

Group: Effort to balance budgets often hurts minorities

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A group of social equality agencies Wednesday called on the state and [Long Island](#) county governments to stop exacerbating an already significant racial divide by balancing their budgets with policies that harm blacks and Hispanics.

Speakers based their comments on reports from three of the five agencies represented at a news conference in Mineola. "Race Still Matters on Long Island," was the subject of the event meant to highlight a connection between government policies and continuing racism on Long Island.

"The research ... paint[s] a staggering picture of segregation and racial exclusion in present-day Long Island, whether it comes to housing, jobs, education or criminal justice policies," said Serena Alfieri a board member of the Long Island Progressive Coalition, citing the LIPC report "Race Matters."

The report of Erase Racism, "The Racial Equity Report Card: Fair Housing on Long Island," chided both [Nassau](#) and [Suffolk](#) governments, as well as the state for its lack of housing discrimination enforcement.

The organization's head, Elaine Gross, said "the continued housing discrimination gives a failing grade to Long Island."

Gross recalled a case in which a Glen Cove realtor refused to rent housing to a black couple, saying it already had been rented to a woman named "Amy."

"Even when an action was brought against the Realtor who could not produce a last name for 'Amy,' the State Division of Human Rights ruled for the Realtor," Gross said.

Maya Wiley, executive director of the [Manhattan](#)-based Center for Social Inclusion, cited findings that communities of color have suffered disproportionately from the mortgage crisis, using data mostly for [New York City](#) -- although Wiley said much of it was relevant for the metropolitan area.

Communities "most lacking in opportunities should be targeted to benefit from [federal] stimulus money," she said. "Not only is that fair, it can help the larger regional economy grow." Also at the news conference were the Alliance for Quality Education and Citizen Action of New York.

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