

For Immediate Release:

Galveston, TX: Dateline December 03, 2013

Today, my law firm filed a lawsuit in Galveston federal court, on behalf of a group of racial and ethnic minorities, as well as members of other protected classes, who qualify for public housing assistance. We asked the court to stop the Galveston Housing Authority from forcing my clients to live in highly segregated and impoverished neighborhoods whose locations will also expose them to great danger from hurricane force winds, flooding, and industrial contamination.

People who qualify for public housing ordinarily do not have the knowledge, expertise, or financial resources to mount a legal challenge of this kind, so they rely on groups such as the Galveston Open Government Project (GOGP) to support this kind of action on their behalf. Without the efforts of the GOGP, other plaintiffs may likely have no hope of trying to stop the government from violating their rights.

Defendants HUD, the State of Texas, through the General Land Office and the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, the City of Galveston and the Galveston Housing Authority acted in coordination and in concert with each other in a scheme to maintain a level of racial and ethnic segregation that has not been seen since the modern civil rights era began in 1968. The Defendant's actions are illegal and intentional.

The Defendants also insist on building the new public housing units on a barrier island in the Gulf of Mexico, that will expose the plaintiffs to higher winds and far greater risk of flooding than in many much safer locations on the Mainland. But they don't even want to build in the best neighborhoods, on the barrier island, they insist on building in the most segregated and impoverished areas.

These proposed neighborhoods are also in the City's industrial area, polluted with contamination, subjected to heavy truck and railroad traffic, and surrounded by blight. Building in locations with high concentrations of poor minorities, and with above average environmental risk is a violation of the Fair Housing Act, HUD's Site and Neighborhood Standards and Executive Orders dealing with Environmental Justice for impoverished minorities and other protected classes; and yet the Defendants demand that it be done!

For the first time, HUD is no longer simply playing a passive role in allowing local segregation to continue; it is demanding that segregation continue. In true Orwellian fashion, HUD has demanded that State and local government build these concentration camps of poverty or it will charge them with "civil rights violations" and withhold their disaster recovery funding.

We are confident that when the court reviews the evidence it will find it so conclusive that the court will stop the folly and outrage of this plan that would attempt to build

segregated public housing in already impoverished industrial neighborhoods and order the Defendants to draft a plan that will further fair housing.

Poor minorities should not be forced to live in these conditions in order to receive much-needed housing assistance. Housing assistance can be provided to those in need in a more fair manner that provides housing authority recipients with greater opportunity to better their lives and broaden their horizons.

The GOP exhausted every possible political and administrative avenue in trying to shape the Government's illegal plan into something that would affirmatively further fair housing and meet the purpose of the Fair Housing Act.

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