Lower 9th Ward Village; Advocates for Environmental Human Rights; and Moving Forward Gulf Coast.

Resolve

Our Focus, Our Projects, Our Victories

LJI fills community-identified gaps in Louisiana's current public interest legal resources, and we work closely with our partners and advisors to target those gaps. Our programs and litigation are focused on the following issue areas: voting rights and civic engagement; public education; housing; worker rights and economic justice; health care; and criminal justice.





CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Retired Orleans Parish Criminal Court Judge Calvin Johnson, Katy Reckdahl, and George Soros at a dialogue on Criminal Justice

Adolph Grimes, III
Killed January 1, 2009
by New Orleans Police
Officers



The criminal justice system is still in utter disrepair nearly four years after Katrina hit. Citizens are presumed innocent under our Constitution, but in Louisiana indigent defendants are not receiving anything close to constitutionally adequate representation.



Residents Protesting
New Orleans Police
Department Brutality

Public Safety

Louisiana has the highest incarceration rate in the country, prison conditions are horrendous, and police abuses are widespread. Indigent defendants have virtually no rights, and generally very poor representation. The criminal justice system is still in utter disrepair nearly four years after Katrina hit. Citizens are presumed innocent under our Constitution, but in Louisiana indigent defendants are not receiving anything close to constitutionally adequate representation.

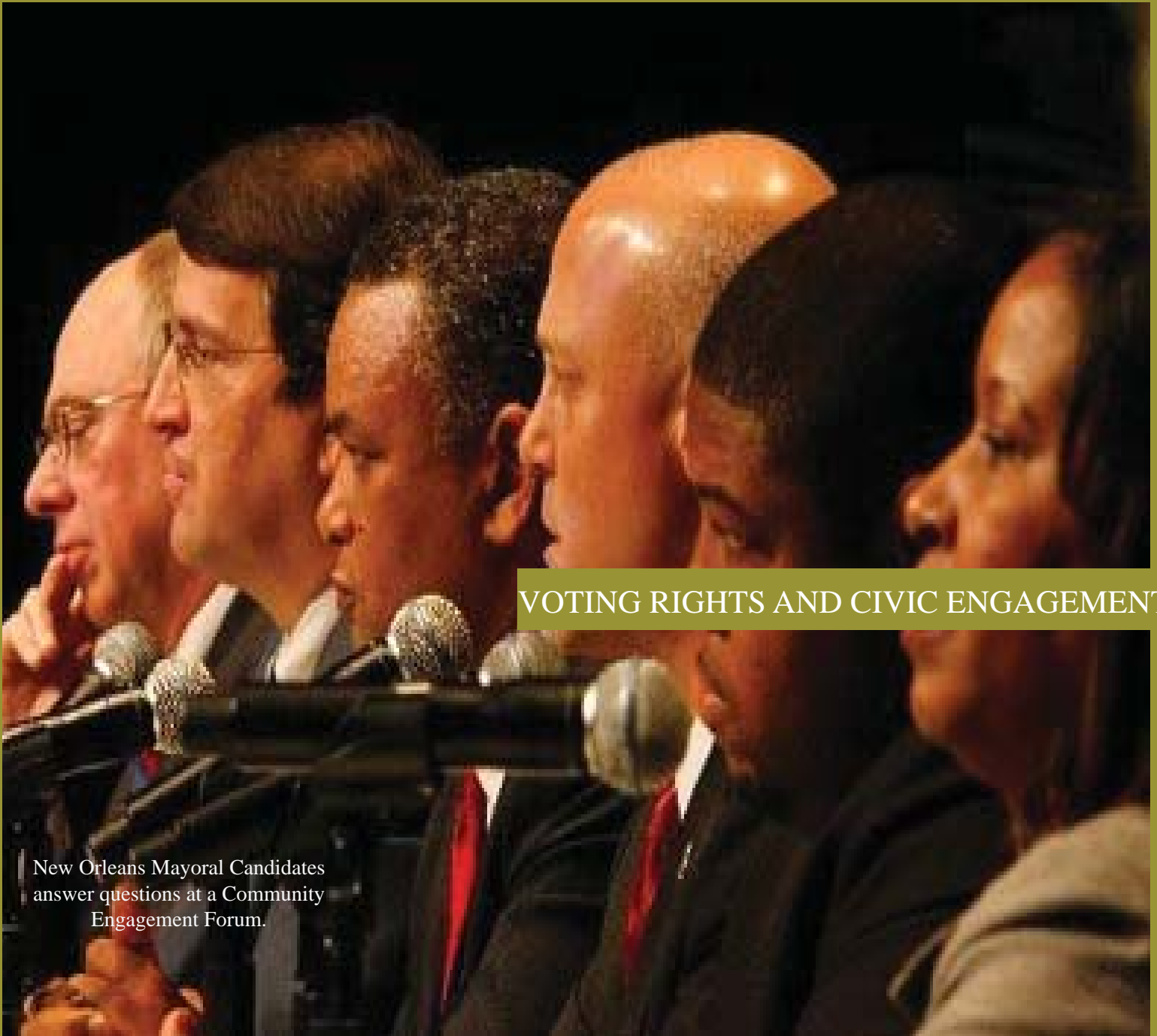
In the suburbs around New Orleans, Jefferson and St. Tammany Parish Sheriffs made national news with their comments concerning racial profiling.

And in Orleans Parish, the crime problem that was often blamed on public housing has not yet subsided, even though public housing residents have been prohibited from returning to the city. In the Greater New Orleans community, citizens segregate to discuss race and the conversations are often vitriolic.

Those conversations were never so important as now in Jena, Louisiana, where the Jena Six, a group of young African-American men, were caught in a struggle between engrained racism in a tiny town in the deep south, a shaky Criminal Justice system, and nationwide media attention that has recently brought in hundreds of thousands of protestors, including Reverends Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson. LJI was involved in coordinating the legal team for the Jena 6, as well as assisting the families in their media campaign. Although the cases have since been resolved (and the young men are all now in college or going soon), LJI has continued to stay involved in Jena, communicating with family members who are still facing harassment from local police.

In addition, we have joined a coalition of organizations convened by the organization Women With A Vision to support impoverished women who have been improperly charged as sex offenders under an 1803 statute that criminalizes oral sex.

Finally, we have worked with State Representative Cedric Richmond on Eradicating Barriers to Re-entry from Criminal Justice System.



VOTING RIGHTS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

New Orleans Mayoral Candidates answer questions at a Community Engagement Forum.

Voters today continue to face major obstacles to voting in Louisiana including major registration purges, last minute changes in polling places and a heavy dose of apathy.



Voters today continue to face major obstacles to voting in Louisiana including major registration purges, last minute changes in polling places and a heavy dose of apathy. LJI has partnered with other major civil rights organization through the Louisiana Voting Rights Network, to monitor polls at every election, insure access of all Louisiana voters to the ballot, particularly those still displaced, and provide all voters with the information they need to make informed decisions.

LJI is an active member in the Louisiana Voting Rights Network (LVRN), a partnership of non-partisan, non-profit, local, and national civil rights organizations working together to protect the right to vote in Louisiana. During elections, LJI attorneys monitored the polls and answered phones for a LVRN hotline with volunteers from other member organizations. LJI also helped LVRN reach out to the community to encourage voter participation, as well as advocate for fair election processes before and after those elections.

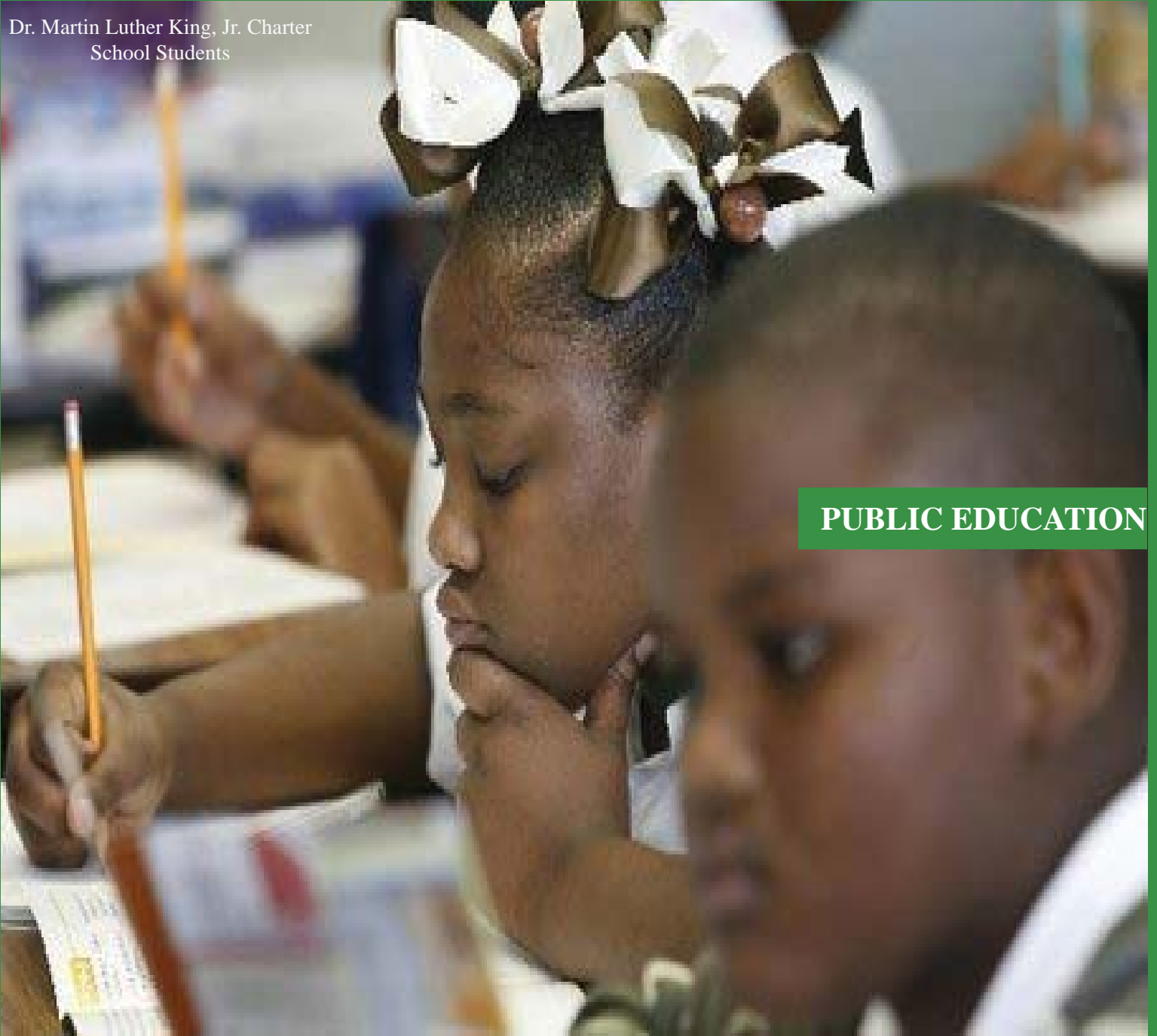
With the 2010 Census approaching, Louisiana and especially New Orleans faces a loss of both federal funds and political representation.

We have joined in coalition with local organizations who are working on these issues to make sure all of our people are counted.

The 2010 mayoral and city council elections offer an opportunity for new civic engagement and for grassroots pressure to affect policy. To further process, LJI convened the NOLA Kitchen Table as a process for bringing together the ideas and initiatives of the people of New Orleans, and pushing those ideas into the political process.

In addition, LJI is planning the Revius Ortique Symposium, a statewide legal symposium, for 2010.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Charter
School Students



PUBLIC EDUCATION



President Obama visits Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Charter School Students



Students and advocates march in support of ending the “Cradle to Prison Pipeline.” This effort is led by Children’s Defense Fund with the support of LJI.

Photo Credit: Abdul Aziz

Thousands of schoolchildren across the Louisiana Gulf Coast were displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The schools that have re-opened are divided into two tiers in a grand experiment at the expense of parents and students in New Orleans.

Public Education

The top tiered schools are racially mixed elite and charter schools. The other half of the schools, the bottom tier, are run by the Recovery School District and can be classified as underperforming and nearly one hundred percent African-American.

This decision to run two school districts with multi-layered governing bodies has led to numerous problems (lack of transportation, books, hot lunch, school facilities, qualified teachers). This has produced disarray and confusion, deeply frustrating many parents and students.

In response to overwhelming requests, LJI Co-Managing Director Tracie Washington helped coordinate several initiatives to address these

problems, including the New Orleans Public Schools Monitoring Line, which advised parents, students, and school employees of their rights and resources, and logged complaints for action by school system officials. School system officials were asked to respond to public complaints within one week.

To challenge some of the waste and inconsistencies that the new charter system has brought, LJI is also preparing a report on Duplication of Services, such as the changes in school busing that the new system has brought.

Tracie Washington also is on the board of the Martin Luther King Charter School, has worked directly with several other schools, and, through LJI, is a founding member of OPEN: Orleans Public Education Network.

Finally, LJI continues its assistance to individual parents and students on education issues. We do this because we understand in this area of advocacy, needs are often far too pressing and have reached a crisis point.

Unlawful demolition of the Lafitte
Housing Project



HOUSING

Today New Orleans is experiencing a gaping lack of affordable housing, a low rate of home ownership, and widespread racial discrimination and residential segregation.

Residents march for affordable housing



At City Hall, residents protest the demolition of public housing in New Orleans

Combined with a slow and uneven reconstruction effort, many Louisianans have found it difficult or impossible to start over.

Significant, immediate action must be initiated to insure that displaced residents are made whole with affordable and long-term housing.

In response to the overwhelming demand to address housing issues, Tracie Washington embarked on several policy and advocacy initiatives, including a partnership with PolicyLink and the Louisiana Association of Nonprofit Organizations to form the Louisiana Housing Alliance, and the continued fight for public housing.

Working with Children's Defense Fund, LJI participated in the Katrina Citizens Leadership Corps, helping bring several hundred Gulf Coast women to Washington, DC to share their stories of displacement.

In collaboration with dozens of organizations, we prepared an Advocates Letter on Discrimination in St. Bernard Parish that brought further pressure on the Parish for their discriminatory housing policies.

We also supported and helped coordinate the New Orleans visits from representatives of the UN Advisory Panel on Forced Evictions and from the UN Special Rapporteur on Housing, and worked on FEMA intervention, and a Biloxi FEMA Trailer Ordinance that would have caused hundreds of residents to become instantly homeless.

Construction fraud has proven to be a vexing problem for residents of the metropolitan area of New Orleans. LJI has opened its doors to members of the community who need assistance with writing demand letters, filing complaints, and moving toward mediation. To date, LJI has assisted over 50 families with construction fraud issues. While LJI conducts advocacy work on the ground level, we are also working with the city of New Orleans to introduce an ordinance that would help to both prevent and penalize contractor fraud.



WORKER'S RIGHTS AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE





New Orleans Migrant Workers Rally



New Orleans Hotel Workers rally for living wages

There is a need for a collective body that would both provide low income workers the ability to assert their rights as well as create an incentive for employers to maintain an appropriate workplace atmosphere.

Tens of thousands of employees in the Louisiana Gulf Coast Region face tremendous barriers to regaining meaningful employment post-Katrina.

These individuals were our teachers, our healthcare workers, our hospitality industry workers, many of whom lived paycheck to paycheck on poverty wages.

And, by some estimates, close to 100,000 new migrant workers – Latino, Asian, Native-American – were recruited to the gulf region for reconstruction work, or have migrated here on their own, seeking better economic opportunities for themselves and their families.

What is clear is that neither the mostly African-American displaced workers nor the new immigrant workers will be served if the working conditions and wages return to their abysmal pre-hurricane state.

In the midst of a global economic crisis, low-income residents do not have systems in place to give them the support they need. Small business owners are also feeling the economic pain, and there are few institutions to give them assistance. In addition, the city's economy and many businesses and neighborhoods still haven't recovered from Katrina. In large regions of the city, blocks of empty storefronts stand as stark reminders of a lack of shopping options and the distance we still need to go before our communities recover. Finally, many residents lack the financial literacy required to navigate much of the banking and finance system, resulting in the exploitation of low income workers by employers and financial institutions.

LJI has also embarked on a case, *Diwad vs. Signal International, Inc.*, that alleges fraud, and illegal trafficking of Indian nationals into the United States to work in the Mississippi shipbuilding industry under deplorable, slave-like conditions.

Charity Hospital (New Orleans' only public hospital) was operating during Hurricane Katrina, but was illegally closed after the storm.

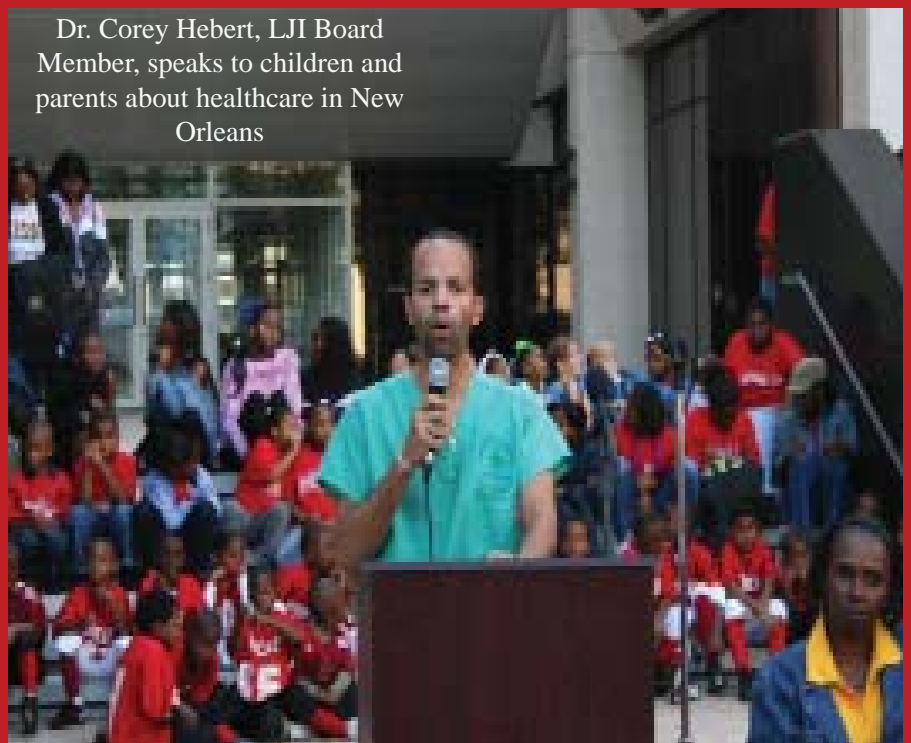


HEALTHCARE

By any measure, the healthcare situation for the economically disadvantaged in New Orleans is dire. In the wake of hurricane Katrina, Charity Hospital in downtown was controversially closed, leaving a significant number of residents without access to affordable healthcare.



Tulane University Medical Students get hands-on training.



Dr. Corey Hebert, LJI Board Member, speaks to children and parents about healthcare in New Orleans

Since the 2005 hurricanes, the Greater New Orleans area health system has been overwhelmed at best, and devastated at worst, with the loss of health facilities and closure of Charity Hospital, the dispersion of health care workers, and confusion and disrupted care for people, especially the poor and uninsured.

LJI Co-Director Jacques Morial has been a key organizer in the struggle to save Charity Hospital, and LJI has joined the struggle in the streets, in the legislature, and in the courts to re-open Charity.

Though consensus has been limited on a comprehensive solution, many agree that the current system is inefficient and wastes funds in acute care facilities (ER) as primary care facilities are not readily available and/or are not marketed sufficiently to the public.

This results in the exploitation of Emergency Room facilities for care that can and should be provided in a clinic setting.

The strain on expensive acute care facilities produces overcrowding, insufficient care, and ultimately passes on costs to patients.

In addition to the challenges facing the provision of professional care, some economically disadvantaged neighborhoods in New Orleans are also at risk due to the lack of adequate groceries. This lack of infrastructure has an indirect, albeit negative effect on the city's overall health, as residents rely on less healthy foods that are readily available.

We have organized Health Care Forums, written a Louisiana Health Care Factsheet that has been widely used and distributed by activists, organized protests in support of health care reform, and challenged Congressman Cao and Senator Landrieu at public forums on the issue.



**GOVERNMENT
TRANSPARENCY**



New Orleans City Councilmembers chat during a meeting.



Mayor C. Ray Nagin

The reason New Orleans local government has become ineffective and growth stymied is due in no small measure to the racial tension exhibited amongst City Council members, petty bickerings, and tribalism one would expect in viewing Survivor - not local government.

Government Transparency

LJI launched Project Transparency (www.NolaPublicRecords.org). We did this because access to information, especially about our government and its activities, is part of our common heritage as US citizens, and it is a human right. Members of the public demand access to unclassified documents their tax dollars have been used to produce.

To further the cause of transparency in local government, LJI made a request for the emails of several city council members, their staff, and members of the Nagin administration.

In September of 2009, the Louisiana State Supreme Court agreed with The Louisiana Attorney Disciplinary Board's (LADB) Hearing Committee Report and Recommendation, which found absolutely no grounds to the charges against Tracie and LJI. In fact, one LADB Hearing Committee member wrote, in this case:

“New Orleans City Government is using its influence to attempt to crush an opponent with ethical charges when the real battle is over its own incompetence and ineptitude... “

“The New Orleans City Council, in its petition to the Louisiana Office of Disciplinary Counsel, submitted misleading statements and outright lies to the Supreme Court of the State of Louisiana, all in an effort to ‘punish’ Tracie Washington and Louisiana Justice Institute for daring to challenge these government officials’ obsession with secrecy, closed government, and good ol’ boy politics of the 50’s and 60’s.”

Through our work on www.nolapublicrecords.org, as well as helping other concerned New Orleanians to file public records requests and through several reports summarizing our findings, we have brought sunshine to the inner workings of our government. We have further used our website, blog, and appearances on local and national television and radio to bring more transparency within city government.

Finally, we brought public attention to waste and incompetence at the Office of Inspector General, including our recent report on the Office of Inspector General, which succeeded in pressuring the new Inspector General to return excessive funds and equipment the office had bought.

Renewal.

There can be no doubt but that this great state can and must be redeveloped. But we must renew our commitment as residents and advocates to equitably redevelop Louisiana, so that all people have the opportunity to prosper. That is, live in sustainable communities that provide its residents with a real voice in growth, public education, housing, economic development, healthcare, and safety. Indeed, this is the model of local/statewide activism that will unite residents across race and class, to build consensus democratically on issues, develop participants' leadership skills, and restore relationships capable of making change to promote the public good.

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