

NR-DRLE
→ Brittany Martinez

Community Development Corporation of Freedmen's Town

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April 20, 2010

Alfredo Armendariz, Director
Region 6 - Environmental Protection Agency
Fountain Place 12th Floor, Suite 1200
1445 Ross Avenue
Dallas, Texas 75202-2733

RE: Discrimination of Historic Black Freedman's Town Neighborhood by City of
Houston Parks and Recreation Department

Dear Mr. Armendariz:

I present this letter of complaint of discrimination against the City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department under its director Joe Turner, who constantly excludes the residents of historic Freedman's Town in any decision-making capacity regarding the redevelopment of parks (only two) in their community.

Parks at issue: San Felipe Park and Wiley Park.

Which park?
closed SAN Felipe

San Felipe Park mysteriously closed more than seven years ago when our design plans were disregarded and the neighboring Caucasian community of Montrose presented its plans for our park. Mr. Turner is Caucasian and rather than address our plan and implement it he fenced off the said park without any prior notice to us. Next thing our investigation disclosed was that the land is toxic! Well, why weren't the low income Black and Hispanic families informed of this long ago? Now we understand why our children who played and rolled in the grass there decade after decade illnesses may have been attributed to the city's gross negligence in not remediating that site. It is Freedman's Town that helped the city of Houston obtain its initially brownfields grant in 1995 but our community just cannot seem to get one cent of those funds to remediate San Felipe Park, receive a grant to produce our own design, training of grassroot residents to work under our nonprofit as the contractor, to remediate. Stimulate job training and placement for projects needing and can be done by our grassroot residents, Mr. Armendariz.

Wiley Park recently began renovation about a month ago in Freedman's Town but without our prior knowledge or input. We found out about the day the fence went up by the contractor. Here again, Mr. Armendariz, Mr. Turner decides what is best for our minority neighborhood. Our youth have no where to play but in the streets where danger lies. Inclusion of our grassroot organizations would have guided Mr. Turner to a better plan long ago to avoid both parks being closed simultaneously. Oh, by the way, the site for housing Black and Hispanic low income working families as homeowners is that mentioned in the city's initial application for brownfields funding in 1995. But the city of Houston lied to us and now has a park for dogs there—yes, the new Caucasian


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homeowners have an entire block for their pets while our children must play in the streets!

The city of Houston's brownfields department focuses on projects of the affluent rather than grassroot citizens while jobs are basically political appointments rather than including our grassroot residents. It appears that we are taxed but without representation. Local government in Houston is grossly mismanaged and discriminatory not to mention corrupt. It concerns us that your office has permitted such injustices to exist for so long.

In closing, Mr. Armendariz, we ask your immediate investigation and meeting with us here in historic Freedman's Town this month on the corrective action plan you have to better monitor and penalize the city of Houston for injustices against Freedman's Town and its grassroot residents, jobs and job training and remediation projects here. Time is of the essence and we look forward to hearing from you soon.

Respectfully yours,


Gladys M. House

Cc: Lisa Jackson, Administrator, EPA
Steven Chu, Secretary, Department of Energy
Mark R. Vickery, Executive Director, TCEQ, Austin, Texas