

# POLICY

## Symposium Addresses Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare

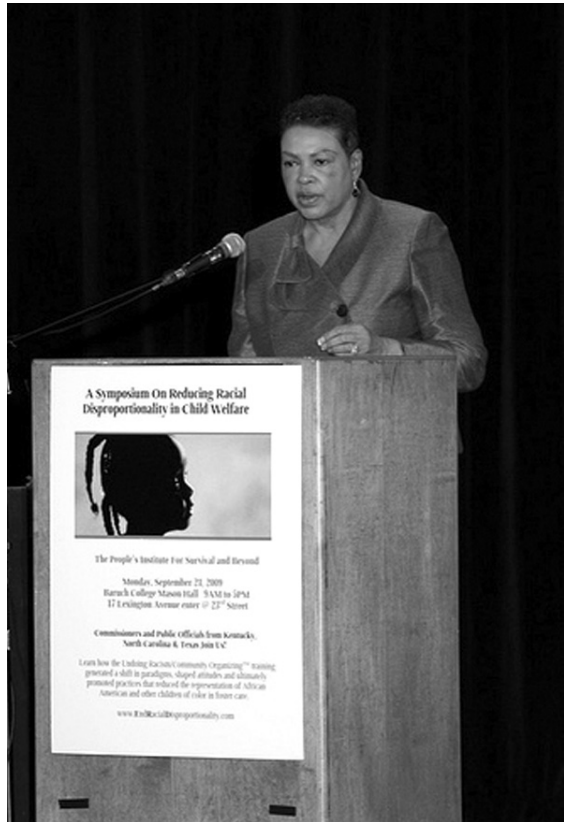
More than 750 members of New York's nonprofit and child welfare communities turned out for a symposium on "Reducing Racial Disproportionality in the Child Welfare System" on September 21st. The event was presented by the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond and detailed the positive results which have been achieved in efforts to reduce overrepresentation of children of color in the foster care systems of Texas and Kentucky following training in the Institute's Undoing Racism principles.

"The impact of our work effort in Texas did create positive outcomes and it created them for all children," said Joyce James, Deputy Commissioner of the Texas Department of Family & Protective Services. The state's multi-year effort to strengthen the understanding of systemic racism in society and child welfare service delivery on the part of child welfare staff and other key players in the system reportedly has resulted in a significant decline in the relative number of African American children placed in foster care. Following Texas' implementation of Undoing Racism trainings, African American children (who represent 12% of all children in the state) reportedly declined from 39% of all children placed in foster care to 32%. As a result, the state has reportedly accrued savings of \$103 million, a portion of which is now being diverted to family preservation efforts.

The symposium also heard from Jackie Stamp, Regional Administrator for the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, and Teresa McElroy, Parent Advocate, Kentucky Parents Campaign for Undoing Racism, on the positive impacts of Undoing Racism trainings in that state.

"There is no one silver bullet or magic potion that can easily solve the issue of disproportionality and disparities for children of color in foster care," said Ralph Bayard, Director for Systems Improvement/Disproportionality at Casey Family Programs. "However, if taking the time and having the courage to talk about how race impacts the issue is a first step in the process, then time and the courage are but two of the silver bullets needed to improve outcomes for children and families."

"These bold leaders took on the conversation about undoing racism and they were effective in reducing racial disproportionality," said Sandra Bernabie of the Anti-Racist Alliance. "Racism is what the whole thing is about. We will never undue racial dis-



Joyce James, Deputy Commissioner of the Texas Department of Family & Protective Services.

proportionality through cultural competency training, as important as that is."

New York City Administration for Children's Services Commissioner John Mattingly and Greg Owens of the New York State Office of Children and Family Services also addressed the gathering.

Other local participants included Mary Pender Greene, Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services; Ronald Chisom, People's Institute for Survival and Beyond; Carmen Ortiz Hendricks, Yeshiva University; Darwin Davis, Black Equity Alliance; Senator Andrea Stewart Cousins and Senator Ruth Hassell Thompson.

An afternoon panel featured David Billings; Bernadette Blunt, Child Welfare Organizing Project; Christiana Cummings, New York Social Work Education Consortium; Maurice Lacey, Black Agency Executives; Nigel Nathaniel, CRADLE with NYC ACS; Bob Schachter, National Association of Social Workers NYC; Michael Stoller, Human Services Council of NYC; and Paul Levine, JBFCS.

Material from the symposium, including video excerpts, is available at [www.antiracistalliance.org](http://www.antiracistalliance.org).

## GOT ISSUES?

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## NYU Launches McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research

Last month, the Silver School of Social Work at NYU launched the McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research. The institute is intended to become a central source for research, education, implementation and dissemination of poverty-related information relevant to New York City-based organizations.

The McSilver Institute and its purposes were introduced to the New York City community in a lecture with keynote speaker Geoffrey Canada, of the Harlem Children's Zone, on Saturday, October 3rd. The School then convened leaders from across New York City in an all day working conference to help shape the Poverty Agenda on Friday, October 16th.

The October 16th event featured a keynote address by NYC Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Linda Gibbs. Robert Leibson Hawkins Ph.D., the newly appointed McSilver Assistant Professor in Poverty Studies -- a newly endowed professorship -- provided an introduction to the Institute. A panel discussion moderated by Kim I. Jasmin, Northeast Region Community Relations Manager at JPMorganChase Foundation, included Verona Middleton Jeter, Executive Director of Henry Street

Settlement; Michael Stoller, Executive Director of the Human Services Council of New York City; and Mimi Clarke Corcoran, Director of the Special Fund for Poverty Alleviation at The Open Society Institute. Phil Coltoff, Katherine W. and Howard Aibel Visiting Professor and Executive-in-Residence, offered closing remarks.

The McSilver Institute was founded with support from Constance and Martin Silver. The Institute will study current poverty-related issues and programs, and will pilot interventions in agencies throughout the city, becoming a supportive resource and change agent for agencies working to address poverty in New York City.

In order to undertake this work, the Silver School of Social Work is seeking critical input from agency leaders in New York City to help identify needs from the field, which will be integrated into the School's Poverty Agenda.

The Institute has already developed a number of resources including an Economic Empowerment Assessment tool, designed to better understand structural and individual poverty in the lives of low-income people.



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