

NESRI NATIONAL ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RIGHTS INITIATIVE

Human Rights Listserv

December 2008

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About Us

Founded in 2004 NESRI works to build support for universally recognized human rights, such as health, education, decent work, housing, food and social security.

We support the use of human rights at the community level and develop practical advocacy models for human rights campaigns.

Support Us

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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Dear Friend,

December 10th is Human Rights Day in celebration of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Sixty years ago today, the Universal Declaration emerged after WWII out of a global crisis of stunning proportions. A world confronting an abhorrent genocide, not long after a global depression that plunged most of humanity into brutal need, chose to embrace a set of moving ideals that reaffirmed but also redefined basic dignity, freedom and equality. The United States at that time showed stunning leadership in the creation of the Universal Declaration and in making sure that economic and social rights were included and took their rightful place within the longstanding and enduring notion of basic human rights. But resistance at home, particularly around issues of race, doomed the much needed agenda of domestic human rights for decades.

Today, however, within the context of a fractured and fragile economy paired with a historic new Administration, new hope has emerged for bringing human rights home, and the relevance and need for the vision contained within the Universal Declaration can only be said to have grown. We call on our political leaders to take up the unfinished work of human rights in the United States in this new economic and political era. But we also need to reinforce this call through all of our work within social movements, and ensure that human rights become central to a progressive vision in the United States. Heeding the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, *"it is necessary to realize that we have moved from the era of civil rights to the era of human rights."*

Please take a moment to read about our recent work and what we are doing to promote human rights in the United States!

[Human Right to Education](#)

Promoting Dignity in U.S. Public Schools

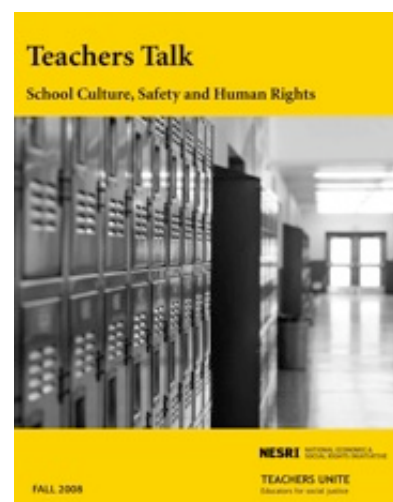
The Human Right to Education Program at NESRI works with education advocates and organizers to promote human rights based policy change in public education.

Teacher Voices and Students' Rights in NYC

- In October NESRI and Teachers Unite held a community forum where they released the new report

[Teachers Talk: School Culture, Safety and Students' Rights.](#)

The report presents findings from teacher surveys on discipline policies in NYC schools and urges policy reform to promote approaches such as conflict resolution and restorative practices that guarantee the human right to education.



- In November NESRI rallied with the [Student Safety Coalition](#) at New York City Hall for students' human right to safety with dignity in school.

Upcoming National Conference and White Paper

- SAVE THE DATE! [Dignity in Schools Campaign National Conference](#), June 5-6, 2009, Chicago, IL NESRI is a co-organizer of this conference which is dedicated to reframing the national dialogue on school climate and discipline through human rights. For more information visit www.dignityinschools.org/national-conference or email liz@nesri.org.
- NESRI is also working with the [Dignity in Schools Campaign](#) to develop a White Paper for Congress and the New Administration on human rights-based approaches to ending zero-tolerance in schools.
- To join the Dignity in Schools Campaign listserv email info@dignityinschools.org.

Other Highlights

- View NESRI's Education Director's [powerpoint](#) presentation "Dismantling the School to Prison Pipeline through Human Rights" to the Dignity in Schools Campaign and U.S. Human Rights Network Membership Skills Building Conference Call.
- Read a joint NESRI and Human Rights Watch [letter](#) urging the Jackson, MS Public School District to pass a discipline policy using positive behavior support and restorative practices in schools.

[Human Right to Health](#)

Building Support for Universal, Equitable Health Care

The Human Right to Health Program, a joint NESRI and [NHELP](#) project, works with health advocates to

develop a human rights approach to protecting health and ensuring that all people in the United States can get the health care they need. Over the last few months NESRI/NHELP Human Right to Health Director Anja Rudiger traveled the country speaking to community activists, college students, public health professionals, policy makers and legal aid lawyers. NESRI also supported local activists in Montana, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Kansas and Washington.



- Today NESRI in collaboration with the [Montana Human Rights Network](#) and the [1000 Voices Archive](#) released a [set of three human right to health care videos](#). This series of short videos features Montana residents talking about their experiences in the health care system and starts with a story told by Mary Caferro (pictured above), who came to the Montana legislature knowing that health care is a human right.
- See the NESRI/NHELP publication "[Human Right to Health Care: Nominees' Plans Lag Behind Public Demands](#)." This human rights assessment not only includes a review of Barack Obama's health care plan, but also sets out a framework of detailed human rights standards against which any health care

reform proposal should be evaluated.

- Listen to a [radio interview](#) with Anja on WBAT's "Health Action" program about NESRI's human rights framework for health care reform and the report on the Presidential candidates' health care proposals.
- Read NESRI Board Member Paul Farmer's article "[Can Obama Solve America's Health Care Crisis?](#)"
- Our work in Montana: We are supporting our partner, the [Montana Human Rights Network](#), in expanding their state-wide human right to health care campaign. This campaign builds on the success of a ballot measure that will expand public health insurance programs for children, which was approved by voters on November 4. The Montana Human Rights Network used the campaign for children's health insurance as a vehicle for raising awareness about our government's human rights obligation to protect health and ensure universal and equitable access to health care through public financing. We are now broadening this campaign to demand greater accountability from the private health care industry, and to call for an expansion of the excellent public services provided by community health centers. At a local level, we are excited that on December 4 the Board of Health in Lewis & Clark County adopted a resolution recognizing health and health care as human rights. The resolution sets up a task force that will examine how to best achieve universal health care in Lewis & Clark County. We will work closely with the county to help make this commitment a reality.
- Human Right to Healthcare Campaign in Vermont: After surveying 1,200 Vermonters the Workers' Center releases its report [Voices of the Vermont Healthcare Crisis: The Human Right to Healthcare](#). On Saturday, December 13, the Workers' Center is holding the [Ella Baker Human Rights Conference](#) at the University of Vermont's Davis Center.
- The Human Right to Health Program has a listserv! Subscribe [here](#).

Human Right to Housing Supporting the Right to Housing Across the Country

NESRI's Human Right to Housing Program works with community-based organizations to support their social justice campaigns through the use of human rights.

Partnership with May Day New Orleans

- Over the past few months NESRI's exciting partnership with May Day New Orleans included a human rights training conducted in New Orleans by NESRI Housing Director Tiffany M. Gardner.
- Watch an [interview](#) with Sam Jackson, founder of NESRI partner May Day New Orleans, about public housing in New Orleans on GRITtv with Laura Flanders.
- Read Sam Jackson's [comments](#) about community rebuilding efforts post Hurricane Katrina to the Fourth Session of the World Urban Forum held in China in November. Review the new official [report](#) from the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (AHCR) Disaster Seminar in Nanjing.



New National Campaign

Throughout the Fall NESRI has been spearheading the development of a new national coalition entitled The Campaign to Restore National Housing Rights. The coalition is calling for regional congressional hearings on housing for the poor.

- Read the initial [letter](#) to Congresswoman Maxine Waters (Chair of the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity) and the coalition's recently released [public call for the hearings](#).
- View a [press release](#) about a [solidarity letter](#) sent by national housing rights groups to congressional members of the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity urging them to ensure that any bailout plan includes ample resources and commitments for affordable housing.
- Join the Campaign listserv by emailing Human_right_to_housing@lists.mayfirst.org.

Other Highlights

- Read the new NESRI issue brief "[There is No Place Like Home: Revisiting Our Commitment to Housing the Poor.](#)"
- Find out more about the NESRI coordinated late October 2008 unofficial [visit of Raquel Rolnick](#), the [UN Special Rapporteur for Housing](#), to New York City where she visited with housing groups across the city. NESRI is working with Rolnick to coordinate her yet to be scheduled official visit to the United States in early 2009.
- NESRI Housing Director Tiffany M. Gardner presented at the University of Massachusetts's international conference on "Rebuilding Sustainable Communities for Children and their Families after Disasters." See both her [presentation](#) and a [summary](#) of the panel discussion.

Human Right to Work with Dignity

Advocating for Living Wages and Humane Working Conditions

NESRI's Human Right to Work with Dignity Project works in close partnership with the [Coalition of Immokalee Workers](#) (CIW) to build support for its Fair Food Campaign aimed at transforming human rights conditions in the agricultural sector. NESRI is a co-founder of the [Alliance for Fair Food](#), a network of human rights, religious, student, labor, and grassroots organizations who work in partnership with the CIW. NESRI recently brought on Katherine Caldwell as a Research Fellow on the Human Right to Work with Dignity this fall to coordinate its Fair Food Campaign and partnership with CIW.



Two Major Victories!!!

NESRI is proud to announce two major victories by its partner organization, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW). In September Whole Foods Market, the world's leading natural and organic foods supermarket, and the CIW announced that the two will work in partnership to help improve wages and working conditions for Florida tomato pickers. On December 2, 2008 Subway, the third largest fast-food chain in the world and the biggest fast-food buyer of Florida tomatoes, reached an agreement with CIW to help improve

wages and working conditions for the workers who pick their tomatoes! Both Whole Foods Market and Subway have signed onto CIW's "penny-per-pound" approach for tomatoes purchased from Florida, with the goal of passing these additional funds on to the harvesters. These victories fall on the heels of major agreements with Yum!Brands Inc., McDonald's, and Burger King.

- Read the Whole Foods Market-CIW [press release](#).
- Read the Subway-CIW [press release](#).
- See NESRI fact sheet "[The Role of Human Rights Protections in Sustainable Food Systems](#)" developed for the Slow Food Conference in August of 2008 as part of the broader effort to bring Whole Foods and Chipotle to the negotiating table with CIW.
- See [coverage](#) of CIW and their allies in the Alliance for Fair Food 10-day tour through the Northeast. The tour was aimed at bringing public attention to the exploitation of farmworkers in the fields. The tour culminated today, December 10, in New York City.
- Read [Challenging Chipocracy: "Food With Integrity" Must Respect Farmworkers' Human Rights](#), an Alliance for Fair Food report prepared by NESRI.

Other News

This year, in honor of the 60th Anniversary of the UDHR, NESRI participated in the "Bringing Human Rights Home" conference at the Roosevelt Institute in Hyde Park, NY, and co-organized the Boston, MA, panel entitled "The Human Rights Movement in the Obama Era: Prospects for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the United States."

- NESRI is growing! This fall we hired Phil Wider as our Communications Fellow! We are looking forward to seeing how our communications will change and grow. He has already hit the ground running and updated the look of our listserv announcement! Also we hired Kate Caldwell as a Research Fellow to work on our Human Right to Work with Dignity Project. [See their bios.](#)
- Read NESRI Board Member Mimi Abramovitz's article, "[Wall Street Takes Welfare It Begrudges to Women](#)" in *Women's eNews*.
- Read "[Towards a Human Rights Vision for People's Lawyers in the United States](#)", a presentation given by NESRI Executive Director Cathy Albisa to the National Lawyers Guild "Law for the People" Convention this past October.
- Check out [Human Rights at Home: A Domestic Policy Blueprint for the New Administration](#), a recently released report from the American Constitution Society. The report was authored by Catherine Powell, Associate Professor of Law at Fordham Law School. NESRI Executive Director Cathy Albisa served on the Blueprint's Advisory Group. View a [video](#) of the launch event.
- See the latest [NESRI News](#) that came out in November.
- On December 4th the [Gustavus Myers Center for the Study of Bigotry and Human Rights in North America](#), as part of national anniversary celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, announced *Bringing Human Rights Home* amongst the winners of the Myers Center's 24th Annual Outstanding Book Awards. *Bringing Human Rights Home* is a three volume series chronicling the human rights movement in the United States. NESRI Staff and Board Members greatly contributed to this work in various ways. Download the [press release](#) or [learn more/order a copy](#).

- See the December 9th Laura Flanders [GRITtv interview](#) of Blanche Cook and NESRI Executive Director Cathy Albisa about U.S. economic and social rights.

Special Thanks to...

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- The Asian Coalition for Housing Rights for their assistance in organizing Sam Jackson's trip to China for the World Urban Forum.
- Schulte, Roth & Zabel LLP for their pro bono assistance.
- Ann Snitow for generously opening her home to hosting a NESRI event.
- Blanche Cook for her steadfast and invaluable support.
- Jeff Lipman, Director of 5 Rights Inc., for organizing a human rights panel in Boston, MA.
- Kathrin Rueegg for her research assistance to the Human Right to Health Program.
- Our interns and volunteers for their commitment, hard work and enthusiasm!

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