

The View From The Ground

by Craig Futterman

On April 20 and 21, 2007, nearly 500 scholars, practitioners, and civil rights activists gathered at the Law School for a conference titled “The View From The Ground: Issues and Inquiries Arising From Eight Square Blocks of Chicago’s South Side.” The eight square blocks of the title refer to Stateway Gardens, a public housing development recently demolished as part of Chicago’s “Plan for Transformation.” For the past six years, Mandel Clinic students, under the direction of Clinical Professor Craig Futterman, partnered with Stateway residents to improve public safety and police accountability and to make visible human rights issues in the inner city. The collaboration also yielded five federal civil rights suits, the most recent of which, *Bond v. Utreras*, has been central to the debate over police reform in Chicago.

Grounded in the particular circumstances of Stateway, the panels explored broad themes: impunity and institutional denial, the impact of law enforcement practices on the public space, police abuse as gender violence, and the effects of the war on drugs” on inner city communities.

Among the participants were Randolph Stone, Abner Mikva, and Bernard Harcourt of the Law School, Danielle

Allen (Dean of Humanities), former Seattle police chief Norm Stamper, Tracey Meares (Yale Law School), Frank Zimring (Boalt Hall), Joseph Margulies and Mary Pattillo (Northwestern), Carl Bell and Beth Richie (University of Illinois-Chicago), Sudhir Venkatesh (Columbia University), attorney Tom Sullivan, epidemiologist Steven Whitman, former Chicago police officer Howard Saffold and writers Alex Kotlowitz and Jamie Kalven.

Panels were moderated by public radio hosts Steve Edwards and Richard Steele and WVON Radio’s Cliff Kelley. A webcast of the conference is available at www.invisibleinstitute.com.

