

From: jackson-action@hotmail.com

Subject: Sign on letter calling for further federal investigation/audit of HUD/HANO

Date: Tue, 21 Apr 2009 19:24:38 -0700

Dear Housing Rights Advocates,

Please consider signing onto the following letter. It has been drafted by Sam Jackson, Darwin BondGraham, Stephanie Mingo, Cody Marshall, Mike Howell, but it is intended to be an open letter from a coalition of grassroots voices. Our goal is to gather as many signatures as possible before contacting AG Eric Holder, Jr., in hopes that we might actually reignite an investigation into possible corruption and malfeasance under HUD and HANO after Katrina.

Call me if you have questions. 504-319-3300

In Solidarity,

Sam Jackson, May Day New Orleans

Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr.

U.S. Department of Justice

950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Holder,

It has been almost four years since Hurricane Katrina passed over the great city of New Orleans. While life has returned to normal for some, much more of the city struggles to rebuild. Many of our communities remain in tatters. To list the problems we still face would take up too many pages. We have written you, instead, to bring up a very specific problem, one we feel you can help to rectify. We are asking for serious help.

Following Katrina the majority of our public housing was shuttered, fenced in, and finally demolished, even though it sustained relatively little damage compared to other residential buildings across New Orleans. This was a highly polarizing event, one that has scarred our city's political conscience and landscape. Even worse, it has displaced thousands of families and made their homecomings all too difficult.

Irregardless of whether one feels that the demolition and drastic redevelopment of public housing is a necessary good, or an unnecessary burden, several troubling facts stand out. We believe these facts call for special attention from your office.

It is imperative that the official decisions, contracts, payments, and operations of the businesses, foundations, and nonprofits involved in post-Katrina public housing redevelopment receive a fresh and thorough audit by the Obama administration. It is of the utmost importance that the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO), and especially the federal

Housing and Urban Development department (HUD) be audited from top to bottom with regard to their operations in New Orleans since 2005. We are asking that the Justice Department take the lead on this by appointing an audit team to compile a comprehensive report on post-Katrina government spending on public housing demolition, redevelopment, maintenance, and operations in New Orleans.

Secondly, it is unclear to us whether the FBI probe into former HUD Sec. Alphonso Jackson's business and political relationships with HUD and HANO contractors is still underway. We have not heard much of it in the news lately. Has this effort been put on a back burner? We hope not.

The decision to demolish public housing in New Orleans was made at an incredibly inopportune time for the thousands of families who lived here, and who were seeking their right of return. The entire decision making process which led to demolition - from the federal to city level - was never open to public input or scrutiny. We fear, therefore, that

motives such as profit and politics might have figured into this decision more than service and compassion. The complex web of companies, non-profits, and foundations that have controlled redevelopment of public housing, with their various links to HUD and HANO employees - former Sec. Jackson's financial links to Columbia Residential being only the most conspicuous example - require a comprehensive investigation of post-Katrina decisions made with respect to public housing.

Given this, we ask that you appoint a special prosecutor whose jurisdiction will be to investigate government decisions and contracts related to post-Katrina public housing in the city of New Orleans.

We look forward to hearing your response.

Sincerely, the undersigned