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Doubling of rents stayed in Delta housing lawsuit



During July, the Mississippi Center for Justice filed a lawsuit on behalf of more than 250 residents against South Delta Regional Housing Authority over attempted rate increases at rental units housing low-income, disabled and retired persons throughout the Mississippi Delta. A hearing in the case was held before U.S. District Court Judge Allen Pepper, Friday, August 21. Beth Orlansky, Advocacy Director for the Mississippi Center for Justice, said that although a ruling was not issued immediately following the hearing, an agreement was reached that the rate increases would not become effective until further order of the court.

[Read about the case here.](#)

Photo: Mary Welth works as a home health care aide. She is one client facing rent increases that would require her to work a second job just to keep up. Maintenance requests are routinely ignored by South Delta Regional Housing Authority.

New report highlights Mississippi's recovery shortcomings

Four years after Hurricane Katrina devastated South Mississippi, the state's misplaced priorities continue to hamper the housing recovery effort, according to a new report released by the Steps Coalition. The report encourages officials to keep the promise to make affordable housing the state's first priority in disaster recovery. Reilly Morse, Mississippi Center for Justice Senior Attorney, along with other staff, prepared the report for the Steps Coalition.

The report, "Hurricane Katrina - Has Mississippi Fallen Further Behind?" concludes that the Steps Coalition's 2008 prediction that disaster housing programs would fail to meet the needs of storm-damaged Mississippians has come true. Small rental and workforce housing progress has fallen dramatically short of State predictions, and so Mississippi has asked HUD for additional funds to temporarily subsidize lower-income residents in market rate rentals. The Steps Coalition recommends that the state redress this continuing injustice by allocating some of the unspent billions in CDBG funds to finance additional permanent affordable rental housing. [Read the full story and access the report here.](#)



Photo: Empty lots dot the Mississippi coast line, as affordable housing slips out of reach for many residents still recovering from Hurricane Katrina.

2009 Great Mississippi Road Trip ready to roll

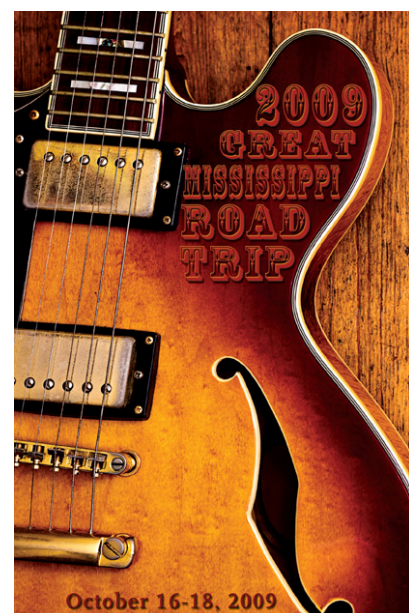
The bus is filling up quickly. If you haven't already made plans to join the Mississippi Center for Justice's 2009 Great Mississippi Road Trip, Oct. 16-18, what are you waiting for?

We'll journey from Jackson through the Mississippi Delta and experience the Blues, dine on soul food, soak in the culture and see how the Center's work is advancing racial and economic justice.

The trip includes the 2009 Champions of Justice Dinner; an informative tour of the Mississippi Delta; a visit to the B.B. King Museum; a stop at Bryant's Grocery, where Emmett Till's fatal encounter helped launch the civil rights movement; and much, much more. Local authors and experts will join the tour to provide insight and personal stories of the history, and perhaps more importantly, the future of the social justice movement in Mississippi.

Saturday night, stay at the luxurious Alluvian Hotel in Greenwood and experience a new Delta tradition. A late-night ramble to the grave of blues legend Robert Johnson adds to the mystique of this educational, thoroughly enjoyable tour. It's a trip that is sure to entertain, inspire and enlighten!

Trip details, including more exciting venues and information about accommodations, are included in the [2009 Great Mississippi Road Trip Brochure](#). Mark your calendars, register today and check the web site often for more exciting announcements.



New faces join Mississippi Center for Justice Staff

The Mississippi Center for Justice is pleased to welcome two new faces to our team.

Whitney Barkley joins us as an Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps Recovery Fellow. In this role, she focuses on foreclosure prevention efforts throughout the state. During law school, Whitney spent summers interning at the Equal Rights Center and Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, where she worked on projects involving payday lending, fair housing and election protection.

Whitney holds a BA in political science and communication from the College of Charleston and a JD from the University of Michigan Law School, where she was recognized as the UM Law and the Women's Lawyers Association 2009 Woman Lawyer of the year.



Scott Colom joins us as a Skadden Fellow. Scott's fellowship is aimed at combating the growth of payday lending by exploring litigation strategies, launching an outreach and education program, and developing an alternative loan product for short-term loans. Scott is from Columbus, Miss., and received a BA in English and History from Millsaps College. After college, Scott spent a summer teaching in Guyana, South America. He is a 2009 graduate of the University of Wisconsin Law School. While in law school, Scott interned with the chief prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha, Tanzania, and was a summer honors intern with the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice.

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