

NATIONAL LAW CENTER ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY

2011 National Forum on the Human Right to Housing
June 7 ▪ Thurgood Marshall Center, Washington, DC
June 8 ▪ Jones Day & Capitol Hill, Washington, DC

The National Forum on the Human Right to Housing, held annually by the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, is a gathering of homeless and housing advocates for training, information sharing, and strategizing.

Online forum registration is now closed, but we will still accept calls and walk-in registrations. Questions? Contact Christine Hwang at chwang@nlchp.org or call 202-638-2535.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Tuesday, June 7 – Thurgood Marshall Center, 1816 12th St, NW

8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. – Registration and Breakfast

9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. – Opening Plenary

The Human Right to Housing in the Housing Crisis (Main Room)

Pam Fessler, National Public Radio

Maria Foscarinis, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty

Barbara Poppe, U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness

Christopher W. Williams, UN-Habitat

In June 2010, President Obama stated in the new Federal Plan to End Homelessness that “It is simply unacceptable for individuals, families, children, and our nation’s veterans to be faced with homelessness in this country.” But while making strong statements like this, we have slashed budgets meaning many *will* face homelessness, and our government continues to ground the conversation about housing primarily in market-based, rather than rights-based terms. This plenary will feature a roundtable conversation about where our government stands, both in principle and in action, with regards to the human right to housing in the U.S.

10:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. – Morning Workshops

Introduction to Housing & Human Rights (Main Room)

J.R. Fleming, Chicago Anti-Eviction Campaign

Eric Tars, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty

This workshop will provide an introduction to the essential features of the international human rights system, with a focus on the human right to housing and related rights, and explain ways in which the human rights framework can serve as a tool in advocating for the rights of poor and homeless persons.

Children’s Rights Are Human Rights (Conference Room 1)

Stefani Cox, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty

Karen Cunningham, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty

Larry Gold, Covenant House Washington

Jacob Newman, Latin American Youth Center

Jasmine Williams, Sasha Bruce Youthwork

While all homelessness implicates human rights, the growing population of homeless children and youth who are going to bed each night without a home to call their own or a meal in their belly is a moral and legal crisis this country particularly needs to address. Panelists will discuss the range of rights homeless children and youth *do* possess in accessing food, shelter, education, and other services, as well as areas

where our state and federal laws do not yet meet the basic human rights obligations to ensure children's basic human dignity.

Combating Criminalization of Homelessness Using a Human Rights Framework

(Conference Room 2)

Paul Boden, Western Regional Advocacy Project

Melanca Clark, U.S. Department of Justice

Tulin Ozdeger, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty

Mona Tawatao, Legal Services of Northern California

Homeless persons in America are often dehumanized by policies that deny them their basic human right to shelter and criminalize their very right to exist in public places with dignity. These measures violate basic human rights norms and do nothing to end homelessness. This year, the federal government has taken a stand against these measures and has highlighted in the Federal Plan to End Homelessness the counterproductive nature of these measures in an effort to promote more constructive alternatives. This panel will discuss steps the federal government and advocates are taking at the local and national level to combat criminalization of homelessness and to encourage cities to take constructive steps to end homelessness, including using human rights mechanisms and arguments, in policy, courtroom advocacy, and efforts to raise public awareness.

Preventing Homelessness in the Housing Crisis (Heritage Room)

Geraldine Doetzer, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty

Jonathan Harwitz, U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development

Gail Laster, Rep. Barney Frank's Office

Rob Robinson, Take Back the Land

The impact of the housing crisis continues to devastate homeowners and tenants of all income levels, but particularly the poor. However, its nationwide scope may provide stakeholders with an unprecedented opportunity to rethink the way we deal with housing instability, homelessness, and community building in general. This panel will focus on several solutions to homelessness in an era of rampant foreclosure: ranging from legal tools like the Protecting Tenants at Foreclosure Act to grassroots movements like "Take Back the Land."

12:15 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. – Lunch & Keynote Address

Civil Rights are Human Rights (Main Room)

Carol Anderson, Associate Professor of African American studies at Emory University, and author of *Eyes Off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955* will describe how the civil rights struggle was originally a *human* rights struggle, how it shifted its focus, and why it needs to go back.

1:45 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. – Afternoon Workshops I

Litigation & the Right to Housing I (Main Room)

Tulin Ozdeger, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty

Peter Sabonis, Maryland Human Rights Authority Inc.

Eric Tars, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty

This two-part workshop will ask participants to help devise a strategy to move us toward the day when we can say housing is an enforceable human right in the U.S. The first part of the workshop will address the existing lay of the land in terms of state, federal, and international law around housing rights, including examples of how human rights law has been used in domestic and international advocacy. This session assumes some basic knowledge of human rights and their applicability to the U.S., so please attend "Introduction to Housing & Human Rights" during the first workshop session if you need this background.

No Place to Go: Discrimination, Housing & Human Rights (Conference Room 1)

Karen Cunningham, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty

Bryan Greene, U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development

Daniel Hazen, VOICES

Aadika Singh, Rights Working Group

Phil Tegeler, Poverty & Race Research Action Council

Non-discrimination in the right to housing is a core component of the right, but one that is frequently violated in the U.S. In 2008, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination broadly condemned the U.S. on its record in housing discrimination, with one member comparing the U.S. to apartheid South Africa. Last year, the Human Rights Council repeated these concerns in reviewing the U.S. Meanwhile, immigrant populations are being harassed in their homes, and persons with disabilities are prevented from living integrated into communities. This workshop will discuss how advocates are bringing a human rights focus to these long-standing problems of housing discrimination.

"Show Me The Money!" – Federal and Local Budgets and Human Rights (Conference Room 2)

Margot Baruch, Center for Women's Global Leadership

Douglas Rice, Center for Budget & Policy Priorities

Jeremy Rosen, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty

Think the U.S. government doesn't have enough money to guarantee the human right to housing? Think again. The money is there – our governments at all levels just don't choose to spend it in ways that would uphold the government's obligations to ensure basic human rights. Learn how to talk about the budget as a human rights document and to understand where the real money goes. Hint – it's not to affordable housing and human services programs.

Domestic Violence and the Right to Housing (Heritage Room)

Lisalyn Jacobs, Legal Momentum

Rachel Natelson, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty

Monica McLaughlin, National Network to End Domestic Violence

Sandra Park, American Civil Liberties Union

This workshop will examine a variety of pending legislative initiatives designed to promote the rights of low-income women to housing and economic stability. Topics will include the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families as well as such international measures as IVAWA and the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. Special emphasis will be placed on the potential for these protections to enhance income security and prevent homelessness.

3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. – Afternoon Workshops II

Litigation & the Right to Housing II (Main Room)

Maria Foscarinis, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty

Tulin Ozdeger, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty

Peter Sabonis, Maryland Human Rights Authority Inc.

Eric Tars, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty

This is the second part of the litigation workshop and will build on the first. Participants will be asked to share their own current areas of struggle in legal advocacy and think about the applicability of human rights standards in their work locally, and how we can use the human rights framework in litigation as part of a broader strategy to advance, step-by-step, the movement for a right to housing. Our goal is to emerge with an outline of concrete next steps for the coming years to help guide our litigation and policy advocacy at the national and local levels.

Veteran Homelessness: Barriers and Best Practices (Conference Room 1)

Sean Clark, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Antonia Fasanelli, Homeless Persons Representation Project

Rachel Natelson, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty

Long over-represented within the adult homeless population, veterans continue to face challenges in accessing such basic human necessities as housing, education, and income support. This workshop will address strategies, both legal and legislative, for advancing the economic rights of men and women who have served in the military. Panelists will address such barriers to reintegration as mental and physical disability and underutilization of government benefits, highlighting best practices and emerging policy.

Surplus Property & Benefits: Expanding Access to Housing (Conference Room 2)

Geraldine Doetzer, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty

Ken Ellison, So Others Might Eat

Kendall Jackman, Picture the Homeless

Frank McMillan, V.O.I.C.E.

Vacant properties are one of the most visible symbols of the foreclosure epidemic. Widely viewed as nothing more than dangerous eyesores, homeless advocates in the U.S. and around the globe have developed programs to revitalize these once vibrant properties to house those who need shelter the most. This panel will bring together domestic and international voices on creative uses of vacant property, and the steps needed to expand these efforts.

The Human Right to Housing: The Funders' View (Heritage Room)

Ellen Dorsey, Wallace Global Fund

Melissa Johnson, Neighborhood Funders Group

Sue Simon, U.S. Human Rights Fund

Beadsie Woo, Annie E. Casey Foundation

Making the human right to housing a reality in the U.S. will take persistence, dedication, and resources. The funding community has a unique role to play in this work, and a unique perspective to share. This panel of representatives from foundations across the country will discuss the impact of the rights-based frame on the funding community, and the challenges and opportunities they face.

5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. – Closing Plenary

Voices of the Streets (Main Room)

Linda Barnes

Barbara Ehrenreich, best-selling author & New York Times columnist

Walter Scott Lovell

G.W. Rolle

This panel discussion will feature speakers who have previously or are currently experiencing homelessness. Guided by the question, “What do you want lawyers to know about homelessness?” the panel will share their personal experiences and reflect on how laws and policies have impacted their struggles.

6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Ending Homelessness: Pro Bono Works! Reception (Main Room)

Peter Edelman, Georgetown University Law Center

Barbara Ehrenreich, best-selling author & New York Times columnist

All are welcome to attend this special reception celebrating the work of *pro bono* attorneys in the movement to end and prevent homelessness. The reception will honor the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty’s LEAP and *pro bono* partners and will serve as an opportunity for law firms to educate their summer associates, and associates generally, about their commitment to *pro bono* work.

Wednesday, June 8 – Jones Day, 300 New Jersey Avenue, NW

Do not use the Louisiana Avenue entrance.

8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. – Breakfast

9:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. – Morning Plenary I

Communicating Housing & Human Rights to Legislators (L. Welch Pogue Room)

Tom Mullins, Sullivan & Cromwell

Jeremy Rosen, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty

Juhu Thukral, Opportunity Agenda

This workshop, presented by Capitol Hill veterans and communications experts, will help prepare advocates for a day of advocacy on the Hill. Participants will learn basic lobbying skills and techniques for communicating with legislators using human rights messaging, as well as learn about current national initiatives promoting the right to housing that they can help support with their advocacy.

10:30 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. – Morning Plenary II

The Right Tool for the Job: Spreading the Word about Human Rights through

Social Media (L. Welch Pogue Room)

Laura Baum, US Human Rights Network

Melissa Boteach, Half in Ten Campaign

Whitney Gent, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty

Eric Sheptock, Homeless Advocate

In a world that's quickly shifting from traditional media to online information sharing, how do we keep up? Social media upkeep can be daunting, but using online tools effectively can help deliver your message to a vast audience. This workshop will explore social media strategies to spread human rights messages to a wired audience.

11:15 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. – Closing

11:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. – **Right to Housing Advocacy Visits**

Spend the afternoon carrying the human right to housing message to your local members of Congress and their staffs. The Law Center will provide fact sheets on a number of key policy issues, to help you with your meetings, but urges you to supplement those materials with information about critical housing needs in your local community. *Please remember to contact Congressional offices well in advance of the Forum to make appointments.*

2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. – Congressional Briefing (Capitol Visitors Center, Congressional Meeting Room North, CVC-268)

A Human Rights Perspective on Opening Doors: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness

Paul Boden, Western Regional Advocacy Project

Kirsten Clanton, Southern Legal Counsel

Maria Foscarinis, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty

Rob Robinson, National Economic & Social Rights Initiative

Kathi Sheffel, Homeless Liaison, Fairfax County Public Schools

Join us for a congressional briefing on Capitol Hill. The session will feature an introduction from a Member of Congress, followed by a panel of speakers examining housing, education, and civil rights components of the federal plan through the lens of human rights. You do not need to be a forum attendee to attend this briefing.