COMMUNITY RENEWAL SOCIETY
is an organization rooted in a faith-based
tradition that empowers people to combat
racism and the effects of poverty by providing
tools such as objective investigative
journalism, organizing and training to
civic leaders, community activists, and
congregations.

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Civic Action Network Member Melahnie Shan Spears from Daniel Chapel AMEZ Church at the Congregational Faith-Based Training, January 2009
The work of seeking justice never ends.

In these difficult times—with banks and the economy falling apart around us—it is important to remember those whose voices need amplification. Community Renewal Society has risen to that challenge.

This year, we addressed the needs of some of our most vulnerable citizens. In this, our third year of the Children of the Incarcerated (COI) Campaign, we won some desperately-needed concessions for children with parents in jail. We also began work on a campaign to address the needs of black boys in our educational system. And finally, we addressed the standards of care in African-American nursing homes.

In May, one of Community Renewal Society’s newsmagazines, The Chicago Reporter, revealed shocking disparities between nursing homes that serve white vs. black residents.

In its report, the Reporter showed that Nursing Home Compare, a new federal ranking system of nursing homes in the United States, found that Illinois has more African-American nursing homes at the bottom rung of the system than any other state in the nation and, furthermore, indicated that no majority-black nursing home in Illinois had received its highest ranking.

Our Civic Action Network, and particularly its Senior Action members, consisting of congregations located in Chicago and its metropolitan region, has worked to expose these inequities. We found an ally in State Senator Jacqueline Collins of the 16th senatorial district, who has begun to shape legislation to address these disparities.

These campaigns represent the best of how we do our work.
When in-depth investigative journalism is combined with direct action, legislators listen, hearings are held, and new policies are able to be actualized. This year saw the power of Community Renewal Society’s magazines working in tandem with Civic Action to affect real change. As you read through this annual report, you will see how we do what we do in clear, actionable ways.

Community Renewal’s efforts seek to assure that all people, whatever their race, ethnicity or economic status, will receive fair and equitable treatment and that those who have struggled all of their lives to play by the rules of the game will not be further exploited and ill treated in their sunset years.

This year has been a challenging time for many people. Those who exist on the margins have suffered even more. Because of your support and your ongoing prayers, we enter into our 128th year of providing a strong moral challenge to these ever-present issues. I want to thank you for being with us “in season and out of season.” There is no doubt about it; the work of justice continues, and so do we.

Go well, stay well, and always be encouraged.

Rev. Calvin S. Morris, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Knowledge

acquaintance with facts, truths, or principles, as from study or investigation; the fact or state of knowing; the perception of fact or truth
Reaching Black Boys

*Catalyst Chicago’s* June 2009 issue “Reaching Black Boys” elevated the debate on how to serve this fragile population. Its main finding was that Chicago’s elementary and high schools are suspending and expelling students at alarming rates and that African-American male students are bearing the brunt of these punishments. By taking these students out of class, these policies are greasing the skids to dropping out.

The statistics:
- Nearly one in four black male students in CPS was suspended at least once last year, a rate that is twice as high as the district average.
- More than 60 percent of expelled students last year were black boys, up from 53 percent just five years ago.

The issue received widespread attention. The Associated Press subsequently conducted a similar investigation statewide, with similar results. Some of the following resulted from this issue:
- Trinity United Church of Christ reprinted the main story in its bulletin and on its web site.
- ProPublica.com, the Why Boys Fail blog and NBC 5 were among the media outlets that linked to the report online, and lead writer Sarah Karp discussed it on WBEZ and WVON.
- Reacting to the AP investigation, the Illinois Senate President created a study group to look into the racial disparities.

Along with four other organizations, Catalyst will sponsor a solution-focused symposium to show leaders from various sectors what they can do, scheduled to occur in April 2010. In addition, Community Renewal Society is planning follow-up community forums and an online resource page.
SOS
SAVE OUR SENIORS
WWW.COMMUNITYRENEWALSOCIETY.ORG
Action

The causation of change by the exertion of power; Organized activity to accomplish an objective
Nursing Home Disparities

In May, The Chicago Reporter released findings that revealed vast differences between nursing homes with African-American and white residents in the Alden network, owned by Floyd Schlossberg, the largest nursing home chain in the Chicago region. The Reporter found that:

- All three predominantly African-American homes in the Alden Network received the lowest possible rating from Nursing Home Compare.
- Residents at Schlossberg’s African-American homes received roughly half the staff time as those at his homes in Skokie and Evanston.

One of the reasons for these disparities is lack of support and training for staff in African-American homes, leading to poorer quality of care.

On the morning of May 28, leaders from the Civic Action and Senior Action Networks rallied outside the Alden Wentworth facility on the South Side—where an 84-year-old man fell to his death earlier that month—to call for equal staffing for African-American homes. A crowd of 50 prayed and chanted for justice for all seniors. As they did so, residents of the facility shouted their support from the windows. After the protest, a delegation of Senior Action Network leaders entered the home and attempted to deliver a letter for Mr. Schlossberg, stating their concerns and requesting that he meet with them. The staff at the nursing home threw the letter away.

Leaders from the Civic Action and Senior Action Networks rallied outside the Alden Wentworth and Alden Princeton facilities again on June 13. This time, the leaders staged a funeral procession to dramatize the poor service conditions at each of these homes and the recent death at Alden Wentworth. The Senior Action Network leaders and community supporters stood in silence at Alden Wentworth and asked that justice be done for the residents inside. The activists were joined by Illinois
State Senator Jacqueline Collins, State Representative Andre Thapedi and Chicago Alderman Freddrenna Lyle.

Throughout the rest of the summer, Senior Action and Civic Action leaders met with Senator Collins and other officials. They also formed a partnership with the Jane Addams Senior Caucus. This work led to the next protest, held on October 10, at Alden network’s majority-white Alden Estates facility in Evanston.

Then on October 22, the Illinois Senate Public Health Committee held a public hearing on nursing home disparities. The senate committee heard testimony from advocates, researchers, family members of nursing home patients, and journalists from The Chicago Reporter. A large turnout demonstrated the importance of this issue to our elected officials. Civic Action leaders worked with state Sen. Collins to draft legislation that will be introduced to the state legislature in the spring.

The National Citizens Coalition for Nursing Home Reform (NCCNHR), presented its Public Service Award to reporter Jeff Kelly Lowenstein and The Chicago Reporter for the nursing homes investigation, which highlighted racial disparities in the quality of care at nursing homes nationwide. Editor Kimbriell Kelly, Kelly Lowenstein and Senior Action Network organizer Rev. Elaine Bellis attended the NCCNHR Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C. and presented their findings on Sunday, October 25, 2009. The work of the Civic Action and Senior Action Networks was also presented and was lauded by NCCNHR at the conference.
Change
to make the form, nature, content, future course, etc., of (something) different from what it is or from what it would be if left alone.
Children of the Incarcerated

In the spring, the Illinois House and Senate both unanimously passed legislation drafted by a CRS-supported coalition that commits the Illinois Department of Human Services and the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) to provide, as part of the prisoner intake process, information on visitation, family counseling, mentoring and school-based programs for children whose parents are incarcerated. Reporting by Catalyst Chicago and The Chicago Reporter found that prisoners and their families, as well as school-based social workers, often were unaware of such available services. The Governor signed the legislation into law in June 2009 (SB 1404). This was a major victory for the COI campaign.

The Youth and Family Committee of the Illinois House of Representatives held a legislative hearing on September 18 regarding the needs of children with incarcerated parents. This hearing was attended by chairs of three other committees. For more than three hours, legislators heard testimony about the need for protocols to protect children during the arrest of a parent, sentencing practices that limit the distance between incarcerated parents and their children, and services to help children cope with their loss and maintain contact with incarcerated mothers and fathers. Among those delivering testimony were several members of Civic Action Network congregations. The testimony also included findings from stories published in Catalyst Chicago and The Chicago Reporter.

On November 12, nearly 250 leaders from Civic Action Network member congregations and allied organizations attended a public meeting regarding children of the incarcerated, with the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC). IDOC Director Michael Randle had agreed to the meeting after receiving hundreds of postcards from member congregations.

At the meeting, IDOC representatives heard testimony about the need
for improved family-friendly visitation, for inclusion of families in inmate classification and re-entry planning, family transportation, and alternative sentencing. Thanks to moving testimony and powerful turnout, the department agreed to the following six demands:

- Creating full contact, family-friendly visitation in all IDOC facilities
- Removing limitations on the number of children who can visit a parent at one time
- Making information on lockdown publicly available as early as possible
- Including distance from family as a consideration in the classification process
- Including families in re-entry plans
- Creating 100 new beds of family unity model alternative sentencing to provide parents with addictions treatment while keeping them with their families

These commitments represent major steps forward for children of the incarcerated in Illinois and they are all thanks to the hard work of hundreds of leaders in Civic Action Network member congregations.
Chicago Muckrakers
In summer 2009, *The Chicago Reporter* launched *Chicago Muckrakers* on *Chicago Now*, a blog aggregator created by the *Chicago Tribune*. *Chicago Muckrakers* is produced by the award-winning staff of *The Chicago Reporter*. In addition to aggregating the best in local investigative news coverage, *Chicago Muckrakers* periodically tackles the hottest local news headlines, offering a “deeper take” in the tradition of *The Chicago Reporter*.

Wells Fargo Sued by Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan
In July, citing blog posts, data analyses and maps from *The Chicago Reporter*, Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan filed a lawsuit against Wells Fargo. The lawsuit alleged that the lending giant targeted African-American and Latino borrowers with subprime products.

In four blog posts between June 22 and July 10, the Reporter revealed that black borrowers in Chicago received their priciest home loans from Wells Fargo. In addition, the company sold mostly high-cost loans in black neighborhoods and gave wealthy African Americans subprime loans more often than poorer white borrowers.

Catalyst in Crain’s
*Crain’s Chicago Business* published an op-ed by Editor Veronica Anderson on the need for corporations to provide internships to breathe life into the school system’s languishing career education program.

Training
Civic Action held two 3-Day Organizing Trainings in 2009. Civic Action’s flagship three day training identifies key organizing principles, how values influence those principles, and how people can become effective organizers and leaders. Civic Action Network staff and guest trainers led participants through challenging sessions focused on organizing skills and faith-based principles. This training challenges presumptions, confronts priorities, and moves people to reflect on who they are capable of being as community builders. A total of 50 people were trained, including employees from the
Civic Action organized and held 10 Congregational Justice Trainings that dealt with issues of children with incarcerated parents. It trained more than 150 congregational leaders, who learned important skills to engage their congregations around criminal justice issues.

**HIV/AIDS Funding in African-American Communities**
The January/February issue of *The Chicago Reporter* showed a mismatch between state prevention dollars for HIV/AIDS and the African-American communities most affected by the virus. While African Americans represented more than 50 percent of new diagnoses from 2003 through 2007, they received just 30 percent of the state's prevention dollars in 2007. In 2002, black people received 46 percent of the state's prevention dollars.

As a result, African Americans, who many say are in most need of HIV/AIDS support, were not receiving the resources necessary to stop the epidemic that was originally seen as a “white gay men’s disease” but which, for decades, has been on the rise most dramatically in communities of color.

In response to this issue, the Reporter co-hosted a forum with the Coalition for Justice and Respect, the Bayard Rustin Access Center, and U.S. Representative Danny K. Davis. The forum was a roundtable discussion and community speak-out that followed U.S. Representative Danny K. Davis' press conference for National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. The speakers included policy makers, service providers, and activists.

**Catalyst Online**
The Catalyst Notebook, home to news stories and reader comment, and the Catalyst Calendar for education related events became Catalyst web features in 2009. Additionally, in December 2008, Catalyst created a Twitter account and has attracted more than 1,000 followers in a year.
Ignored Expungements Draw State Attention
In March 2009, the Reporter found that the Illinois State Police ignored 8,583 court orders to seal or expunge the records of reformed ex-offenders throughout the state from 2004 to 2008; in Cook County, 6,948 orders were not enforced.

In an email statement to the Reporter, Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan said “This is a shocking defiance of the law. Ignoring these expungement orders negatively impacts the lives of too many people who deserve a fair opportunity to get a job in order to take care of their families.” Madigan added that her office would “begin work on a court mandated compliance and remediation plan to require the State Police to follow the law. The order will cover all of the outstanding expungement and sealing orders arising out of the Circuit Court of Cook County.” A similar plan would soon be worked out to cover other outstanding cases outside Cook County, she said. Later that same week, Illinois State Police Director Larry Trent resigned. Trent said in a statement, “It was time for a change to do something else and spend more time with family.”

School Funding Reform Faith in Action Day
The Community Renewal Society and Protestants for the Common Good held a press conference in Springfield on May 12, 2009 about school funding reform. The speakers included policy makers, community organizers and activists such as Illinois Senator James Meeks; Illinois Representative David Miller; Alden K. Loury, publisher of The Chicago Reporter; and Rev. Al Sharp, executive director of Protestants for the Common Good. The Civic Action Network brought several dozen members to the event downstate to lobby their lawmakers for change in the tax structure to allow for better schools for children throughout the state.

Relative Caregivers
The Illinois Department of Human Services increased aid to relatives caring for an incarcerated family member’s child(ren) by 9 percent. Some of our Civic Action Network congregations worked in coalition with the Illinois Department on Aging and other organizations to achieve this significant victory.
Catalyst Founder and Publisher Linda Lenz was among the first recipients of the “The ACI-Arne Duncan Awards for Educational Equity,” sponsored by the Associated Colleges of Illinois. Sec. Duncan flew to Chicago to bestow the honors.

On Mar. 11, 2009, during a dinner at the Chicago Cultural Center, Publisher Alden K. Loury and three other journalists received the prestigious Studs Terkel Award, an honor meant to celebrate the legacy of the renowned Chicago journalist and others who embody his community-focused approach to journalism.

Reporter Kelly Virella captured the Peter S. Lisagor award in the Best Business Reporting category of the non-daily newspaper, magazine or newspaper magazine section for “A Renter’s Nightmare.” Virella’s investigation revealed that lenders and mortgage service companies were taking over thousands of foreclosed apartment buildings in the Chicago area and, in some cases, threatening to evict tenants without lawful notice and valid court orders.

The Chicago Bar Association presented awards for meritorious achievement in the print category of the 2009 Herman Kogan Media Awards to Fernando Diaz, Jeff Kelly Lowenstein, Alden K. Loury, Rui Kaneya and Christiana Schmitz for installments of the “Children of the Incarcerated” series. The stories showed that the criminal justice system—from arrest to reentry—rarely considers the needs of children of the incarcerated, and that many children in the Chicago area are unable to visit with their incarcerated parents because of the great distance between their homes and most Illinois prisons.

The Reporter’s Chicago Matters: Growing Forward series, featured in the May-June, September-October and November-December issues of 2008 with stories by Jeff Kelly Lowenstein, Kelly Virella and Kari Lydersen, was
a finalist for best in-depth reporting in a magazine or magazine section (in the non-daily newspaper, magazine or newspaper magazine section).

*The Chicago Reporter*’s “Fallen & Forgotten,” written by Fernando Diaz, was named a finalist in the magazine/specialty publication category of the IRE Awards, presented by Investigative Reporters & Editors, a professional organization for investigative journalists.

*Catalyst Chicago* won the award for “Best Magazine with Less than 1 Million Circulation” in the investigative category at the National Association of Black Journalists for the story “Weighing the Options” by John Myers and Sarah Karp.

*Catalyst Chicago* won second place at the Education Writers Association for trade and special interest publications for the story “The Class of 2011” by Sarah Karp and John Myers.

Rev. Calvin S. Morris, PhD, Community Renewal Society’s Executive Director, was the recipient of a 40 Who’ve Made a Difference Award.

Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI) honored the extraordinary public interest accomplishments of 40 individuals whose vision, tenacity and courage have contributed so much to the people of the Chicago region. The 40 Who’ve Made a Difference Awards were presented at BPI’s 40th Anniversary Celebration Dinner.
## CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

### UNRESTRICTED

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**TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS** $6,577,007
### CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

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|                   |                         |                        | $ 38,698,174        | $ 48,007,329        |
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## CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITY

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COMMUNITY RENEWAL SOCIETY


2008 - 2009 DONORS

$200,000 and above
Joyce Foundation
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

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