

NEWS FROM MARIN GRASSROOTS



PRESS RELEASE

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ELECTION SYSTEM IS FAILING TO INCLUDE THE POOR

Marin-based organizations working with low-income residents are frustrated with the systematic exclusion of their constituency from the Electoral system.

“The system is failing the poor – the poor are not able to have a voice”, says Cris Jones, Director of Volunteer Programs at St. Vincent de Paul’s Dinning Room. *“We have been working according to the systems’ rules, carefully registering our clients - most of them homeless - as voters, according to the Registrar of Voters guidelines, and, for the second year, many names were not on the list of voters at the polling places. We asked for provisional ballots, but our clients felt discriminated on the spot, and this is just not fair! They are not being able to access the system in the same way that people that have a home”,* she said.

Ericka Erickson, Director of Programs of Marin Grassroots Leadership Network, agrees with Cris about the system inaccessibility; mainly in terms of the knowledge that is necessary for someone to vote informed. *“We have been organizing voter registration and education drives to reach the most underserved members of our community. By doing this, we realize how the system is designed to include the citizens who have knowledge and time to analyze and discuss what is on the ballot. Many of our constituents lack the knowledge about public administration and/or the English language and feel intimidated by the complexity of the system. In this way, The Election system becomes an instrument of a knowledge dictatorship”,* she says concluding *“we must find ways to make the American electoral process more user friendly”.*

Both organizations are supporting the creation of the “Voice of the Poor” – a committee that will monitor and take action on public policy affecting the poorest members of Marin County. Volunteers of St. Vincent de Paul dining room will coordinate the creation of the committee.

For more information and to get involved, please call (415) 269-8905 or (415) 451-4350 x303.

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