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Massachusetts Law Reform Institute Records

1966-1993 (*Bulk:* 1975-1985)

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[About SCUA](#)

[SCUA home](#)

[Credo digital](#)

[Scope](#)

[Overview](#)

[Series 1: Holyoke - Olga Ramos, et al. v. Ernest Proulx, et al.](#)

[Series 2: Boston - Viviana Munoz-Mendoza, et al. v. Samuel R. Pierce, Jr., et al.](#)

[Inventory](#)

[Series 1. Holyoke - Olga Ramos, et al. v. Ernest Proulx, et al.](#)

[Series 2: Boston - Viviana Munoz-Mendoza, et al. v. Samuel R. Pierce, Jr., et al.](#)

[Admin info](#)

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[xml version](#)

[print version \(pdf\)](#)



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Founded in 1968, the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (MLRI) is a statewide non-profit poverty law and policy center. Their mission is to advance economic, racial, and social justice through legal action, education, and advocacy, specializing in large-scale impact litigation and policy reforms in a wide range of poverty law fields. The MLRI Housing Unit was involved in several cases attempting to protect low-income and minority housing in urban settings in Massachusetts in the 1980s. In a 1982 case, *Olga Ramos et al. v. Ernest Proulx et al.*, nine minority residents of Holyoke and two Hispanic non-profit service agencies sued Mayor Proulx and the City of Holyoke for discriminatory practices related to disproportionately demolishing housing in low income and

minority neighborhoods. In Boston, MLRI joined as counsel for the plaintiffs in a 1981 case, *Viviana Munoz-Mendoza, et al. v. Samuel R. Pierce, Jr., et al.*, where South End residents sued the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), claiming federal funds were being used to racially desegregate their neighborhood when a HUD grant for the Copley Place development did not make a thorough study of the impact on residential integration or address a long standing desire for low-income housing on an adjacent site known as Tent City.

The MLRI Records consist of legal records, memos, correspondence, and strategy related to litigation for fair housing practice in the Holyoke and Boston cases, *Ramos v. Proulx* and *Munoz-Mendoza v. Pierce*. Newspaper clippings, city statistics and reports, and other documents stemming from the discovery portions of the cases are also abundant.

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Massachusetts

Reform

Social change

Social justice

Background on Massachusetts Law Reform Institute

Founded in 1968, the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (MLRI) is a statewide non-profit poverty law and policy center. Their mission is to advance economic, racial, and social justice through legal action, education, and advocacy, specializing in large-scale impact litigation and policy reforms. Their work encompasses a wide range of poverty law fields including housing, health care, family homelessness, public assistance, immigration, employment law, racial equity, child welfare, family law and domestic violence, and court reform.

The MLRI Housing Unit, primarily through the activity of lawyer Frank L. Smizik, was involved in several cases attempting to protect low-income and minority housing in urban settings in Massachusetts in the 1980s. In a 1982 case, *Olga Ramos et al. v. Ernest Proulx et al.*, nine minority residents of Holyoke and two Hispanic non-profit service agencies, the Spanish American Union and the Brightwood Development Corporation, sued Mayor Proulx and the City of Holyoke for discriminatory practices related to disproportionately demolishing housing in low income and minority neighborhoods. They also sued the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for continuing to provide funds to Holyoke that were used in a discriminatory manner, and for failing to adequately monitor Holyoke's activities, particularly in relation to their Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). Holyoke Gas and Electric were also named as defendants for cooperating with the city in these activities. After over ten years of litigation a settlement through consent decree was eventually reached, with greatly increased governmental and community responsibilities towards protecting and promoting equality, diversity, and opportunity in Holyoke housing.

In Boston, MLRI's Smizik joined as counsel for the plaintiffs in a 1981 case, *Viviana Munoz-Mendoza, et al. v. Samuel R. Pierce, Jr., et al.*, where South End residents sued HUD, claiming federal funds were being used to racially desegregate their neighborhood when a HUD grant for the Copley Place development did not make a thorough study of the impact on residential integration. For activists representing the interests of low-income and minority residents, the Copley Place project signified both the increasing threat of displacement and also a new political opportunity to push for long-sought housing on a site known as Tent City. In 1968, hundreds of demonstrators against displacement without relocation occupied a site where houses had been recently demolished for urban renewal projects. An impromptu sit-in began, and for three days between 100 and 400 people lived on the lot with many others joining the protest. The parking lot site became known as Tent City, and eventually the Tent City Task Force was established, becoming the Tent City Corporation, which worked to preserve affordable housing in the South End. However, no progress had been made on the site of the original protest, and the upscale Copley Place plans did not address the need for low-income housing in the neighborhood.

The Copley Place developers, Urban Investment and Development Co. (UIDC) claimed during negotiations that Copley Place would be completely privately financed, but in 1979, they announced that the project would not be financially feasible without public subsidy. Despite objections from South End residents, HUD awarded Copley Place an \$18.8 million Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) in October 1980. With another opportunity to advocate for fair housing practice, the *Munoz-Mendoza v. Pierce* case was filed in federal court, seeking to block the new HUD funds on the grounds that it would accelerate displacement and impact racial integration. The court eventually found that the residents did have standing to argue injury over the building project's cause of racial segregation of their neighborhood, a win for future housing policy and litigation, and a factor in the eventual raising of a new mixed-income community housing complex, Tent City, in 1988.

Scope of collection

The MLRI Records consist of legal records, memos, correspondence, and strategy related to litigation against, and negotiation with, HUD and local housing authorities for fair housing practice in the Holyoke and Boston cases, *Ramos v. Proulx* and *Munoz-*

Mendoza v. Pierce, respectively. Newspaper clippings, city statistics and reports, and other documents stemming from the discovery portions of the cases are also abundant. Many documents are labeled with exhibit numbers used in litigation, and folder titles from the original filings have often been retained.

This small but focused collection highlights how MRLI's systemic advocacy around large complex issues is rooted in local issues with specific communities. The records are organized into two series, one for each community case. The Holyoke case is larger, but contains a greater amount of newspaper clippings, primarily from the *Holyoke Transcript-Telegram*, which document multiple issues facing low-income and minority residents at the time, including housing, employment issues, voting rights, higher education, arson cases, and zoning and construction plans. The Boston Copley Place case series is smaller, but contains more documentation of the work, drafts, and correspondence of MLRI lawyer Frank L. Smizik and co-council.

Series descriptions

Series 1: Holyoke - Olga Ramos, et al. v. Ernest Proulx, et al.

1966-1993

1.5 boxes (2.25 linear feet)

Series 2: Boston - Viviana Munoz-Mendoza, et al. v. Samuel R. Pierce, Jr., et al.

1978-1986

1.5 boxes (1.25 linear feet)

Inventory

Series 1. Holyoke - Olga Ramos, et al. v. Ernest Proulx, et al.

1966-1993

1.5 boxes (2.25 linear feet)

A-95 Review of CDBG

1975-1981

Box 1: 1

Administrative Record (grant applications; Maisonet, Wilfredo; MLRI)

1979-1981

Box 1: 2

Audits and Budgets (HUD, CDBG)

1972-1981

Box 1: 3

Compliance Office

1976-1982

Box 1: 4

Correspondence: Glaser, Lenore

ca.1984

Box 2: 1

Correspondence: Holyoke Housing Partnership

1990 Dec

Box 2: 2

Fair Housing

1975-1983

Box 1: 5

Fair Housing Plan issues (HAP)

1978-1981

Box 1: 6

Five to Six Person Family Issue

1980

Box 2: 3

Grant documents (HUD)

1983-1985

Box 1: 7

Grantee Performance Reports (HUD, CDBG)

1978-1988

Box 1: 8

Holyoke Gas and Electric
1981-1982
Box 1: 9
Holyoke - miscellany
1968-1981
Box 1: 10
Holyoke Strategy
1987
Box 2: 4
Holyoke tables and graphs
ca.1980
Box 2: 5
HUD Discovery Materials: Community Development Plan
1975-1977
Box 1: 11
HUD Discovery Materials: Complaints and responses
1978-1982
Box 1: 12
HUD Discovery Materials: Information on case (clippings, press release)
1979-1982
Box 1: 13
HUD Discovery Materials: Investigative reports
1978, 1983
Box 2: 6
HUD Discovery Materials: Property documents
1978
Box 2: 7
HUD Materials: Applications, plans, proposals
1978-1980
Box 2: 8
HUD Materials: Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application
1980
Box 2: 9
HUD Materials: CDBG audits, financial reviews
1976-1982
Box 1: 14
HUD Materials: Complaints, objections, responses
1978-1981
Box 2: 10-11
HUD Materials: Complaints - YMCA
1979-1980
Box 2: 12
HUD Materials: Monitoring visits (CDBG, relocation programs)
1977-1982
Box 2: 13
HUD Materials: Reviews (eligibility, grantee performance)
1976-1983
Box 2: 14
HUD Materials: Reviews (in-house)
1978-1980
Box 2: 15
HUD's Sanchez Investigation Materials
1985-1986
Box 1: 15
I-391 Downtown Connector
1980-1986
Box 1: 16-18
I-391 Master File
1973-1978, 1993

Box 2: 16
Identifying Goals/Meeting Them (housing, CDBG)
1978-1981

Box 1: 19
List of case related items
n.d.

Box 2: 17
Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination
1975-1982

Box 1: 20
Massachusetts State Advisory Committee (MSAC) Housing Discrimination Study on Holyoke
1966

Box 2: 18
Modernization Program, Chapter 200-1
1972-1981

Box 2: 19
Money: Arson, code enforcement, demolition
1981

Box 2: 20
Neighborhood Improvement Program (NIP), Rental Neighborhood Improvement Program (RNIP)
1982

Box 2: 21
Neighborhood Improvement Program (NIP), Rental Neighborhood Improvement Program (RNIP), Interim Assistance Program (IAP)
1985, 1989

Box 2: 22
Newspaper clippings
1967-1987

Box 1: 21-36
Nueva Esperanza, Inc. - flier
1984

Box 2: 23
PILRAP class memo - summary of Ramos v. Proulx
1985

Box 2: 24
Ramos et al. v. Proulx et al. - drafts, comments, transcripts
1982

Box 2: 25
Relocation and Demolition
1976-1983

Box 1: 37
Relocation case: Figueroa complaint, J. Peck Emergency Order
1982

Box 1: 38
Relocation Policy
1982

Box 1: 39
Statistics (Holyoke)
1975-1981

Box 1: 40
Toepfert Apartments
1988

Box 1: 41
USA v. Town of Cicero, Henry J. Klosak, and the Cicero Housing Authority
1983 Jan

Box 2: 26
Series 2: Boston - Viviana Munoz-Mendoza, et al. v. Samuel R. Pierce, Jr., et al.
1978-1986
1.5 boxes (1.25 linear feet)

Boston Transition Report
1984
Box 2: 27
Castro v. City of Boston (fire and police case)
1981
Box 1: 42
Copley Management and Development Corporation v. Julie Anderson
1990
Box 2: 28-29
Copley Settlement Draft
1980-1982
Box 1: 43
Correspondence: Boston Redevelopment Authority to Flynn, Raymond L.
1980 Apr
Box 2: 30
Correspondence: Wallis, Albert W. to King, Mel
1982
Box 2: 31
HUD: Block Grant Conditioning in Boston
1982
Box 2: 32
Munoz-Mendoza v. Landrieu: Plaintiffs' Exhibits 1-6
1980
Box 2: 33-34
Munoz-Mendoza v. Pierce:

Appeals, Complaints, Memos, Orders

1981-1983
Box 1: 44
Article - Pursuit of a Court Ordered Inclusionary Remedy to Public/Private Displacement
1983-1985
Box 2: 35
Boston Magazine article - "The Copley Place Papers: Intrigue, Rivalry - and Vision: That's How Boston Gets Built"
1982
Box 2: 36
Bill of Costs
1982-1983
Box 2: 37
Class Action Motion
1981-1983
Box 3: 1
Community Advisory Group
1982
Box 2: 38
Complaint
ca.1980
Box 3: 2
"The Courts: Reluctant Reformers," possible sidebar by Frank Smizik
1982
Box 2: 39
Federal Responses to Request for Admissions
1981
Box 2: 40
First Circuit Brief
1982-1983
Box 2: 41
First Circuit Decision
1983-1984

Box 3: 3
Harvard Law Student (Holland, Joseph H.)
1982

Box 3: 4
HUD Study on Action Grant Record
ca.1980

Box 2: 42
Invitations
1983, 1986

Box 2: 43
Memo for additional discovery
1984-1985

Box 3: 5
Rehearing Petition for Federal Appellees
1983

Box 2: 44
Response by Boston to an Administrative Complaint Submitted to HUD Concerning the Copley Place Urban Development Action Grant
1980 Aug

Box 2: 45
Second Summary Judgement Argument
1982

Box 3: 6
Summary Judgement
1980-1982

Box 3: 7
Temporary Restraining Order
1981

Box 2: 46
Trial Elements of Proof
1982

Box 3: 8
Wallis, Albert W.
1983-1984

Box 2: 47
NAACP v. Pierce Trial Brief
1978-1982

Box 3: 9
Neighborhood Development Fund
1982-1983

Box 3: 10
Newspaper clippings
1983-1984

Box 3: 11
Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) Grant Agreement
1980

Box 3: 12

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Acquired from Judith Liben, November 2015.

Processing Information

Processed by Blake Spitz, December 2015.

Related Material

Carlos Vega was involved in the legal and community activism movement in Holyoke, MA fighting to protect low income and

minority housing. SCUA holds some of his papers in the **Carlos Vega Collection, MS 803**.

Language:

English

Copyright and Use (More information)

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Search terms

Subjects

Boston (Mass.)--History.

Discrimination in housing--Law and legislation.

Holyoke (Mass.)--History.

Housing--Law and legislation.

Contributors

Massachusetts Law Reform Institute. **[main entry]**

United States. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Genres and formats

Legal documents.

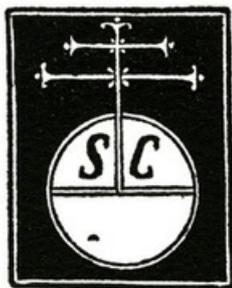
Link to similar SCUA collections

Massachusetts

Reform

Social change

Social justice



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