

HUD hoaxer calls attention to lack of affordable housing

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Assuming the role of Rene Oswin, spokesperson for United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in New Orleans, Louisiana, a member of The Yes Men gave a satirical 15-minute speech claiming that HUD had reversed its decision to demolish four serviceable public housing complexes -- a controversial action, suspected by many former residents and the NAACP as a policy intended to drive out poor black families. The media coordinator for the Survivors Village, Annie Chen, applauded Oswin.

Alternatively, Oswin proposed for Wal-Mart "to withdraw from areas near low-income New Orleans neighborhoods and to help nurture local businesses to replace them," "partnership with health departments and the CDC" to "insure there is at least one well-equipped public health clinic for every public housing development," and "that Exxon and Shell have agreed to finance the rebuilding of the protective wetlands from part of their 60 billion dollars in profits this year." From Washington, D.C., HUD spokeswoman Donna White confirmed the speech as a hoax and that no one named Rene Oswin works for the department. She said, "I'm like, who the heck is that?"