

The Civil Rights Project



Proyecto Derechos Civiles

--News Advisory--

For Immediate Release

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Government's Largest Program for Subsidized Housing Ignores Civil Rights Standards says New Report by UCLA Civil Rights Project

Los Angeles-December 9, 2009-The UCLA Civil Rights Project has issued a new report by Researcher Deirdre Pfeiffer and finds that the government's largest program for building subsidized housing -- a program urgently needed by poor families in Southern CA -- places these homes in areas with very weak schools unlikely to prepare the children attending them for higher education and a future in California's economy. The new report, *The Opportunity Illusion: Subsidized Housing and Failing Schools in California*, attributes these housing placement decisions to an ongoing lack of supervision and non-adherence to civil rights standards by the U.S. Department of the Treasury, which administers this costly program and channels its subsidies through the tax system rather than through normal expenditures.

The report explains that the Department of Housing and Urban Development has a number of civil rights standards for the subsidized housing it runs based on federal fair housing and nondiscrimination laws. Unfortunately, the Treasury Department does not have similar standards and has specifically failed to enforce Title VIII of the 1968 Fair Housing Act while administering the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program. LIHTC provides billions of dollars for building homes across the country and has been the only significant source of funds for building housing for poor families since the 1980s. Since it operates primarily through the tax system rather than through far more visible public budgets, and all the building is by private developers, the LIHTC is largely invisible to the public. "I was sad to discover that state and federal LIHTC policy does little to encourage the siting of projects in low poverty neighborhoods that feed into high performing schools -- I only hope this report can create a real opportunity for change," says Pfeiffer.

The report stresses that housing segregation is very directly related to school segregation, and that this in turn strongly correlates to inferior educational opportunities and lower levels of achievement, graduation and success in college. “These decisions force poor minority families needing housing to live in areas with very weak schools and amount to decisions that limit the future of the children who grow up there,” says Civil Rights Project Co-director, Gary Orfield. He calls on the Obama Administration “to end the neglect of civil rights in the program and to implement standards that would break the vicious cycle of unequal opportunity.”

To read *The Opportunity Illusion*, please go to www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu

About The Civil Rights Project at UCLA

Founded in 1996 by former Harvard professors Gary Orfield and Christopher Edley Jr., the Civil Rights Project/*Proyecto Derechos Civiles* is now co-directed by Orfield and Patricia Gándara, professors at UCLA. Its mission is to create a new generation of research in social science and law, on the critical issues of civil rights and equal opportunity for racial and ethnic groups in the United States. It has commissioned more than 400 studies, published 14 books and issued numerous reports from authors at universities and research centers across the country. The Supreme Court, in its 2003 *Grutter v. Bollinger* decision upholding affirmative action, cited the Civil Rights Project's research.

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