

## Women Advocates of the Southeast Update November 2006

### Women and Economic Justice News and Resources

#### **Increase in Volunteering Among College Students**

The trend to volunteer is on the rise amongst college students as reported in the "College Students Helping America" report released by the Federal Corporation for National and Community Service. The report found that nearly 3.3 million college students volunteered in 2005 i.e. 600,000 more students than in 2002. For more information, visit [www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov).

#### **Book: "We got Issues! A Young Women's Guide to a Bold and Empowered Life"**

In their book 'We got Issues! A Young Women's Guide to a Bold and Empowered life" Rha Goddess and J Love, activists and performing artists, have found that young American women have more meaningful issues of social concerns like ending racism and violence and improving the healthcare system on their minds rather than boys and shopping. They collected information from 1000 young girls in the form of poems, essays etc on their road trip. The book also stresses the importance of building capacity of the young women to be strong and effective leaders. The book is available at Barnes and Noble and Amazon.com. For more information about the writers please visit [www.wegotissues.org](http://www.wegotissues.org). To get a complimentary copy of the book or to buy copies of the book call 1-808-573-8000 ext. 22 or write at [kateim@innerocean.com](mailto:kateim@innerocean.com)

#### **Campus Progress Launches 'Debt Hits Hard' Campaign**

Campus Progress, the youth organizing division of the Center for American Progress, has launched Debt Hits Hard, a national campaign to raise public awareness of how ineffective federal policies weaken educational opportunity and feed the dramatic growth of student debt. Not including private loans, total student debt in the U.S. totals more than \$438 billion. The average college senior now graduates with \$3200 in credit card debt and \$18,900 in student loans. Between 2001 and 2010, two million academically qualified students will not go to college because they can't afford it. Debt affects the choices students make after graduation. Many students cannot pursue careers in teaching or social work because of the debt payments they face after graduation. For example, nearly one quarter of all graduates from public universities and almost 40 percent of graduates from private universities have levels of student debt that would become unmanageable at the salaries of starting teachers. The Debt Hits Hard campaign proposes three solutions to help students escape the debt trap. First, end corporate welfare for lenders that wastes billions of taxpayer dollars. Second, ease the debt burden on students and families by cutting student loan interest rates in half. Finally, make financial aid more effective by raising the minimum Pell Grant to \$5,100. Learn how you can [take action here](#).

#### **Book: *Unsung Heroines: Single Mothers and the American Dream***

This compelling book destroys the derogatory images of single mothers that too often prevail in the media and in politics by creating a rich, moving, multidimensional picture of who these women really are. Ruth Sidel interviewed mothers from diverse races, ethnicities, religions, and social classes who became single through divorce, separation, widowhood, or who never married; none had planned to raise children on their own. Weaving together these women's voices with an accessible, cutting-edge sociological and political analysis of single motherhood today, *Unsung Heroines* introduces a resilient, resourceful, and courageous population of women committed to their families, holding fast to quintessential American values, and creating positive new lives for themselves and their children. What emerges from this penetrating study is a clear message about what all families--two-parent as well as single parent--must have to succeed: decent jobs at a living wage, comprehensive health care, and preschool and after-school care. In a final chapter, Sidel gives a broad political-economic analysis that provides historical background on the way

American social policy has evolved and compares the situation in the U.S. to the social policies and ideologies of other countries. For more information or to order, please visit: <http://www.ucpress.edu/books/pages/10026.html#copy>

### **The Community-Building Role of Cultural Organizations**

Across the United States, nonprofit cultural heritage organizations help build and sustain a sense of community through public celebrations of music, food, and holidays. This brief finds that these organizations tend to be small and that there are important programmatic and organizational variations across ethnic groups. These key characteristics should be taken into account when supporting cultural heritage organizations. For the full brief, please visit: [http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311376\\_cultural\\_heritage\\_orgs.pdf](http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311376_cultural_heritage_orgs.pdf)

### **Film: Motherhood Manifesto**

A new film based on the book *Motherhood Manifesto* brings to life stories of women and deals with policy issues such as paid maternity/paternity leave, paid sick leave and free child care. The film premiered on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., with Senator Hillary Clinton, among others, appearing to promote motherhood issues. For more information about the film and to order a free copy of the DVD, please visit: <http://www.momsrising.org/film>

### **“Real Lives of Working Mothers” Survey**

Sharon Meers and Joanna Strober are writing a book called “Opting In”, focusing on the real stories of working moms, whether they work full-time, part-time for themselves or for others. This survey asks you your candid views about your life at work and at home – both the rewards and the challenges. Your responses are anonymous and the results will be published in their book. Make sure your story is told by [completing the survey](#).

### **Editorial – Alabama: “Hunger in America Should Not Exist”**

According to the editorial published in *The Anniston*, October 7, 2006 hunger should not exist in America; however ten percent of Americans experience hunger or risk of hunger, according to the Society of St. Andrew, an organization committed to eradicating hunger. Despite social safety net provided by assistance programs, people still go hungry because lot of them are not able to avail the benefits of assistance programs like food stamps due to reasons like substance abuse, embarrassment, language barrier and lack of access. For detail, visit <http://www.annistonstar.com/opinion/2006/as-editorials-1007-0-6j06u0216.htm>

### **Post-Katrina News and Resources**

#### **Translating Research into Action: Nonprofits and the Renaissance of New Orleans**

The large body of information collected through commissioned papers, independent research and program reports on the extent of damage and efforts required to rebuild New Orleans have been compiled by the Urban Institute. The website provides links to the readings on issues important for rebuilding of New Orleans. The collected information focuses on six key issues: (1) housing (2) children and families (3) arts and resources (4) disaster preparedness (5) community health and (6) poverty reduction and asset development. The compiled studies, in most cases draw on the lessons learned from other disasters or demonstration projects aimed at rebuilding the devastated area. Each category of reading is further divided as essential and further readings. The resource is designed to help people and institutions trying to find out ways to rebuild the devastated area. For the full resources, please visit: <http://www.urban.org/katrinabiblio/>

### **Article: Central City child care center plan unveiled**

*"A center offering day care, basic health care and early childhood education for as many as 500 infants and pre-schoolers may open in 11 months in Central City, its organizers and advocates said Tuesday in a ceremony unveiling the concept. This facility, which would enroll children younger than existing government-subsidized programs such as Head Start, is "a very wonderful program, a great idea," said Darryl Kilbert, acting superintendent of New Orleans public schools, during a ceremony at the former Mahalia Jackson Elementary School, where backers plan to establish the center." Full article below.*

### **Letter to Editor: Low-income workers are essential to recovery**

*"Jefferson Parish Councilman Chris Roberts' resolution to reject low-income housing development is an embarrassment to our entire region and particularly to his constituents in Jefferson Parish. Roberts condemns the region's poor as "criminal," "ignorant," "lazy" and "leeches on society." In fact, in a regional market that is highly dependent upon the health care, service and hospitality industries, low-wage workers are not only viable, but absolutely essential contributors to the economy." Full article below.*

### **Article: As more immigrants go to New Orleans to help rebuild the city, laborers say they're making less**

*"Above the din of hammers, drills and mortar mixers, some immigrant construction workers are grumbling that wages have dropped and a lull in work has developed in the last few months. "It was better in the beginning," said Honduran Marcos Antonio Enamorado, who lived in Houston for six years before moving to New Orleans last year. The prospect of a plethora of high-paying jobs is drawing workers like Enamorado to the area. But some immigrants, especially those on the ground looking for work, say there aren't as many projects under way and wages are falling." Full article below.*

### **Article: Central City child care center plan unveiled**

Source: The Times-Picayune

Date: October 25, 2006

Author: John Pope

A center offering day care, basic health care and early childhood education for as many as 500 infants and pre-schoolers may open in 11 months in Central City, its organizers and advocates said Tuesday in a ceremony unveiling the concept. This facility, which would enroll children younger than existing government-subsidized programs such as Head Start, is "a very wonderful program, a great idea," said Darryl Kilbert, acting superintendent of New Orleans public schools, during a ceremony at the former Mahalia Jackson Elementary School, where backers plan to establish the center.

The fact that it would accept children before their first birthday is an acknowledgment that children start learning "virtually from the time they're born," said U.S. Rep. William Jefferson, D-New Orleans, who attended the event.

But the center does not have a budget, an organizational structure or an architect, and a list of services to be offered to youngsters and their parents has yet to be compiled, said Orleans Parish School Board President Phyllis Landrieu, the dominant force behind the project.

Leon McCowan, a regional administrator in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, stressed the importance of adequate financing when he urged the center's organizers to tap a wide variety of financial sources, including governments and private foundations, to get the money the center would need to provide everything its organizers want.

"You have more needs than you have resources," he said.

None of that daunts Landrieu, who said she plans to have meetings on the center's administration, programs and financing in the next few weeks.

"It's very doable," she said after the hour-long event, which was held in a breezeway at the school in the 2400 block of Jackson Avenue. The Mahalia Jackson campus had housed school-system offices before Hurricane Katrina forced it to close. It hasn't been repaired.

Even though the facility, which would be called the Mahalia Jackson Early Childhood and Family Development Center, would be new to the New Orleans area, its organizers could learn from similar centers in West Feliciana Parish and McComb, Miss., Landrieu said.

Moreover, she has lined up a network of partners, including Head Start, the United Way, Children's Hospital, the Louisiana Children's Museum, the New Orleans Health Department, the state Department of Social Services and the psychiatry department at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center to help make the concept a reality.

"We can't conceive of continuing without your participation," Landrieu said.

The Orleans Parish School Board, the Recovery School District and Head Start will be the principal organizations in charge, at least at first, she said, explaining that an independent nonprofit organization may be ultimately hired for the job.

The center, which is designed to help reduce such poverty-related problems as poor health care and high rates of dropouts and juvenile offenders, "is something our children absolutely deserve," said Linda Johnson, president of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

"You've heard that it takes a village to raise a child," Health Department Director Kevin Stephens said. "We're the villagers."

### **Letter to Editor: Low-income workers are essential to recovery**

Source: The Times-Picayune

Date: October 29, 2006

Re: "More housing for poor opposed: Roberts says those from city unwelcome," Metro, Oct. 20.

Jefferson Parish Councilman Chris Roberts' resolution to reject low-income housing development is an embarrassment to our entire region and particularly to his constituents in Jefferson Parish.

Roberts condemns the region's poor as "criminal," "ignorant," "lazy" and "leeches on society." In fact, in a regional market that is highly dependent upon the health care, service and hospitality industries, low-wage workers are not only viable, but absolutely essential contributors to the economy.

Contrary to Chris Roberts' appallingly inaccurate characterization of the poor, the area's low-income population includes hundreds of thousands of intelligent, hardworking individuals. Under HUD's guidelines, a head of household working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year for anything less than \$13.50 an hour may very well qualify as "low-income."

Roberts' stated objective -- to bar criminals from Jefferson Parish -- will ultimately serve to exclude the elderly, schoolteachers, bus drivers, grocery store clerks and myriad other members of our region's work force.

Economic recovery in the greater New Orleans area relies upon cooperation between all the region's parishes, and an acceptance of post-storm demographic shifts. The elected officials and business leaders of Jefferson Parish owe it to their constituents and to the entire region to take affirmative strides toward recovery, rather than rejecting the progress they irrationally fear will "change the complexion" of their parish.

Rachel Wilch

Policy analyst

Neighborhood Housing Services

New Orleans

**Article: As more immigrants go to New Orleans to help rebuild the city, laborers say they're making less**

Source: The Houston Chronicle

Date: October 29, 2006

Author: Jenalia Moreno

Above the din of hammers, drills and mortar mixers, some immigrant construction workers are grumbling that wages have dropped and a lull in work has developed in the last few months.

"It was better in the beginning," said Honduran Marcos Antonio Enamorado, who lived in Houston for six years before moving to New Orleans last year.

The prospect of a plethora of high-paying jobs is drawing workers like Enamorado to the area. But some immigrants, especially those on the ground looking for work, say there aren't as many projects under way and wages are falling.

Enamorado may be right about it being better in the beginning.

According to an April estimate by the Washington-based Advancement Project, 30,000 to 100,000 migrant workers moved to Gulf Coast areas after Hurricane Katrina.

And according to a June study by Tulane University and University of California, Berkeley, a fourth of the construction workers in New Orleans are undocumented.

Another indicator of the massive influx: remittances, the money sent to family out of the country.

So many immigrants have settled in the area, at least temporarily, that remittances from Louisiana will soar nearly 250 percent to \$208 million this year from \$61 million in 2004, according to a recent report released by the Washington-based Inter-American Development Bank's Multilateral Investment Fund.

The Mexican government estimates that 30,000 Mexicans are living in New Orleans and the surrounding area, up from 5,000 before the hurricane.

"They are contributing in an important way to the reconstruction of the city," Juan Bosco Marti, general director for North America for the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said during a recent visit to New Orleans.

That demographic shift has persuaded the government, which has been operating a mobile consular office out of Houston since 2002, to reopen a New Orleans consulate next year.

During a recent visit by the mobile consulate, Marco Antonio Salazar and his wife, Estella Hernandez, were among the hundreds of people lined up at the Hispanic Business Resources and Technology Center in Kenner. The former Galveston residents relocated to New Orleans because of better job opportunities and were renewing their Mexican passports.

"In Houston there's little work. There's not the same level of work as here," said Salazar, who moved to New Orleans six months ago and earns \$150 a day in construction.

But now Hispanic day laborers who wait on street corners and in front of hardware stores in hopes of getting hired say there's a glut of immigrant workers and not enough projects under way.

Immigrants complain that too many of their compatriots have migrated from Houston to New Orleans.

"A lot of people arrived," said Juan Martinez, a Mexican immigrant who relocated to New Orleans from Memphis in March.

"The Texans lowered the prices," he added.

In the spring, labor prices were chopped in half to as little as \$400 a week as more workers and contractors arrived, Martinez said as he and four of his cousins from the Mexican state of Zacatecas recently waited for potential employers to hire them at a Lowe's parking lot in Metairie.

Even Baytown-based contractor Jose Yanez, who moved to New Orleans in December, said business has slowed since May, but it's still better than it is in Houston.

"There's a lot of competition in Houston," said Yanez, who moved to Baytown from El Salvador eight years ago. "You make an estimate, and someone else gives it lower."

Many construction workers agree that although wages and work have dipped lately, there's still more opportunity in New Orleans.

Entire neighborhoods remain damaged and abandoned, and many businesses are still shuttered, promising more work to come.

"Many people predict there will be jobs here for the next 10 years," said Phuong Pham, an associate professor at Tulane University and one of the authors of the June study *Rebuilding After Katrina*.

That's why many immigrant workers said they plan to stay in the area at least a few more years because they earn more in the Crescent City than they do in the Bayou City.