

NESRI NATIONAL ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RIGHTS INITIATIVE

Human Rights E-Newsletter

April 2009

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About Us

NESRI promotes human rights in the United States to advance the principle that meeting fundamental human needs, such as health care, housing, food, education and work with dignity, gives rise to human rights obligations on the part of government and the private sector.

Because we believe that social movements are the foundation for creating a culture that protects these economic and social rights, we work in partnership with affected communities to build local projects and national coalitions that advocate for universal, equitable, comprehensive and sustainable public policies.

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Recent Publications

Dear Friend,

Thank you for being part of the movement for economic and social rights. We're sending you our e-newsletter to share our efforts with you and provide you with information and opportunities to become part of [NESRI's work](#).

Updates from the Field

NESRI Conducts Human Right to Housing Participatory Survey with May Day New Orleans

The foreclosure crisis has awakened Americans to the stark reality that

our nation's housing policies have failed to ensure decent and affordable homes for many. Poor communities across the country have lived this reality for decades. The current crisis presents them the opportunity to launch new organizing and public education campaigns for governmental policies that protect housing as a human right. In addition to NESRI's collaborative work calling on Congress to hold national field hearings to examine the housing crisis in light of human rights commitments, we support local grassroots efforts generated in response to these new opportunities.

In March 2009, NESRI traveled to New Orleans to assist our partner organization [May Day New Orleans](#) in a participatory survey of public housing and Section 8 residents. This survey, which will serve as the basis of a report, was a response to a threat of eviction against Kawana Jasper, a member of May Day New Orleans, for using language deemed abusive by the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO). Kawana's case surfaced the range of abusive regulations where residents could get evicted for minor offenses, including trivial issues like broken light fixtures. [Read more.](#)

For more info:

- View our [photo collection](#) of the recent New Orleans trip.
- Watch a trailer of the soon to be released documentary about May Day New Orleans - [Coming Home](#).

CIW Wins Florida Governor Crist's Support For Campaign for Fair Food

Following seven successful slavery prosecutions by the U.S. Department of Justice since 1997 (which freed well over 1,000 farm workers in Florida), on December 19th of last year a federal court



[Ten Human Rights Principles for Financing Health Care](#)
March 2009

[Embedding the Human Right to Health Care in U.S. State Constitutions](#) February 2009

[The Right to Development](#)
February 2009

[The Right to Education](#) in the Juvenile and Criminal Justice Systems in the United States
December 2008

sentenced another set of Florida farm labor supervisors for enslaving tomato pickers, including beating, chaining, and locking them inside a truck at night.

When soon after Florida Governor Crist's spokesperson referred to the ongoing slavery of farmworkers in Florida, as "maybe a case a year," NESRI partner the [Coalition of Immokalee Workers](#) called on the Governor to take an unequivocal stand against slavery in his state.

NESRI's Human Right to Work with Dignity Program helped organize a late December national sign-on letter to Crist, a February speaking engagement by CIW's Lucas Benitez at the United Nations, and participated in an early March street theater and press conference (which NESRI board member Patrick Mason facilitated) on the steps of the old Capitol in Tallahassee. The Governor heard these voices in support of human rights, met with the CIW in Tallahassee in late March and has since pledged his support for the Campaign for Fair Food! Read more. [Read more.](#)

Upcoming Events

[April 18](#)
United Workers Association
Human Rights Zone Fair, March, and Rally

[May 1](#)
Vermont Workers Center Health Care is a Human Right Rally

[June 5 - 6](#)
Dignity in Schools Campaign National Conference

[July 20 - 29](#)
United Nations Advisory Group on Forced Evictions Official Fact Finding Mission to New Orleans

For more info:

- Read the December '08 [Sign-on Letter to Governor Crist.](#)
- Listen to CIW's [Lucas Benitez's February '09 testimony at UN.](#)
- Read CIW's [Lucas Benitez's February '09 testimony at UN.](#)
- View the [photos of the March press conference](#) and theater.
- [Read Florida Governor Crist's March '09 Letter](#) to CIW.

Special Thanks

to our funders:

Ford Foundation
Mertz-Gilmore Foundation
Public Welfare Foundation
U.S. Human Rights Fund
Libra Foundation
The Moriah Fund

And all our individual supporters for their commitment to building social movements in the United States!

and to:

Schulte, Roth and Zabel LLP for their pro bono assistance.
Frank Sindaco for his web blog assistance to May Day New



Join the Movement

Sign the Human Right to Health Care Petition, Hold Health Care Reformers Accountable for Meeting Human Rights Standards

Over the last few months there has been a frantic level of health care reform activity from the White House, Congress, advocacy organizations and industry groups. Yet, our country is no closer to health care reform measures that

would meet the key human rights principles of universality, equity and accountability. Despite consistent failure of commercial health care markets to provide health care for all, reformers continue to treat care as a commodity by making private, for-profit coverage the center of the reform process. They listen intently when insurance lobbyists complain that some proposals, particularly those that would create a public insurance plan option for all, may not be good for their industry's bottom line. This reflects a profound failure to meet their obligation to protect people's health, not corporate profits, and to treat health care as a public good that is shared equitably.

The [Human Right to Health Program](#), run jointly with the [National Health Law Program](#) (NHeLP), has published Ten Human Rights Principles for Financing Health Care to set down markers for health care reformers. We've also collaborated with [Amnesty International](#) on their new petition, which calls on our elected officials to recognize that health care is a human right, not a commodity. With both initiatives we seek to intervene in the national reform debate, which is likely to lead to concrete legislative proposals from congressional committees as early as June.

Action steps:

- Let your representative know that health care is for people, not for profits. [Sign the petition.](#) [Download and circulate the petition.](#)
- Read, download and distribute the Health Program's [Ten Human Rights Principles](#) for Financing Health Care.

Orleans.

The Center for Constitutional Rights and the Poverty Initiative for accompanying NESRI to New Orleans and assisting with a human rights survey.

Jeff Lipman for his development and communications support.

Our interns and volunteers for their commitment, hard work and enthusiasm!

- [Request printed copies](#) of the principles.
- [Listen to NESRI Executive Director Cathy Albisa's](#) comments on the Human Right to Health Care at the recent Amnesty International USA Annual General Meeting.

Join Us for the Upcoming Dignity in Schools Campaign Conference and Help Us Work For Positive School Climates



The federal stimulus bill passed by Congress includes over \$100 billion in funding for education and presents an opportunity for states and school districts to address the pushout crisis facing our nation's schools. Today, millions of low-income youth and youth of color are being denied their human right to an education by harsh disciplinary practices, lack of supportive services, and destructive school climates that push students out of school. NESRI, along with the [Dignity in Schools Campaign](#) (DSC), a national coalition in which NESRI is a core group member, is advocating for states and districts to invest in practices that improve school climate and use positive approaches to discipline to keep children in school and improve learning.

Towards this end, On June 5 and 6, NESRI is co-sponsoring the first DSC National Conference in Chicago to develop collective human rights-based strategies to end school pushout. The conference will include panels on human rights and alternatives to zero-tolerance discipline, a series of discussions on models that are working in communities around the country, and sessions to draft a National Resolution on Ending School Pushout.

Action steps:

- [Learn more and register](#) for the DSC National Conference.
- [Read and share](#) the publication "Positive Behavior Supports: A Wise Investment of Economic Stimulus Funds" from the DSC and the Southern Poverty Law Center.

New Media!

We are pleased to share two new NESRI web 2.0 tools. Listen to presentations by NESRI staff, board, and partners on our podomatic page or look through our new flickr page where we document key events and actions through photos.

NESRI's Podomatic Podcasts

- [Paul Farmer](#) (NESRI Board Member) and NESRI staff speak to a gathering of supporters on "Economic and Social Rights Under a New Administration" October 2008
- [Tiffany Gardner](#) (NESRI) and Derek Norvell (Concerned Citizens of Greater Harlem) speak to the Poverty Initiative's Immersion Course, January 2009
- [Cathy Albisa](#) (NESRI) and Maisie Chin (CADRE) address the Opening Plenary of the U. S. Human Rights Fund's Convening in New Orleans, January 2009
- [Lucas Benitez](#) (CIW) testifies at the United Nations on World Social Justice Day, February 2009
- [Cathy Albisa](#) (NESRI) presents on a Human Right to Health Care Panel at the Amnesty International U.S.A. Annual General Meeting, March 2009

NESRI's Flickr Photo Collections

- NESRI's [field visit](#) to May Day New Orleans, March 2009
- NESRI at the [U.S. Human Rights Fund's Convening](#) in New Orleans, January 2009

Other News

- NESRI continues to grow! This spring we hired [Meredith Vatssek](#) as our new Program Assistant.
- [New Internship Opportunities at NESRI!](#) Are you interested in becoming an integral part of building a movement for economic and social rights? NESRI is currently seeking Summer 2009 interns for its housing, education and health programs as well as its communications and development departments.
- Our [Montana partners](#) introduced two rights-based health care bills in the state legislature.
- Our ally in Vermont, the [Vermont Workers' Center](#), is [collecting signatures for a People's Plan](#) - a human rights alternative to proposed state budget cuts.
- Our ally in Washington State, Northwest Health Law Advocates (NoHLA) released a report, "[Washington State's Health Reform Proposals: A Human Rights Assessment](#)."
- Our ally Families and Friends of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children (FFLIC) has released a trailer of their new documentary [Stopping the School to Prison Pipeline](#).

Thank you for being part of the NESRI community. We rely on the support of foundations & individuals like you! Tax-deductible donations will help us promote human rights in the United States.

We also accept in-kind donations so please [contact us](#) for more details.

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-The NESRI Team

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