

## Women Advocates of the Southeast Update May 2007

### Women and Economic Justice News and Resources

#### **Mom Deserves a Raise in 2007**

Salary.com has released their annual Mom Salary. Based on its survey of more than 40,000 mothers, Salary.com determined that the time mothers spend performing 10 typical job functions would equate to an annual salary of \$138,095 for a stay-at-home mom. This is a three percent increase over the 2006 salary of \$134,121. Working mom's "at-home" salary is \$85,939 in 2007— an increase of only \$63 from last year; this is in addition to the salary they earn in the workplace. "We believe it is important that mothers understand the value of the work they are doing," said Coleman. "If mom decides to re-enter the workforce, she should be aware that while she may have been out of the workforce, the skills she has gained by raising kids is transferable to the workplace." See below for the breakdown of "mom jobs" and the time spent on each job for both the working mom and the stay-at-home mom, as well as their total "mom salary", including overtime: [http://www.salary.com/personal/layoutscripts/psnl\\_articles.asp?tab=psn&cat=cat011&ser=ser031&part=par642](http://www.salary.com/personal/layoutscripts/psnl_articles.asp?tab=psn&cat=cat011&ser=ser031&part=par642)

#### **Call for Nominations for Lifetime Televisions' Women of Worth Contest**

Who is worth it in your community? Do you know a Woman of Worth whose volunteer service is making difference in your community? Nominate her at <http://www.womenofworth.com> and L'Oreal Paris could honor her and award a donation of up to \$25,000 in her name to support her most cherished cause.

#### **Lifetime Television's Women's Pulse Poll**

Lifetime Television's Women's Pulse Polls betrays the Gen Y women's (aged 18-29) surprising responses to the questions of marriage, careers, kids and more. Compared with the results of the similar study conducted more than 30 years ago, Gen Y women changed dramatically in terms of their life goals. "Fifty-one percent felt that there are more advantages to being a man than being a woman in today's society; Seventy-five percent said the ideal age both to get married and to have kids is under 30." To find more interesting Gen Y women's responses, please visit Lifetime's [web site](#).

#### **"Are Women-Owned Small Businesses Underrepresented in Federal Contracting?"**

In a study examining whether women-owned small businesses are underrepresented among firms contracting with the federal government, RAND found that the results vary depending on the way the measurement is made. Researchers found that when they examined the total number of contracts awarded, women-owned businesses were underrepresented in more than half of the industry categories studied for federal purchasing during 2002, 2003 and 2005. However, researchers found that when the dollar value of the same federal contracts was the measurement standard, there was little evidence women-owned small businesses were underrepresented.

While contracting by women-owned businesses has risen over time, it has not yet reached the target set by Congress of 5 percent of prime and subcontract contract dollars for each industry category. Women-owned small businesses accounted for 3.3 percent of the totals in 2005, the last year studied. Please visit the full report at:

[http://www.rand.org/rnbrd/0507/pubs/technical\\_reports/2007/RAND\\_TR442](http://www.rand.org/rnbrd/0507/pubs/technical_reports/2007/RAND_TR442)

#### **Article: Giving to Women and Girls Is Her Liberation**

*"Cecilia Boone and her husband had prospered in business and she was tired of consuming. Giving to girls and women brought liberation. First in a year-long series on women who give \$1 million or more to fund serious change for women." Full article below.*

**Article: Money Advice Runs Low for Minority Women**

*“April is financial literacy month. Numerous financial-planning Web sites and groups have sprung up to cater to higher-income women but advisers and advocates for lower-income women's retirement planning say they have the field to themselves.”* Full article below.

**Article: Sharing the Wealth: Female Philanthropists Open Up**

*“Helen Hunt was saddened to learn that the women's suffrage movement was largely funded by men. Today, however, more women are learning to give to causes aimed at women and girls. Twelve will tell their stories here in the months ahead.”* Full article below.

**Article: Women's Leaders Put ERA Back on Agenda**

*“After a weekend meeting in Washington of key figures in the women's rights movement, federal lawmakers reintroduced the long-dormant Equal Rights Amendment. Supporters of the ERA say its time has finally come.”* Full article below.

**Article: Pregnant workers filing more bias complaints; Such discrimination claims are among the fastest-growing, up 23% in the last decade, federal officials say.**

*“Just days before starting a new job as a receptionist, Kimberly Sudhoff took a telephone call from a hiring manager who asked for her uniform size. Because she was four months pregnant, Sudhoff said, she wasn't sure about her size. A few days later, she said, the manager rescinded the employment offer and questioned Sudhoff's commitment to the job. Sudhoff said she was encouraged to reapply after having the baby. “It's really terrible to say, but you can't help to think if I wasn't pregnant, I would have gotten the job,” recalled Sudhoff, 27, who lived in Maryland at the time and has since moved to Mississippi.”* Full article is below.

**Post-Katrina News and Resources****Report: Katrina Index: Tracking Recovery of New Orleans and the Metro Area**

Since December 2005, the Katrina Index has been monitoring the social and economic recovery of the Gulf coast region, especially the New Orleans area, from the storm's impact in August 2005. The 2007 release of the Index provided the data concerning the key facets of recovery, such as housing, population, services and infrastructure, economy, and emergency response. Full report is available at <http://www.gnocdc.org/KI/KatrinaIndex.pdf>.

**After Katrina: Shared Challenges for Rebuilding Communities**

This volume of essays presents the thoughts of leading researchers and policy experts regarding models and policies that can help guide the rebuilding efforts in the Gulf Coast region. The essays focus on six issue areas: affordable housing; services for children and families; strengthening the arts and culture community; public and environmental health concerns; rebuilding financial assets; and the role of nonprofits in preparing for the next disaster. Together, the essays lay an important foundation for developing action plans to address the underlying issues of poverty, inequality, and weak social infrastructures that have been persistent in the region for decades. This volume of essays is available at [http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311440\\_After\\_Katrina.pdf](http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311440_After_Katrina.pdf). The digital audio files of an event on the same topic are posted at <http://www.urban.org/Pressroom/otherevents/afterkatrina.cfm>.

**Report: GulfGov Reports: A Year and a Half after Katrina and Rita, an Uneven Recovery**

The report examines the impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on 22 communities across Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama and the role of local governments in the recovery efforts and what factors have helped or hindered the process. In addition, researchers examined the status of the local economies, the housing and labor situation, and how well the states are faring. According to this report, signs of recovery abound across the Katrina affected area in the Gulf Coast region but the recovery is uneven. The progress a community has made seems to be

dependent on how quickly its business and economic infrastructure was damaged; how quickly it has been able to tap into state and federal aid flows; and how effective its local leaders have been in making decisions about what direction the recovery should take. This study also shows seeking help from the government would bring its own problems. Full report is available at <http://www.rockinst.org/GulfGov/pdf/GulfGov18MonthReport1.pdf>.

### **FEMA Announces Extension of Rental Assistance Program Through March 1, 2009**

The Federal Emergency Management Agency announced on April 26 that the rental assistance program for more than 120,000 families dislocated by Katrina and Rita will be extended through March 1, 2009. ACORN members had campaigned all year for an extension of housing assistance, with thousands of supporters sending letters and emails and others rallying in Texas and Washington, D.C. The Department of Housing and Urban Development will take over management of evacuee housing assistance from FEMA effective on Sept. 1, another change which ACORN members and allies had demanded. Toni McElroy, president of Texas ACORN, praised the housing extension but added: "The next step, long overdue, will be for the administration to get serious about rebuilding housing and infrastructure in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, so that our people can finally come home. A good first step would be for the President to support the Gulf Coast Hurricane Recovery Act."

### **Testimony: Alternatives to the FEMA Trailer Parks: Lessons from Social Science Research**

In this testimony, Margery Austin Turner noted that large numbers of low-income families should not live in trailer sites and trailers should have been the last option of the government. Director Turner proposed that the federal government should create opportunities for low-income families to leave the trailer sites and obtain permanent, affordable housing in opportunity-rich communities. The full testimony is available at [http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411448\\_Alternatives\\_FEMA.pdf](http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411448_Alternatives_FEMA.pdf).

### **Article: Katrina Hit Blacks Harder Than Whites, Study Finds**

*"The catastrophe of Hurricane Katrina has cost countless people here their homes, their jobs or their health. But according to a survey being released Thursday regarding daily life in the flood-ravaged city, the burden has fallen far heavier on blacks than on whites."* Full article below.

### **Article: A good ol' boy bets on a dream**

*"Mike Adkinson, a colorful developer, hopes to build a brand new city from scratch in Mississippi for thousands of Katrina refugees."* Full article is below.

### **Article: New Orleans' blacks see rental block**

*"African Americans seeking rental housing in the New Orleans metropolitan area face significant discrimination and fewer accommodations to choose from since Hurricane Katrina, a report released Tuesday found. In 6 out of 10 transactions, African Americans faced less favorable treatment than comparably qualified whites, the report said."* Full article is below.

## **Giving to Women and Girls Is Her Liberation**

*Run Date: 04/30/07*

*By Cecilia Boone  
WeNews commentator*

*Cecilia Boone and her husband had prospered in business and she was tired of consuming. Giving to girls and women brought liberation. First in a year-long series on women who give \$1 million or more to fund serious change for women.*

(WOMENSENEWS)--For me, philanthropy has been a form of liberation. It has also been a journey.

At the heart of it is a partnership--a partnership with my husband that extended into a business and now has grown into an expanding involvement in philanthropy in our home city of Dallas.

Almost 30 years ago, my husband and his business partners opened the first Container Store, in a northern suburb of Dallas. I was deeply involved in starting the business; getting merchandise on the shelves and organized, and working in the store from day one until my first child was born. My husband and I maintained the spirit of partnership, even after we divided the labor and he minded the store and I minded the children.

With the passage of time, the Container Store flourished--today there are 40 stores around the nation--and my husband and I developed a capability to give back to the community. But we gave randomly, and--unlike the way we made business decisions--we had no strategy, no plan, no focus. That's when we began to be more strategic. Our first decision was to focus our giving locally. Dallas had everything to do with our success, and it seemed only right for us to give in such a way as to make Dallas a greater city.

### ***Giving in Two Directions***

Then we made the equally important decision to focus our giving in two areas. We decided to fund the environment, in which my husband would take the lead.

And we would fund women and children, which had become my passion.

I had served as board chair of Planned Parenthood in Dallas and had subsequently become familiar with the Dallas Women's Foundation, which supports economic empowerment for women and girls. I joined the board of the Dallas Women's Foundation in 2002 and stepped up my giving; now I was giving in the five-figures, and it felt good.

The Dallas Women's Foundation researches and quantifies the needs of women in our community and funds initiatives that address those needs. Last year the foundation gave a million dollars in grants and has an endowment of nearly \$13 million.

However, it wasn't until a few years later that my true liberation through philanthropy began.

But first, let me backtrack a bit.

I grew up in a small town in Kentucky. My mother was widowed and reared three children with little economic support. She had to budget our finances very carefully; we were never hungry, but we never had anything extra.

### ***Siren Song Gets Louder***

After college I began working, and, for the first time I had discretionary money; the allure of nicer clothes and a better car was powerful. When I moved to Dallas, that siren song became even louder: a larger apartment, nicer clothes. I was learning to become a significant consumer.

Later when I was first married--when our children were small and the business was new--budgeting once again returned to my life. But as the business grew and became more profitable, those constraints diminished.

I discovered, however, that at the same time that I was accumulating more and nicer things, there was always something else to want: bigger house, bigger jewelry, bigger car. But, buy as I might, none of these things translated to more happiness, more satisfaction or more peace. I had begun to feel almost a physical tightening in my heart around the issue of accumulating more "things."

In 2005, I attended a Dallas Women's Foundation seminar where Lynne Twist was the keynote speaker. Lynne is the author of "The Soul of Money," an examination of attitudes toward money, and she drove home the concept of "enough."

With Twist's inspiration, I began to give up the pursuit of "more" and felt my heart opening to the joy of giving.

Let me be clear that our lives are not Spartan by any stretch of the imagination, but I have begun the journey of recognizing and appreciating the abundance that we have instead of yearning for what we don't.

In the meantime, my husband had begun to fund causes at the six-figure level while I, like many women, was giving smaller gifts.

### ***'What's Holding Me Back?'***

I was now able to ask myself: "Wait a minute: what's holding me back?"

In 2005 I ramped up my giving to the Dallas Women's Foundation into the six figures. Helping women and their children is the most effective way to enrich families, schools, churches and neighborhoods. I know this because our giving has provided legal help for immigrant women and their children escaping domestic violence, math and science enrichment programs for promising high school girls, a safe home for girls ages 10 to 17 who have been abused and abandoned by their families and whose alternative is life on the streets.

I also became increasingly involved in helping inspire women of means--and there is a wealth of them in my community--not only to know the joy of giving, but to understand that financial support to women lifts the entire community. Indeed, it lifts the world. This is a view that comes not just from the heart, not just from a desire for social justice, but also from the mind. It is a strategic decision that recognizes that helping women and their children is the most effective mechanism for creating positive social change. I have taught workshops for women on this subject and am currently chairing the Dallas Women's Foundation \$30 million campaign.

I've discovered in this journey that planning and evaluating personal philanthropy is a process, not a project. Through the Dallas Women's Foundation, and the international Women's Funding Network of which it is part, in the last few years I have had the opportunity to meet with other women donors and to discuss strategies and values for giving. I am beginning to evaluate my choices in giving in terms of long-term impact rather than just short-term need.

I now know that my giving, my involvement with the Dallas Women's Foundation, actually supports women at both ends of the financial spectrum. It supports women, women like my mother, who--with support--can become true agents for social change in our community. I know also, now, that giving benefits the donor in a way that cannot be measured. The loosening of purse strings also loosens heart strings. The satisfaction in that cannot be duplicated.

*Cecilia Boone, feminist, philanthropist and community volunteer is the mother of three adult children. She lives in Dallas with her husband, Garrett.*

April 13, 2007

### **Money Advice Runs Low for Minority Women**

*By Sandra Guy - WeNews correspondent*

*April is financial literacy month. Numerous financial-planning Web sites and groups have sprung up to cater to higher-income women but advisers and advocates for lower-income women's retirement planning say they have the field to themselves.*

(WOMENSENEWS)--Vickie Elisa vividly recalls living in her car for a week and a half after she lost her apartment 25 years ago to overwhelming credit-card debt. A friend took her in, and Elisa got back on her feet in a big way.

Elisa, 48, is now the board president of Mothers' Voices of Georgia, a nonprofit organization in Atlanta that helps low-income women become financially empowered to better deal with health and lifestyle issues. A single mother, she owns property in Florida and South Carolina, a house in Georgia worth \$350,000, and has accumulated \$65,000 in retirement funds and an annuity. But she knows she is an exception.

"Half of minority women older than 65 in the United States are living in poverty," Elisa said. "Those are my aunts, who at age 75 had to go to work at Wal-Mart because they didn't have enough money in retirement to live in dignity."

Elisa and her ex-husband accumulated \$30,000 in debt after a year and a half of marriage. Even though he generated most of the debt he refused to pay it off. After the couple divorced, Elisa, a public health consultant, worked one full-time and two part-time jobs for five years to repay the debt and restore her credit rating.

At the time, she had no idea that she could have split the debt with her husband during the divorce proceedings.

"That was huge mistake No. 1," she said.

Around nine years ago, Elisa attended a workshop about retirement and economic issues led by Cindy Hounsell, president of WISER, the Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement, based in Washington, D.C. (Hounsell was named a Women's eNews 21 Leader for the 21st Century in 2006.)

Elisa--who attended as a representative of Mothers' Voices--said Hounsell spoke about retirement savings, money management, debt and divorce, and the impact on minority women in an eye-opening way.

Elisa met Hounsell after the workshop and soon afterward she embarked on two years of extensive training by the Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement, or WISER, that covered the basics of money management, investment, Social Security, pension, divorce and widowhood, and reducing credit card debt. While she was working through the curriculum Elisa helped make it culturally relevant for women of color.

### ***Groups Tackle Problem***

Today, Elisa's group is one of a handful tackling the problem of financial planning for low-income women in the Atlanta area and is joined by such national groups as Women Work! The National Network for Women's Employment, a Washington-based nonprofit that works for women's economic equality.

But financial planning is still rare as a stand-alone program for low-income women, said Lauri Alpern, a 20-year veteran of nonprofit leadership. "Financial literacy programs as part of other programs, such as job training or workplace development, are available.

But stand-alone programs are limited," said Alpern, a partner in a Chicago-based startup, ROI Ventures/ROI Partners Fund, that helps social entrepreneurs go into business.

Elisa said banks and financial-planning firms have little interest in helping low-income women because they focus their marketing on those who can immediately buy a financial retirement product, such as an individual retirement account.

Elisa said that Mothers' Voices Georgia, which won a 2006 Freddie Mac grassroots award for its economic literacy program aimed at low-income women, still has trouble persuading corporate partners that economic literacy for poor people really works.

"True, these women may not purchase some great annuity product or begin investing in five to 12 months, but believe me, they see a secure retirement as a goal that they can eventually reach with economic education, motivation and emotional support from groups like Mother's Voices Georgia and WISER," she said.

### ***More Efforts Needed***

Hounsell said her nonprofit organization, WISER, is the only group devoted solely to teaching women how to manage their money for a secure retirement, despite the huge push now dominating the airwaves and bookshelves to get women to close the retirement-planning gap with men that leaves women disproportionately destitute in older age.

"I've been doing this for 20 years," said Hounsell. "It's easier to work on pay equity, or a piece of this or that, but not to really look at the planning."

Jill Miller, president and CEO of Women Work! agrees. Miller said more efforts are needed to develop financial literacy materials that low-income women can use and understand.

Twelve percent of all elderly women 65 and older live in poverty, according to the Employee Benefit Research Institute, a Washington nonprofit.

Hounsell said women continue to tell her how shocked they are to learn they are left with no benefits from a deceased spouse's pension. In most cases, the spouse failed to choose the "survivor benefit" option on the pension forms.

"The employer doesn't say, 'If you pick door No. 2, there will be nothing left for your spouse after you die,'" Hounsell said. "People don't pay attention; they don't know what they need, and they never learn the rules that affect their situations until it's too late."

WISER publishes a quarterly newsletter and booklets to help women better understand their situation. Women typically earn less than men; they take time out of the work force to care for children and aging parents, and they live longer than men, making them more likely to require health insurance and larger savings, experts say.

### ***OWL Lobbies for Retirement Laws***

Another group, the Older Women's League--better known as OWL--lobbies for laws that protect women in retirement.

"Many single mothers are working two jobs. Asking them to take money out of their paychecks to put into savings is a concept that doesn't factor into their lives," said Laurie Young, executive director of OWL, a nonprofit based in Arlington, Va.

"We need to work on public policy to make sure that women aren't punished in retirement because of the demands and the realities in their lives as they age," she said.

One example would be legislation that would give Social Security credits to women in care-giving roles, Young said.

OWL sponsors a project called The Color of Money that educates women of color about preparing for a secure retirement.

The Employee Benefit Research Institute issued a March 22 report that found men age 50 and older are considerably more likely than women of the same age to receive pension and annuity income, and to receive higher yearly amounts of such income.

In 2005, 44 percent of men age 65 and older received annuity and-or pension income, with a mean amount of \$16,933 a year, according to the report. Only 29 percent of women age 65 and older received annuity and-or pension income that year, with mean pension income of \$10,086.

*Sandra Guy, a 24-year veteran journalist, is a business reporter at the Chicago Sun-Times. She has covered business, politics, education, technology and peace issues, and served as a former president of the Chicago chapter of the Association for Women Journalists.*

Women's eNews welcomes your comments. E-mail us at [editors@womensenews.org](mailto:editors@womensenews.org).

March 28, 2007

### **Sharing the Wealth: Female Philanthropists Open Up**

*By Helen LaKelly Hunt, WeNews commentator*

*Helen Hunt was saddened to learn that the women's suffrage movement was largely funded by men. Today, however, more women are learning to give to causes aimed at women and girls. Twelve will tell their stories here in the months ahead.*

**Editor's Note:** *The following is a commentary. The opinions expressed are those of the author and not necessarily the views of Women's eNews.*

(WOMENSENEWS)--Some years ago, while reading through the letters of 19th century suffrage leaders, I uncovered a sad but shocking fact: It was largely men who funded the suffrage movement.

I had been aware of women funding women the last 20 years and I began to see this as a new consciousness among female donors, a growing awareness that is provocative in its scope and impact.

My years of work in the area of women's funds--nonprofit organizations in the United States in cities such as New York and Dallas, and increasingly around the world--has led me to witness that women are using their growing financial resources to change the world of, by, for and through women and girls.

These large-scale gifts are noteworthy and beg to be explored. What motivates these new female donors to devote large sums of money to women's funds or to other causes that tap the talents of women and girls to fuel social change?

### ***51 Percent***

It is now widely reported that 51 percent of all assets in the United States are held in the names of women. And the shift of wealth into women's hands will continue; in some cases from family sources, and in more and more cases from wealth of their own creation. What this trend portends for the future is a source of great hope and inspiration.

This past December Women's eNews published the story of Carol J. Andreae, who had pledged \$1 million to the Women's Fund of Central Ohio. She wrote from her heart about what it meant to give at that level for the first time and to be public about her gift. Carol's voice touched many, including some who have the financial resources to support social change through women and girls by taking their philanthropy "to scale," that is, asking women of means to give to their philanthropic potential.

Carol's journey is like my own and that of many others.

Growing up, I had been taught that men should manage my money. In fact, "money" was a taboo word for women. It is ironic that although I'm from a family of wealth, for many years I felt a disconnect between myself and my net worth. Assuming responsibility for my money, however, brought its own challenges.

### ***Light-Bulb Moment***

My light-bulb moment came upon a casual reading of an annual report from the San Francisco Women's Fund. My imagination was set ablaze by the possibilities offered by women's funds. My sister Swanee and I both saw these emerging institutions as powerful vehicles for social change as they invited cross-race, cross-class alliances. Not only did grassroots women receive needed financial support and thus became stronger, but donors were transformed as well.

Our work in philanthropy is made possible by wealth from our family's oil business. In the 1980s, Swanee and I participated in the founding of several women's funds around the country. And while our goal was to empower other women, in the end, it is we who truly have been transformed.

As part of the ensuing odyssey towards philanthropy and feminism, I discovered the exemplary work of women's funds and helped start funds in New York and Dallas and founded The Sister Fund, a private foundation, as well.

### ***Working Side by Side***

Swanee worked with an extraordinary group of women to organize the Women's Foundation of Colorado. These organizations are but a few members of the Women's Funding Network, now with a worldwide membership of 116, granting \$50 million annually to women on the front lines of social change. The ethic that infuses the work of this San Francisco-based network places female donors and women in the front lines of community social change side by side working together as partners.

In the coming months, you will read in a Women's eNews series--called "Funding Serious Change"--the stories of 12 women who are funding social change through women and girls in a way that is having measurable impact on communities here and abroad.

One woman traveled to Chiapas, Mexico, on vacation and returned with a newfound passion for women and micro-lending. Another has organized women into a crafts guild in India, fueling women's economic empowerment. Yet others, like Carol Andreae, have chosen women's funds in their communities.

No matter who the woman or her chosen vehicle, I am convinced you will find these personal stories an inspiration for your own giving. To my mind, any gift, lovingly given to make the world better, is philanthropy. May we all, as women, live up to our philanthropic potential in giving to and through women and girls for the first time in history.

*Helen LaKelly Hunt has been active within the women's movement for over 20 years. She is founder of The Sister Fund, a private women's fund dedicated to the social, political, economic and spiritual empowerment of women and girls and is the author of "Faith and Feminism: A Holy Alliance," published by Atria books in 2004.*

Women's eNews welcomes your comments. E-mail us at [editors@womensenews.org](mailto:editors@womensenews.org).

March 29, 2007

### **Women's Leaders Put ERA Back on Agenda**

*By Allison Stevens, Washington Bureau Chief*

*After a weekend meeting in Washington of key figures in the women's rights movement, federal lawmakers reintroduced the long-dormant Equal Rights Amendment. Supporters of the ERA say its time has finally come.*

WASHINGTON (WOMENSENEWS)--Lawmakers and advocates vowed this week to revive a moribund effort to pass legislation that would amend the U.S. Constitution to guarantee equal rights for women.

New York Democrat Carolyn Maloney reintroduced the Women's Equality Amendment Tuesday, telling supporters at a news conference on Capitol Hill that the legislation stands a better chance at winning ratification in this Congress than it has at any time in recent years because of the changed political climate.

Two House Democrats on the Judiciary Committee, which has jurisdiction over the amendment, backed up Maloney.

Judiciary Committee Chair John Conyers of Michigan and New York Rep. Jerrold Nadler, chair of the Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, both pledged to hold hearings on the amendment this year. They have not yet set a date for the hearings, which would be the first since the 1980s.

"We are tired of running around stopping inequality when it rears its ugly head," Maloney said, adding she has "great hope" the amendment will pass Congress this year.

The new push for the amendment--also known as the Equal Rights Amendment--capped off a two-day conference here sponsored by the National Council for Women's Organizations that drew hundreds of advocates from across the country to lobby Congress on issues ranging from women's health to workplace rights to violence against women.

The National Council for Women's Organizations is a clearinghouse of women's groups in Washington that represents more than 10 million women.

Conference participants--including Feminist Majority Foundation President Ellie Smeal and National Organization for Women President Kim Gandy--laid out a national agenda that included a host of proposals including bills that would reduce unintended pregnancy, grant workers paid sick leave and fully fund federal programs that combat violence against women.

Also near the top of the list is an international treaty to ban discrimination against women. The United States is the only developed country in the world that has not signed the 1979 treaty, known as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, or CEDAW.

### ***Gathering of Leaders***

Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton of New York, the frontrunner for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination who was endorsed by major women's groups on Wednesday, also emphasized priorities such as narrowing the wage gap and better access to affordable, high-quality child care and health care.

"We have a long list of things we need to address, and now we have a Democratic Congress" to do it, Clinton said to wild applause.

Prominent women such as Dolores Huerta, who led the movement for farm workers' rights, and Mal Johnson, an African American broadcast journalist who was the first black reporter from a major news organization to cover the White House, also addressed the conference.

The two-day conference follows a similar event five years ago. Organizers said they hoped to make it an annual event.

The meeting came on the heels of a leadership conference for young women sponsored by the Feminist Majority Foundation, a nonprofit advocacy group in Arlington, Va. About 350 young women between the ages of 18 to 24 attended the "Campus to Congress" conference, and about five dozen stayed on for the two-day conference that immediately followed to network with older activists.

Gloria Pierce, 69, who oversees women's health at Business and Professional Women of New Jersey, based in Ewing, N.J., said the younger women had inspired her to believe that another generation will carry on the women's rights movement.

Lauren Wallace, a senior at West Virginia University, promised to do that at the news conference announcing reintroduction of the ERA. She said she would help rebuild the movement for ratification on college campuses.

"You can count on us," she said. "We're going to take the baton from our grandmothers and others who worked so hard on this issue and we're going to start working hard for it too."

### ***Opposition Mounts***

Wallace and others will face sturdy opposition from religious conservatives, who say the ERA amendment can be used to further efforts to legalize same-sex marriage and subsidize abortion.

Critics also say the amendment is unnecessary because women already have legal remedies to combat discrimination. The Fourteenth Amendment, they note, requires the states to provide equal protection under the law, and Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act protects women from discrimination in the private sector.

Concerned Women for America, an advocacy group in Washington that opposes the ERA, issued a release saying the amendment would actually undermine gains by the women's rights movement because it does not allow for different treatment of men and women. That, according to the group, would make agencies such as the Food and Drug Administration's Office on Women's Health and the Justice Department's Office on Violence Against Women unconstitutional.

"The ERA is a simplistic, naive effort that would not allow any distinction between men and women and is limited to actions by the government, not individuals, businesses or private entities," Concerned Women for America President Wendy Wright said in a statement. "The ERA would be used to do far more harm than good."

Supporters say the bill is needed, among other reasons, to defend existing gains, such as Title IX, the 1972 law mandating gender equality in institutions that accept federal funds, which has been challenged by the Bush administration.

"As it stands now, what judges and lawmakers giveth, they can taketh away," Maloney said.

### ***ERA Proposed in 1923***

The Equal Rights Amendment was first unveiled in Seneca Falls, N.Y., in 1923 at the 75th anniversary of the 1848 Women's Rights Convention. Congress passed the amendment in 1972, but it died a decade later because it failed to win ratification by three-fourths of the states within a pre-set time limit.

Lawmakers have reintroduced the amendment in every Congress since in the hopes that they can once again win the support needed to amend the Constitution. But the effort came to be viewed by some as more of a ritual than an actual initiative, especially in recent years under Republican control of Congress.

This year is different, Maloney said. After 12 years of Republican leadership, Democrats now control the House and Senate. And there are more women than ever in state and federal office-- including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Pelosi has not yet endorsed this year's amendment, but she has supported it in the past, Maloney said. "She's with us in her heart."

Nearly 200 House lawmakers have already signed on to the legislation and other key Democrats have also endorsed the measure and called to revive the movement. Sen. Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts introduced the bill in the Senate Tuesday.

"A bolder effort is clearly needed to finally live up to our commitment of full equality," Kennedy said in a statement. "The Equal Rights Amendment alone cannot remedy all discrimination, but it will clearly strengthen the ongoing efforts of women across the country to obtain equal treatment."

*Allison Stevens is Washington bureau chief at Women's eNews.*

Women's eNews welcomes your comments. E-mail us at [editors@womensenews.org](mailto:editors@womensenews.org).

## **Katrina Hit Blacks Harder Than Whites, Study Finds**

By Peter Whoriskey  
Washington Post Staff Writer  
Thursday, May 10, 2007; A02

NEW ORLEANS, May 9 -- The catastrophe of Hurricane Katrina has cost countless people here their homes, their jobs or their health. But according to a survey being released Thursday regarding daily life in the flood-ravaged city, the burden has fallen far heavier on blacks than on whites.

The proportion of black respondents who described their lives as "disrupted" more than a year after the storm (59 percent) was about double that of whites who said the same (29 percent).

The racial disparities ran across job experiences, housing and health. Researchers said the differences persist even when comparing blacks and whites who have similar incomes.

"Whites were hit hard, too, but blacks were disproportionately living in the areas that were most flooded," said Mollyann Brodie, vice president of public opinion and media research for the [Kaiser Family Foundation](#), which conducted the survey. "And even before Katrina hit, there were gaps between blacks and whites."

The findings were part of a 100-page study that depicts the area's daily struggle to recover from the August 2005 storm.

The in-person survey of 1,504 randomly selected adults in greater [New Orleans](#) was conducted from September to November of 2006. Though more than a year had elapsed since the storm, its effects persisted on a range of measures.

More than one in five city residents described their mental health as worse than it was before Katrina, with 4 percent saying they were taking a new prescription as a result. One-quarter said they were very satisfied with their overall quality of life, while 65 percent said they felt that way

before the storm. In addition, 28 percent said that their job did not pay enough to cover basic expenses or that they were unemployed.

The survey suggests that African Americans still make up the majority of the adult population in [Orleans Parish](#) -- about 53 percent. Non-Hispanic whites account for about 39 percent, according to the survey. The racial makeup of the city during the recovery became a central issue in the mayoral election, in which C. [Ray Nagin](#), who is black and referred to New Orleans as a "chocolate city," beat Lt. Gov. Mitch Landrieu, who is white.

Researchers reported finding a surprising amount of optimism among city residents despite the striking gloom and practical difficulties of living here. While anecdotal reports have suggested that many residents were leaving, only 11 percent reported they were seriously considering a move.

Nearly 70 percent, moreover, reported feeling "optimistic" about the future of greater New Orleans and 63 percent said the recovery was running in the right direction.

April 19, 2007

### **A good ol' boy bets on a dream**

*By Richard Fausset, Times Staff Writer*

MIKE ADKINSON is a chain-smoking, fast-talking multimillionaire in sneakers and a golf shirt. If there were a World Series of Real Estate Gamblers, he'd be a serious contender.

Adkinson, 58, has known boom and bust, wealth and want. He has managed the Texas investments of Kuwaiti royalty and built thousands of homes in Florida. He has spent time in jail over a savings and loan scandal, won an appeal and walked free.

And here he was on a recent weekday morning, speeding in a cherry-red SUV across a stretch of scraggly pine forest in Stone County, Miss., 25 miles north of the Gulf of Mexico.

Those 25 miles once relegated Stone County to boondocks status. Today, however — with Hurricane Katrina still fresh in the minds of Mississippians — Adkinson is betting it's a hot property.

He imagines a new city here for the estimated 72,000 storm victims still scattered across the state in government trailers. He imagines them living in good, modest homes in the safety of the piney woods. He imagines many of them commuting to the jammed casinos that remain anchored, by state law, to the perilous coast, where housing is still hard to find.

"If we don't do something out here," Adkinson said, gesturing at the trees with his Marlboro Light, "nothing's going to get done."

Adkinson and his partner, Robert T. Windham, have bought 11,000 acres in Stone County, with 12,000 more under contract. If they can get the pieces to fall in place — clearing bureaucratic hurdles, obtaining environmental permits, securing a \$150-million loan — they will build 7,500 single-family homes and 10,000 apartments, along with retail space, parks and lakes.

The development, called Horizon, would be the state's largest post-Katrina building project, and they are hoping it is just the beginning. If the demand is there, they say, they have the capacity to build a total of 110,000 homes, which could turn the tiny unincorporated hamlet of McHenry (population 1,260) into the largest city in Mississippi.

The plan is predicated on the idea that coastal living has become too frightening, difficult or

expensive for many people, resulting in a dramatic post-Katrina population shift. Census figures show that the state's three coastal counties suffered a net loss of more than 32,000 residents between July 2005, the month before the storm, and July 2006. The three counties to the north — Stone, Pearl River and George — picked up about 6,000 people.

"We're beachfront property now, aren't we?" chuckled Sandra Maniscalco of the Stone County Economic Development Partnership.

No one is sure whether the shift is permanent. But uncertainty is no deterrent to the mavericks and moguls who dare to gamble amid the ruin of South Mississippi.

ADKINSON grew up about two hours from the coast, in Petal, Miss. When he was a boy, his father abandoned the family; Adkinson learned the building trade as a teenager, working for his uncle, a general contractor.

Today, he is a big, blowzy man with a high school education and a deceptively casual demeanor. His booming, good ol' boy voice can transform a complex development issue — the finer points of a county tax code, for instance, or the workings of a wastewater plant — into something as simple as a country sermon.

Adkinson says he lost everything — millions in savings, a yacht, a Lamborghini, a helicopter — when he was convicted in 1992 in a complex bank fraud case. Federal prosecutors accused him of defrauding two savings and loans that had lent him and other developers more than \$100 million to buy 21,000 acres on the Florida Panhandle. Adkinson had planned to build a new city there — Emerald City, it was to be called — but it never materialized.

He was imprisoned in June 1992, released on appeal in January 1995. He returned to the Panhandle, picking up construction work with the welder's certification he earned behind bars. It was hot, dirty work, but there was much of it to do: In October, Hurricane Opal touched down near Pensacola Beach, causing about \$2 billion in damage along the Panhandle coast.

He kept fighting to clear his name. He kept telling himself, and anyone who would listen, the words that he knows are on the lips of every ex-convict. But it didn't matter. He had to say to them: "I'm just not a criminal."

In 1998, an Atlanta federal appeals court reversed his conviction. But to Adkinson, the real vindication came three years later, when the court, in a rare ruling, forced the federal government to pay his lawyer's fees after determining that the case against him had been "vexatious, frivolous and taken in bad faith."

Today, he keeps a copy of that ruling in his office for those inevitable moments when, in the course of business, he knows he has to explain himself.

As his case wound down, Adkinson reemerged as a major player in Florida real estate. In less than a dozen years, he went from flat broke to being worth, by his count, more than \$200 million.

Adkinson said it flowed from a simple principle: Investors "could never, never go wrong buying property on the water," he said. "Because they're not making more."

April 8, 2007

**Pregnant workers filing more bias complaints; Such discrimination claims are among the fastest-growing, up 23% in the last decade, federal officials say.**

*By Hanah Cho, Baltimore Sun*

DATELINE: BALTIMORE, MD.

Just days before starting a new job as a receptionist, Kimberly Sudhoff took a telephone call from a hiring manager who asked for her uniform size.

Because she was four months pregnant, Sudhoff said, she wasn't sure about her size. A few days later, she said, the manager rescinded the employment offer and questioned Sudhoff's commitment to the job. Sudhoff said she was encouraged to reapply after having the baby.

"It's really terrible to say, but you can't help to think if I wasn't pregnant, I would have gotten the job," recalled Sudhoff, 27, who lived in Maryland at the time and has since moved to Mississippi.

Federal officials say Sudhoff's case isn't rare.

A record 4,901 pregnancy-discrimination complaints were filed nationwide with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and state and local fair employment practices agencies in fiscal 2006. That is a 23% increase since 1997, making it one of the fastest-growing workplace bias complaints, according to federal officials.

The number of complaints, however, may not reflect the scope of the problem, said EEOC spokesman David Grinberg. Officials think many women, especially those on a professional track, see filing a complaint and litigation as a "career killer," he said.

The nationwide increase in complaints reflects cultural shifts, increasing numbers of working women, and old-fashioned notions that still exist in the workplace, consultants say.

Under federal law, employers must treat pregnancy as a temporary illness or medical condition. The Pregnancy Discrimination Act, which applies to employers with 15 or more employees, covers hiring, leave, health insurance and benefits.

Workplace consultants and lawyers say employers should not ask prospective workers whether they are pregnant or expect to start a family. Job candidates are not required to disclose they are expecting, although it may be obvious in some cases, EEOC officials said.

It's up to prospective employees to decide the best time to disclose their pregnancy, but workplace consultants recommend telling bosses as soon as possible so employers can start making accommodations and staffing plans.

Sudhoff decided to go to the EEOC after she was emboldened by an article on pregnancy discrimination that she read in a book her doctor provided. She filed a complaint last year against Falling Spring Corp., a franchise owner of a Hampton Inn in Hagerstown, Md.

In turn, the EEOC, which enforces federal laws prohibiting job discrimination, filed a lawsuit on her behalf. Falling Spring, which settled the case, denied the allegations. It agreed to pay \$45,000 to Sudhoff and to train managers and employees on anti-discrimination laws, particularly related to pregnancy, according to the settlement.

Maria Salacuse, a senior trial attorney in EEOC's Baltimore office, said women had become more aware of pregnancy-protection laws and were "willing to come forward and file complaints."

Based on cases that she has handled, "there appears to be a presumption or misconception about what women should be doing in the workplace if they're pregnant and whether they should be in the workplace if they are pregnant," Salacuse said.

As more women choose to have both a career and a family, employers must better balance their business needs with accommodations for pregnant workers, consultants and EEOC officials say.

"If you look back 20 to 30 years ago, a lot of women when they became pregnant, they left the workforce," said Jocelyn Frye, a general counsel for the National Partnership for Women & Families, a nonprofit group. "Now, it's far more common that women stay in the workforce."

About 60% of women quit their jobs before or shortly after their child's birth in the 1960s. That number fell to 27% during the early 1990s, according to a U.S. Census study examining maternity leave and employment patterns from 1961 to 1995.

"Women should never be forced to choose between motherhood and their livelihood," said Grinberg, the EEOC spokesman. "Employers should be sensitive to this issue."

The most common allegations of pregnancy discrimination involve not being hired, unlawful demotions and firing, EEOC and workplace consultants say.

Of the 4,629 pregnancy-discrimination complaints resolved by the EEOC in fiscal year 2006, about 27% were considered to be favorable outcomes for the women who filed the complaints, including settlements. The federal agency recovered \$10.4 million during the same period; that figure does not include awards obtained through litigation.

Over the years, EEOC lawsuits have been filed against some well-known companies, including Verizon Communications and Mothers Work Inc., which operates the retail stores Motherhood Maternity, A Pea in the Pod and Mimi Maternity. Both cases resulted in settlements between the EEOC and each company, which denied the allegations.

Verizon agreed last year to pay \$48.9 million to settle charges that its predecessor companies, Nynex and Bell Atlantic, had discriminated against employees who were pregnant or on maternity leave. The monetary settlement, which came after a company consent decree in 2002, covered more than 12,000 current and former employees in 13 states.

In January, Philadelphia-based Mothers Work agreed to pay \$375,000 to settle a lawsuit alleging it had refused to hire qualified applicants at a Motherhood Maternity store in Florida because they were pregnant.

April 25, 2007

New Orleans' blacks see rental block

By Ann M. Simmons, Times Staff Writer

African Americans seeking rental housing in the New Orleans metropolitan area face significant discrimination and fewer accommodations to choose from since Hurricane Katrina, a report released Tuesday found.

In 6 out of 10 transactions, African Americans faced less favorable treatment than comparably qualified whites, the report said.

"For Rent, Unless You're Black," a study by the Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center, surveyed 40 properties in the parishes of Orleans, Jefferson, St. Tammany

and St. Bernard.

Race-based housing discrimination exists in many U.S. cities, but discrimination against blacks in New Orleans was particularly egregious given the housing shortage, said James Perry, executive director of the Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center.

The shortage resulting from the loss of homes in hurricanes Katrina and Rita is already difficult to overcome, Perry said.

"It's unfathomable that on top of that, African Americans have to deal with discrimination," he added.

The storms destroyed more than 200,000 homes and apartments in Louisiana — the majority of them in the New Orleans metropolitan area — according to Louisiana statistics.

The study comes as fair housing advocates say some local governments and politicians are using zoning and other policies to discourage poor and minority residents from living in their neighborhoods.

Last fall, St. Bernard Parish passed an ordinance that required owners of single-family homes there, more than 90% of whom are white, to rent only to blood relatives — making it almost impossible for nonwhites to rent in the parish. Faced with a legal challenge, the ordinance was repealed.

Jefferson Parish politicians have passed a resolution aimed at limiting the construction of low-income units. In Orleans Parish, strong community opposition forced two councilwomen to drop a proposal to put a moratorium on building multifamily housing in their districts.

Anthony Keck, president of the Greater New Orleans Housing Action Center board of directors, cited fair housing practices as crucial to New Orleans' recovery.

"In order to attract people back to the city, we really need to tackle housing discrimination," Keck said.

In an investigation between September 2006 and April 2007, the fair housing action center followed black and white would-be renters as they tried to lease properties from private landlords. The "testers" were from the same income bracket, on similar career paths and had matching family and rental histories, said Thena Robinson, the group's coordinator of investigations.

They received classroom and field training, were taught to be objective fact-finders and told "to report, but not interpret, the results of the test," she said.

The rental units were randomly selected from print and Internet listings.

African American testers were offered fewer appointments to view units, according to housing advocates. In some instances, black testers were told applications were not being accepted, but hours later white testers were offered appointments to visit the same unit. In other cases, African American renters were told units would not be available anytime soon, but white testers were advised of immediate availability.

In one example, black and white testers responded to an advertisement for an apartment in Orleans Parish on Jan. 22. An agent told the black tester that only one unit was available, and not until the end of February. The black would-be renter was allowed to view the apartment only through a window.

Later that day, the same agent showed a white tester two units that would be available Feb. 1. That renter also was advised of another unit coming available March 1.

According to the report, African Americans were often quoted higher rents than those advertised, or different lease terms and conditions, and steered to less favorable units. In many instances, the report charged that landlords used "linguistic profiling" to determine whether to return calls from African Americans inquiring about certain units.

"What we saw were subtle differences that a person looking for housing might not be able to detect unless they were able to compare their experience with another person," Perry said.

The fair housing advocates would not identify the properties targeted in the tests or the testers.

The Civil Rights Act of 1968, a portion of which is known as the Fair Housing Act, prohibits race discrimination in housing, and protects people trying to rent or buy a home, secure a mortgage, or purchase homeowners insurance.

Perry said his group would seek legal action against the landlords.