



FAIR HOUSING NEWS

A newsletter about fair housing, community development, & neighborhood quality of life



GREETINGS!
Welcome to this edition of *Fair Housing News* produced by the GBCHRB as a public service! To join the mailing list: <mailto:wkladky@gbchr.org>. You can go to our website <http://www.gbchr.org> for laws, links, etc. See our TV show on the YouTube Channel - <http://www.youtube.com/user/wkladky1>! Or, check out <http://www.gbchr.org/2rad9899.htm> for radio shows on topics about Fair Housing!

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NATIONAL NEWS

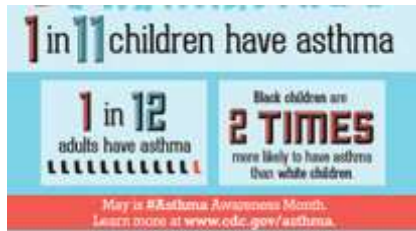


NLIHC’s *Out Of Reach 2023: The High Cost Of Housing Shows Rents are Moving Further out of Reach for Low-Income Renters As Pandemic-Era Benefit Programs Expire.* High rents combined with the expiration of many pandemic-era benefit programs have worsened the financial insecurity of low-income renters, leading to higher eviction filing rates and increased homelessness. The 2023 “Housing Wage” (HW) – an annual estimate of the hourly wage full-time workers must earn to afford a rental home at fair market

rent without spending more than 30% of their incomes - nationally is \$28.58 per hour for a modest two-bedroom rental home and \$23.67 per hour for a modest one-bedroom rental home. The study found that housing is out of reach for workers across a range of occupations and wage levels. 60% of all workers earn an hourly wage less than the two-bedroom HW, and almost 50% of workers earn an hourly wage that is less than the one-bedroom HW. 13 of the 20 most common occupations in the U.S. pay median wages that are lower than the two-bedroom HW, and 10 of these occupations, with more than one-third of the workforce, pay median wages that are lower than the HW. The problem is acute and widespread for the lowest-wage workers. In no state, metropolitan area, or county can a full-time minimum-wage worker afford a modest two-bedroom rental home. A full-time minimum-wage worker cannot afford a modest one-bedroom rental home in more than 92% of U.S. counties. The gap between wages and housing costs is largest for people of color, and particularly women of color. Nationally, the median wage of a full-time white worker is \$2.23 higher than the one-bedroom HW, but the median



wage of a full-time Black and Latino worker is approximately \$.73 and \$1.84 less than the one-bedroom HW, respectively. The disparities grow even starker for women of color. Black and Latina female workers earn median wages that are \$3.96 and \$5.47 less, respectively, than the one-bedroom HW. [Read the NLIHC Summary of its 2023 Out of Reach report.](#) *Out of Reach 2023* is available at: <https://nlihc.org/oor>.



Study Finds Baltimore Children who moved from High-Poverty to Low-Poverty Areas had Improved Asthma.

The health of Baltimore children with asthma in a subsidized program assisting them to move from high-poverty to low-poverty neighborhoods significantly improved, according to a study just published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. The children experienced fewer asthma attacks after moving and had symptoms

on fewer days. These were improvements on par with medication used to treat the chronic condition, said Dr. Craig Pollack, a professor at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the Hopkins School of Nursing and a lead author of the study. Asthma constricts airways in the lungs and causes wheezing, chest tightness, coughing, and trouble breathing. It affects 13.7% of adults in Baltimore compared to 9% across the state and country. About a third of Baltimore high school students have been told by a doctor or nurse that they have asthma, compared to about a fourth statewide. The city also has the highest rate of emergency department visits due to asthma in Maryland. Nationwide, Black children are two to three times more likely to have asthma than white children, and have more than twice the risk for emergency department visits and hospitalizations because of the disease, according to the study, which was published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. The study found that a major reason why children’s asthma got better after their families moved was because their new neighborhoods had fewer stressors. Dr. Corinne Keet, another author on the study, commented "Anyone living in Baltimore understands the impact of violence and poverty on people’s health," she said. "I mean, it’s pervasive." [Read the May 16, 2023 Baltimore Sun article.](#)

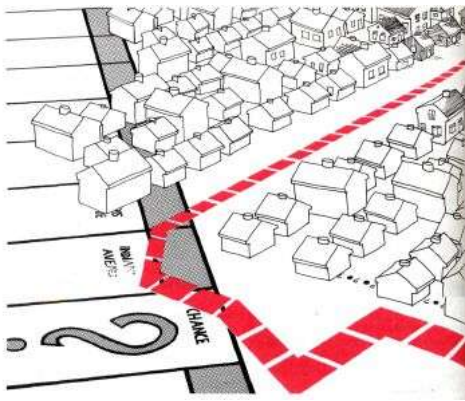
Brookings Releases Study of Racial Progress Improvements.

Seattle launched the nation’s first citywide racial equity initiative in 2004, with racial equity impact assessment at its foundation, many cities, counties, states – and now even the federal government – have followed suit. Many question whether our nation is truly making progress on the imperative of racial justice. There have been promising large-scale national investments in infrastructure, climate action, and domestic industry, plus a job economy that remains strong for most groups of workers, including workers of color, in spite of inflation and fears of recession. On the other, there are also new and concerted attacks on civil rights, including basic voting rights, reproductive choice and reproductive health care, and whether race and injustice are taught as a defining part of American



history—one with a persistent and systemic imprint on our lives and institutions today. Changing our country’s institutions, in ways that deliver real results, is not only very possible, it is happening—in highly innovative ways that can make a measurable difference in the lives of the people most burdened by systemic racism and inequities. In Los Angeles County, the [Coalition for Equitable ARPA Implementation](#) successfully advocated for the county’s Board of Supervisors to adopt equity principles and an

equity funding formula based on an index of community need to allocate \$1.9 billion in federal American Rescue Plan Act Local Fiscal Recovery Fund resources. Dallas has used a [budgeting for equity tool](#) to assess its entire city budget over the past four budget cycles, across each of its 42 departments. Washington, D.C. created a new unit to help the [District of Columbia City Council](#) analyze most proposed legislation for likely impacts on racial equity. Brookings found that these are the key ingredients to strengthen and expand racial equity assessment as a field of practice: Enhance and tailor tools, analytic techniques, and data; Build requisite government operating capacity; Support sustained and adaptive community engagement, especially by historically marginalized groups; and Expand accountability and impact. The study was co-authored by the [Institute on Race, Power and Political Economy at the New School](#). [Read the June, 2023 Brookings Institution report.](#)



MARYLAND NEWS

Maryland Finds Erie Insurance Illegally Rejected Baltimore Auto Customers in Minority Neighborhoods. The Maryland Insurance Administration (MIA) has ruled that Pennsylvania-based Erie Insurance racially discriminated by engaging in insurance “redlining” of predominantly Black neighborhoods in Baltimore. Through the Baltimore Insurance Network, four Baltimore-area insurance brokers had accused Erie in separate complaints filed in 2021: Baltimore Insurance Network LLC of Bowie, Ross Insurance Agency of Windsor

Mill, and Welsch Insurance Group of Baltimore. All contracted or had contracted with Erie as agents to sell auto insurance policies. A fourth brokerage, Baltimore-based Burley Insurance, filed a similar complaint. The state’s ruling also said Erie penalized brokerage firms that failed to engage in discriminatory practices by reducing commissions or terminating contracts.

The MIA found that Erie unlawfully canceled or rejected business from brokers based on race or for other discriminatory or arbitrary reasons. It also found Erie unlawfully canceled or changed agreements for qualified applicants based on “adverse loss ratio,” a measure of an insurer’s profitability. The spokesman for Erie - with nationally has over 6 million home, auto, life, and business policies - disagrees with the findings. Erie has requested a hearing with the agency and expects to “defend our company against these claims.” The original complaints said Erie refused to underwrite policies based on a potential client’s race, ethnic origin, neighborhood and/or socioeconomic status. Baltimore Insurance and Welsch said that Erie urged them to not sell policies to people in Baltimore with “city sounding names.” Baltimore Insurance Network said it was told by an Erie branch manager to “place those people elsewhere, I don’t care where, just not with Erie. They don’t fit Erie’s appetite. Find better people.” That branch manager also told Baltimore Insurance that it was “devaluing the brand” by writing insurance policies for people in predominantly African American neighborhoods, and that the brokerage had to “understand Erie’s appetite.” Likewise, Welsch Insurance Group’s Thomas A. Welsch was told to get his business “from somewhere else.” Welsch’s contract with Erie was terminated in August 2019, citing poor underwriting practices and unacceptable policyholder service. [Read the June 6, 2023 Baltimore Sun article.](#) [Read the June 1, 2023 Baltimore Banner article.](#)





The 2023 Commemoration of the Red Line will be on June 24th from 1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. Location will be disclosed after RSVP*, Baltimore, MD 21230. The Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition (BTEC) will hold a Downtown Walk at the Harbor to celebrate and mark the 8th anniversary of the cancellation of the Red Line Light Rail Project. There will be complementary music, buffet, non-alcoholic drinks, and alcoholic drinks. You must be aged 21 or older to drink alcoholic drinks in

Maryland. RSVPs are accepted until June 20, 2023. For more information and/or questions, contact btec.moretransitequity@gmail.com. Please note that the Harbor venue and its bathrooms are wheelchair accessible. "The Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition is a resolute, community-led organization advocating for equitable, reliable transit that improves quality of life and the environment. Our anti-racist work was born out of Governor Hogan's decision to cancel the Red Line project in 2015. That decision – a quintessential example of structural racism in the region – spurred many of the original Red Line planning committee members to action. Shortly after the governor canceled the project, these members gathered with others in the community to form our coalition. BTEC's first major initiative was to submit a Title VI administrative complaint to the US Department of Transportation on the grounds that the decision violated the federal government's anti-discrimination laws established by the 1964 Civil Rights Act. When that complaint was summarily dismissed by the Trump administration in 2016 (without comment), we continued to seek other avenues to develop equitable transit in the region." Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition, Newsletter, June 3, 2023. <https://moretransitequity.com/>.

Happy Asian Pacific American Heritage Month! Happy Asian Pacific American (or Asian American and Pacific Islander) Heritage Month! This month is a time to celebrate the histories and futures of Asians, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders across the country and in Baltimore. Here are a few fun facts about Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders living in Baltimore: About 15,000 people of Asian descent live in Baltimore City, and 9,600 of them are immigrants. Asian Americans have lived in Baltimore for many years! Baltimore's first unofficial Chinatown was established in the 1880s and the first unofficial Koreatown began in the 1960s. This year, 2023, marks the 120th year of Korean immigration to Baltimore! Many Asian immigrants from various countries have found home in Baltimore: Vietnamese, Filipino, Afghani, Bangladeshi, Indian, Nepalese, Sri Lankan, Thai, Taiwanese, and more! The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MIMA) hopes you have a great Asian Pacific American Heritage Month!



Mortgage Assistance Program Expansion Estimated to Help More Than 1,000 Additional Marylanders Stay in Their Homes. Since the Homeowner Assistance Fund Program Began in 2021, the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (MDHCD) has assisted over 11,000 Marylanders residents behind on payments and housing costs, including 6,000 who were facing foreclosure. The Department has expanded the program to add an additional option for mortgage servicers to provide eligible homeowners with relief as interest rates have risen and affected the affordability of some loan modifications. The program now is able to fund up to six months of forward payments for eligible applicants, and is estimated to help more than

1,000 additional Marylanders. The Homeowner Assistance Fund offers legal assistance, loan modifications with payment of delinquent mortgages, grants to avoid displacement due to property taxes, association and water and sewer fees, and other housing related costs. So far, the program has provided more than \$125 million to eligible homeowners, with an average of \$17,100 of assistance for each household. No additional application is required to be considered for the new forward payment option, and the Department is also reviewing past applications to determine if those homeowners would be eligible for the forward payment option and reaching out to them to offer assistance. For detailed information on eligibility and to apply for assistance: homeownerassistance.maryland.gov. The HAF program was established by the American Rescue Plan Act enacted in 2021 to help homeowners experiencing financial hardship after January 21, 2020. The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development was awarded a total of \$248 million to administer through the program. Contact Brandi Bottalico, Office of Public Information - brandi.bottalico@maryland.gov.



FAIR LENDING NEWS

Justice Department Secures Over \$3 Million Redlining Settlement Involving ESSA Bank & Trust in Philadelphia. The settlement resolve allegations that ESSA engaged in a pattern or practice of lending discrimination by redlining majority-Black and Hispanic neighborhoods in and around Philadelphia. Redlining is an illegal practice in which

lenders avoid providing credit services to individuals living in communities of color because of the race, color or national origin of the residents in those communities. The complaint filed in federal court today alleges that from at least 2017 to 2021, ESSA failed to provide mortgage lending services and did not serve the credit needs of majority-Black and Hispanic neighborhoods in the Philadelphia metropolitan area. Under the proposed consent order, which is subject to court approval, ESSA will invest at least \$2.92 million in a loan subsidy fund to increase access to credit for home mortgage, improvement and refinance loans, as well as home equity loans and lines of credit, in majority-Black and Hispanic neighborhoods in the bank's lending area. It also will spend an additional \$125,000 on community partnerships and \$250,000 on advertising, outreach, consumer financial education and credit counseling, to expand the bank's services in majority-Black and Hispanic communities; as well as hiring two new mortgage loan officers to serve its existing branches in West Philadelphia and conducting a research-based market study to help identify the needs for financial services in communities of color. The USDOJ began investigating ESSA's lending practices after receiving a referral from the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. ESSA fully cooperated with the department's investigation and worked expeditiously to resolve these allegations. More information about the department's fair lending enforcement: www.justice.gov/fairhousing. Individuals may report lending discrimination by calling the Justice Department's housing discrimination tip line at 1-833-591-0291 or submitting a report online.

KeyBank & Capital One Lose Their Access To New York City's Business. The NYC Banking Commission has voted to freeze deposits at the two megabanks over their refusal to tackle racial discrimination. KeyBank and Capital One will not receive further deposits from the City of New York after the unprecedented public vote by the Commission, which took the punitive action because the banks have refused to share information on their



internal efforts to combat discrimination by failing to submit anti-discrimination plans. The New York City Comptroller Brad Lander, one of three members of the commission, also voted against allowing Wells Fargo, PNC, and International Finance Bank to hold public funds after they also failed to submit anti-discrimination plans. In a public hearing, the Commission designated 26 banks to receive deposits from city agencies for the next two years. Despite the Capital One and KeyBank suspensions, the two can service existing contracts for a year.



The Commission in February strengthened its rules by asking banks to provide detailed plans and steps to fight lending and employment discrimination. Banks must provide approved banking products and services for city entities and must provide total collateral for any held money. KeyBank's refusal to provide the documents to the Commission comes months after an NCRC report that it had a worst-in-class performance on lending to non-White, non-wealthy borrowers. The bank in May agreed to a third-party racial equity audit after fair-lending groups and 80 community organizations asked federal regulators to investigate alleged redlining in its mortgage lending practices. The bank claims that the current problem is a misunderstanding. In April 2022, City officials agreed to not to open any new depository accounts with Wells Fargo after a Bloomberg report found the bank approved less than 50% of refinance applications from Black homeowners in 2020 but 72% from whites. Wells Fargo told American Banker that "We are ready to continue serving [the city's] needs today and well into the future." "[NYC Regulator Halts City Deposits at Key Bank, Capital One](#)," *Banking Dive*, May 26, 2023. [NCRC Just News/ May 25, 2023 Press Release](#).



HUD & DOJ ENFORCEMENT

HUD Charges New York Corporation and Associated Entities for Targeting Black Caribbean Homeowners in Fraudulent Mortgage Scam.

HUD has charged multiple entities and individuals related to the Homeowner Assistance Services of New York (HASNY) with housing discrimination for perpetrating a scheme to deceive distressed homeowners into forfeiting title to their homes. HUD's charge alleges that HASNY – plus six individuals, Springfield Realty of New York, Inc., Martin Development and Management, LLC, Launch Development, LLC, 272 Milford Street, LLC, Advill Capital, LLC, and Petermark II, LLC - targeted New York City homeowners in violation of the Fair Housing Act. [Read the Charge](#). The Charge, filed on behalf of seven homeowners, alleges that HASNY and its associates targeted the homeowners for fraudulent mortgage and foreclosure prevention assistance by filing illegitimate liens and using telemarketing to convince homeowners to engage with HASNY for refinance assistance. After the homeowners accepted their offer of assistance, they used false promises of legal assistance, reassurances, and outright lies to convince the homeowners to sign documents that unknowingly sold their homes to Martin Development, LLC and Launch Development, LLC, which resulted for most forced them to vacate their homes. HASNY's actions were disproportionately concentrated in neighborhoods which had a high majority of persons of color, especially Blacks and of Caribbean descent. They also used "affinity marketing" to gain the trust of elderly, vulnerable, and distressed homeowners by having telemarketers use their shared national origin and cultural practices to build trust with the homeowners. The U.S. Department of Justice previously criminally charged 3 of the men, as well as several other HASNY employees, with bank and wire fraud crimes from the conduct alleged in the Charge. Two respondents pleaded guilty and one was convicted after a jury trial and later disbarred. A U. S. Administrative Law Judge will hear HUD's Charge unless any party elects to have the case heard in federal district court. If an administrative law judge finds, after a hearing, that discrimination has occurred, the judge may

impose civil penalties and/or award damages to the homeowners for their losses as a result of the discrimination, injunctive relief, other equitable relief, as well as payment of attorney fees. In addition, the judge may impose civil penalties to vindicate the public interest. If a federal court hears the case, the judge may also award punitive damages to the homeowners. [Read the June 13, 2023 HUD press release.](#)



Federal Housing Administration Launches 30 New Resources to Remove Language Barriers in Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese for Borrowers. These multi-language translations of single family mortgage documents are new resources for lenders and servicers working with borrowers with limited English proficiency. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) has made

available over 30 single family mortgage documents and related resources used in the origination of FHA-insured mortgages. The educational resources are accessible from FHA’s new language access web page and are intended to assist lenders, servicers, housing counselors, and other FHA program participants in explaining information related to FHA-insured mortgages to those with limited English proficiency prior to borrowers executing legal documents in English, as required by law. This first set of translations is part of ongoing efforts by FHA to remove language access barriers for consumers whose preferred language may not be English, and a part of HUD Secretary Marcia L. Fudge’s commitment to making equity a leading compass within the Biden-Harris Administration. The translated documents include the HUD Addendum to the Uniform Residential Loan Application (HUD 92900-A) required for all FHA-insured single family mortgages; model documents, including mortgage notes and riders used in FHA forward and Home Equity Conversion Mortgage (HECM) transactions; and required borrower disclosures. In addition, FHA now has newly translated versions of some of its most widely used single family homebuyer education materials and information resources, including its Save Your Home, Tips to Avoid Foreclosure brochure, its disaster relief and recovery options information card, and FHA “myth busters” question and answer cards. FHA intends to make additional resources available in the future. [Read the June 13, 2023 HUD release.](#)

HUD Announces \$837.5 Million from President Biden’s Investing in America Agenda to Improve Housing Quality and Reduce Energy Costs for Underserved Communities. The May 11th NOFA provides new funding

from the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 and \$4 billion in loan commitment authority will make HUD-assisted multifamily housing more energy efficient, cut greenhouse gas emissions, and improve climate resiliency. The availability of new funding through the Green and Resilient Retrofit Program (GRRP) will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve the energy and water efficiency and climate resilience of HUD-assisted multifamily properties serving low-income residents. The Act provided HUD with \$837.5 million in grant and loan subsidy funding, \$4 billion in loan commitment authority for this new program, and \$42.5 million for a new HUD initiative launching later this summer to collect and assess energy and water usage data from HUD-assisted multifamily housing properties to better target opportunities to save energy and water, cut costs, and reduce emissions. Building owners will be able to invest in technologies, such as solar panels, heat pumps, wind-resistant roofing, insulation, low embodied carbon materials, and other measures that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and make properties healthier and safer for residents. [Read the May 11, 2023 HUD release.](#)





Property Management Company to Pay Nearly \$75,000 to Resolve Service Members Civil Relief Act Claims.

The U.S. Department of Justice (USDOJ) announced that FPI Management Inc. (FPI) has agreed to pay \$74,087 to resolve allegations that it violated the Service members Civil Relief Act (SCRA) by imposing unlawful charges on nine service members who were exercising their right to

terminate their apartment leases after receiving military orders to relocate. The SCRA extends various protections to service members to allow them to devote their entire energy to the national defense, including protections for service members in areas such as evictions, security deposits, pre-paid rent, civil judicial proceedings, installment contracts, interest rates, foreclosures and automobile leases; and allowance to terminate their residential leases after entering military service or receiving military orders for a permanent change of station, deployment or retirement. Landlords are prohibited from imposing an early termination charge on service members who terminate their leases under the SCRA. The USDOJ started investigating FPI's leasing practices after receiving a referral from Coast Guard Legal Assistance about two times where FPI attempted to require service members who were terminating their leases early under the SCRA to repay discounts they had received when they signed the lease in Oakland, California. Under the consent order, FPI has agreed to pay \$51,587 to the service members and a \$22,500 civil penalty. The order also requires FPI to repair the service members' tenant database entries, implement new policies and procedures complying with the SCRA, and train employees on the SCRA. Service members and their dependents who believe that their rights under the SCRA have been violated should contact the nearest Armed Forces Legal Assistance Program Office. Office locations: legalassistance.law.af.mil. [Read the June 13, 2023 USDOJ release.](#)

Cartersville, Georgia Motel Manager Pleads Guilty to Coercing Labor and Sex Acts by Female Tenant.

According to court documents, the 70 year-old manager of the Budgetel Motel hired her as a house cleaner, knowing that she had been homeless, struggled with heroin addiction, and lost child custody. He promised that he would help her regain custody of her child by providing her pay, an apartment, and an attorney. Instead, he monitored her interactions with motel guests and employees, forbade her from speaking to them, and made numerous sexual overtures. He threatened to evict her from the room and threatened to report her drug use to law enforcement or child welfare agencies. He regularly "evicted" her from her motel room, locked her out of her room at night without warning, and required her to perform oral sex on him to stay at the motel. If she did not, Tiwari removed her from the property, causing her to be homeless. Sentencing is set for September 6, and the man faces a penalty of up to 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. As part of his plea agreement, he agreed to pay just over \$40,000 in restitution to his victims. A federal judge will determine any sentence based on the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors. [Read the June 1, 2023 USDOJ release.](#)



CALENDAR

On June 23rd from 10-11 a.m. Economic Action Maryland will conduct a Free Online Training Know Your Rights: HOME

Act. In 2020, Maryland expanded its fair housing laws by passing the HOME Act, which adds "source of income" as a protected class. This extends fair housing rights to people with government assistance like section 8 vouchers and eviction prevention funds, as well as others with non-wage income. Learn

about your newest fair housing rights and how to report discrimination. Too many renters still face discrimination - often without knowing it. Renters have rights! Economic Action Maryland is offering free, online training to educate tenants about their fair housing rights, and what to do if they have faced discrimination. Check out the schedule below. Can't make it at that time? A recording of the training will be available to all training registrants: info@econaction.org.

FAIR HOUSING RESOURCES



Interested In Fair Housing? Community Development? Insurance? Foreclosure Prevention? Check Out the [GBCHRB's YouTube Channel!](#) You can watch interviews about insurance, discrimination, affordable housing, Fair Housing laws, disability issues, mortgage lending, and related issues. Our radio shows: <http://www.gbchrb.org/2rad9899.htm>.

The GBCHRB Distributes Free Fair Housing Brochures, Posters, and Guides.

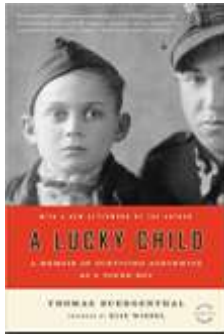
We have Fair Housing information, brochures, guides, & posters in English, Spanish, Korean, Russian, and for people with disabilities, as well as brochures and guides about housing and insurance. 443.347.3701 / <mailto:wkladky@gbchrb.org>.



What Do You Think of This Newsletter? Is it good? Bad? How can we improve it?

What issues should we cover more? Less? Any good ideas? Tips? Good jokes?!

Positive or negative, we want to hear from you! Send your comments to <mailto:wkladky@gbchrb.org>.



INTERESTING BOOKS

***A Lucky Child: A Memoir of Surviving Auschwitz as a Young Boy* by Thomas Buergenthal.** Elie Wiesel, fwd. Little, Brown and Company: 2009. Pp xvi, 228. \$24.99. This memoir by the late Thomas Buergenthal (1934-2023), a Judge in the International Court of Justice in The Hague as well as in several other human rights courts, tells how his survival of Auschwitz which he entered at age 10 after surviving two ghettos and a labor camp influenced his long career as a stellar human rights lawyer and advocate. As the Amazon book description concludes: "A

Lucky Child is a book that demands to be read by all. It was more than luck and the good fortune of his "Aryan" features that enabled him to survive the war - it was his strength, wisdom, and enormous faith that he would one day survive and be reunited with his parents. Amazingly, Thomas was reunited with his mother shortly after the war and then moved to the United States and began a career as lawyer and then as a judge. He has dedicated his career to fighting against the human rights violations that he experienced as a child." [Read the book review in ReformJudaism.org](#). [Read the December 22, 2011 Jewish Book Council book review](#).



REST IN PEACE

Thomas Buergenthal, Human Rights Lawyer, 89. Buergenthal was an international law jurist and human rights defender who was as a boy one of the

youngest survivors of the Nazi concentration camps of Auschwitz and Birkenau, as well as a three-day Nazi death march to Sachsenhausen, Germany. He had a major role in establishing international jurisprudence's framework, stemming from U.N. declarations since the 1960s AKA "International Bill of Human Rights." As a justice of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (1979-1991), Buergenthal judged cases about rights abuses by U.S.-allied governments in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras against leftist guerrillas and supporters. One case, the disappearance of suspected Honduras government opponents, led to legal changes of the burden of proof. He and the other judges held it could consider the overall pattern of disappearances, setting a "rebuttable presumption" of government involvement. Authorities now had to prove they had no role in a specific incident, rather than having a lack of evidence to exonerate them. In 1993, Buergenthal was part of a U.N. commission that found Salvadoran military officers responsible for so-called "dirty war" crimes, including the killing of Archbishop Oscar Romero in 1980. He was vice chairman of the Claims Resolution Tribunal, which examined Holocaust victims family requests seeking assets deposited in Swiss banks until 1945. Tens of millions were estimated to be in accounts hidden from heirs by Swiss banking laws. His memoir *A Lucky Child: A Memoir of Surviving Auschwitz as a Young Boy* is in this issue's Interesting Books section. Buergenthal also served as a judge at the International Court of Justice, honorary president of the American Society of International Law (2001-2009), and as a law professor. [Read an article about Buergenthal in the *Holocaust Encyclopedia*.](#) [Read the June 3, 2023 *Washington Post* obituary.](#) [Read the June 2, 2023 *New York Times* obituary.](#)



William Spriggs, Economist Who Highlighted Racial Disparities, dies at 68. He was lauded by President Biden as a "towering figure in his field, a trailblazer who challenged the field's basic assumptions about racial discrimination in labor markets, pay equity, and worker empowerment. His work inspired countless economists, some of whom work for our Administration, to join him in the pursuit of economic justice." Dr. Spriggs, an economics professor at Howard University and chief economist for the AFL-CIO labor federation, said too many economists assume "that African Americans are inferior until proven otherwise." He rebuked economists for ignoring systemic issues and refusing to accept

that racial discrimination and not skill or ability differences, often led to inequities in jobless rates and wages for Black Americans. As evidence, he noted that "the unemployment rate for Black associate degree holders is so often at the level of White high school dropouts, and their pay is barely equal to that of White male high school graduates." Spriggs was an academic and a committed political activist, telling African American groups that they needed to care more about struggling workers, and unions that they should do more to fight for racial justice. His studies documented Black workers' higher unemployment rate, showing how the failure to raise the federal minimum wage has disproportionately hurt workers of color. "People forget what Black means," he said in 2020. "It's a category created to make a set of people who we could legally discriminate against. It's one of the more disturbing things about the American economy." Spriggs also worked in the Clinton and Obama administrations, Congress's Joint Economic Committee, and was on the staff of nonprofit groups and think tanks, such as the National Urban League. [Read the June 9, 2023 *Washington Post* obituary.](#) [Read the AFL-CIO's profile page.](#)
