



CHILD DEFENDER - NEW YORK

A Call to Action from the Children's Defense Fund - New York
April 7, 2006 **LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND**

Katrina's Children: **A Call to Conscience and Action**

A report released this week by CDF, "Katrina's Children: A Call to Conscience and Action" calls for immediate mental health and health services for children struggling to cope with lasting trauma in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

The report notes that immediately after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the world and nation rallied to assist victims with prompt governmental action, cutting through bureaucratic barriers to ensure immediate health and mental health coverage. Yet more than seven months after Katrina, not only have our leaders in the White House and Congress and state officials not responded with the same urgency, compassion and efficiency to help Katrina survivor children and families, many threw up barrier after barrier and are still dragging their feet.

CDF Founder and President Marian Wright Edelman said: "That children's most basic human needs have been neglected is a moral scandal and impending long term disaster. *More than seven long months* after Katrina, tens of thousands of them have been left to wrestle with profound losses without adequate mental health and health supports. Seven months is a lifetime for a child battered by loss of family members, friends, homes, schools and neighborhoods"

While so many people reached out to survivors in the storm's immediate aftermath, huge challenges remain. We must ensure that children and families who have lost so much – family members, homes, schools, jobs, friends, caregivers, doctors, dentists, professional careers, the records of their
Continued next column

IT'S YOUR MONEY. YOU EARNED IT. NOW CLAIM IT!

There is only **ONE Week Left!** It's not too late to claim the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). To find out where to go for free tax preparation, call 311 or the IRS at (800) 829-1040. For more information, outreach materials or to schedule an EITC training, call CDF-NY at (212) 697-2323.

lives – are able to stitch the pieces back together.

We all have an interest in ensuring safe physical levees, sound preventive and disaster emergency procedures and systems, and competent caring personnel before the next disaster, which could affect any, many or all of us. And all of us have an interest in building the strong health, mental health, preschool, educational and economic levees to ensure that no child is left behind or adrift from poverty and neglect in the richest nation on earth.

To read the full report, visit:
http://www.childrensdefense.org/katrina_children.aspx.

Rally for Immigrants' Rights Monday, April 10, 2006, 3:00-7:00 p.m. City Hall, NYC

On Monday, April 10th, bring your friends, family and co-workers to A National Day of Action Rally for Immigrant Rights! Join the A-10 NYC Mobilization Network for Immigrant Rights in a massive rally to stop anti-immigrant legislation and the criminalization of immigrant communities. Demand comprehensive immigration reform, including a path to citizenship, not a temporary guest worker program; family reunification measures; worker protections; and full rights for all immigrants! For more information, contact Avidah Moussavian at (212) 627-2227 ext. 244 or Angela Lee at (212) 627-2227 ext. 229.

Children's Defense Fund Convenes National Latino Leaders Meeting to Dismantle the Cradle to Prison Pipelinesm!

Last week, Marian Wright Edelman convened an historic national meeting of 50 Latino Leaders to discuss the *Cradle to Prison Pipelinesm* crisis and its impact on the Latino community. The participants came from 12 states, and represented a cross section of leaders active in civil rights, child welfare, early childhood education, immigration, juvenile justice including Family and Juvenile Court Judges, law enforcement, parent and youth advocacy, youth development and youth and parent leaders. They included elected and

appointed officials and representatives of the Latino media. The meeting took place at CDF's Haley Farm in Tennessee.

Two years ago, CDF commissioned a report, "Dismantling the Cradle to Prison Pipelinesm" to document how in the United States far too many poor children, including a disproportionately high number of children of color, face risks, obstacles and disadvantages that often place them on a pipeline to prison and premature death. Right now, more than 580,000 Black males and more than 250,000 Latino males are in prison; fewer than 40,000 Black males and 33,000 Latino males graduate from college each year. There is no single reason for these disturbing trends, but one thing is clear: the only thing our nation will guarantee every child is a detention or prison cell *after* they get into trouble.

Prior to the release of the Cradle-to-Prison Pipeline report, CDF sought the input and expertise of key policy makers who work along the "pipeline" including leaders in the Black and Latino communities whose children fall disproportionately into the pipeline.

CDF knows we cannot turn this crisis around without partnering with people who care about children and who are working hard everyday to "dismantle" the Cradle to Prison Pipelinesm. For two days, the Latino leaders and CDF staff discussed all the dimensions of this urgent and complex problem, developed plans of action and determined the role each of us can undertake to save all of our children and provide hope and opportunities for their futures.

Although some issues facing children and young people are common to all cultures, there are some elements that are particular to the Latino community. The Latino Leaders meeting provided an opportunity for the national Latino community to identify those issues and expand awareness on the Cradle to Prison PipelineSM in Latino communities across the nation.

Advice and Free Help for Taxes

El Diario, Opinion – 3/21/2006, By The Public Advocate

"There is help available in locations throughout the city, known as VITA centers".

We all have seen television announcements and in windows of H&R Block and Jackson Hewitt, among the tax preparers, offering an "instantaneous refund" that in fact is a short term loan, known as a "Refund Anticipation Loan" (RAL). This type of refund can cost hundred of dollars in exorbitant charges and in interest rates that can reach as high as 700 percent. Any way you look at it, this practice falls in usury, and it is especially hard for the many hard-working families that are deceived every year during this season by the announcements, the marketing and the small print.

The RAL is a great business: according to the Children's Defense Fund, in 2004, New Yorkers lost more than 30 million dollars in their tax refunds as a consequence of the RAL. More

than 23 million dollars of that money comes from the pockets of low wage taxpayers. There is evidence that some tax preparation businesses push these RAL loans aggressively in poor neighborhoods, bombarding them with announcements and special offers. These tactics have been successful in poor neighborhoods of the city, where approximately one in every four taxpayer families requested a RAL in 2004.

The marketing strategy of the tax preparers is part of a cynical effort to take advantage of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), one of the few tax breaks for low income workers. The EITC is a refund credit of the federal, state and local taxes, directed at low and medium income workers. By requesting these three credits, a taxpayer can end up receiving a refund of up to \$5,940.

The EITC form can be intimidating to low-income New Yorkers who are used to completing simpler forms like the 1040 EZ; others encounter barriers with the language making them an easy target by unscrupulous tax preparation businesses. There is help available to complete the forms throughout the city, known as Volunteer Income Tax Assistance sites (VITA), which offer free tax preparation help for working families. The volunteers in these centers are trained by the federal tax agency, the IRS. Different tax preparers from the organization, Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) provide similar services for elderly people over the age of 60.

My web page, www.pubadvocate.nyc.gov, offers a complete list of the locations of these free tax preparation sites, as well as information regarding how to apply for the EITC, and other info. Many VITA and TCE sites can help complete and send the tax forms electronically; enabling one to obtain their refund checks the quickest and also providing help in Spanish. Call these sites to find out what services are available. If you do not have access to the internet, call my office at (212) 669-7250. This is the time of the year when you should be careful about your money.

SAVE THE DATE

March for Peace, Justice and Democracy

When: Saturday, April 29, 2006

Where: New York City (More Info TBA)

What: Join with progressives from civil rights organizations, the peace movement, environmental groups, labor and religious communities for a march sponsored by the National Organization for Women. Additional information will be posted as it's available at www.now.org/nyc2006.

New York Immigration Coalition's Immigrant Concerns Training Institute

Where: 137-139 West 25th Street, 12th Floor, NYC

What: A full calendar of workshops and seminars on topics critical for organizations, social service providers and attorneys serving immigrant communities. For a full schedule, call (212) 627-2227, ext. 227 or (646) 240-6792, or visit www.thenyic.org.

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