

S P O T L I G H T

## Luz Vega-Marquis

### Marguerite Casey Foundation Executive Talks About Bringing Families into the Forefront of a National Campaign for Change

By Kristina C. Moore

*On September 6, more than 15,000 families participated in the Equal Voice for America's Families National Family Convention, a culminating event of a campaign by the Marguerite Casey Foundation to bring the voice of America's families into the national discussion on issues affecting them.*

*NCRP communications director Kristina C. Moore interviewed by e-mail the Marguerite Casey Foundation president and CEO Luz Vega-Marquis about the campaign and the foundation's continuing support for advocacy and community organizing.*

**NCRP:** What was the motivation behind the *Equal Voice for America's Families* campaign? Why is it important for Marguerite Casey Foundation to take on this issue?

**Luz Vega-Marquis:** The *Equal Voice for America's Families* campaign is the actualization of Marguerite Casey Foundation's mission to nurture a movement of low-wealth families who can advocate in their own behalf. We believe that *change is possible*, but only if family voices are at the forefront. We also recognized early on that a successful family-led movement would require communities and organizations to work across regions, issues and ethnic lines.

The foundation embarked on the campaign not only to solidify a base of family constituents but to demonstrate that foundations can engage in and support movement building effectively. Over a year's time, more than



Photo: Brian Murphy

*Marguerite Casey Foundation president and CEO Luz Vega-Marquis and Birmingham emcee Greg Hodge excite the crowd.*

30,000 families participated in 65 *Equal Voice for America's Families* town hall meetings and a culminating national convention. During that year, families developed a national family platform that creates across-the-board policies to address family issues. On September 6, 2008, in Birmingham, Los Angeles and Chicago, families called on the nation to adopt that platform.

We understand that foundations alone cannot nurture a movement. Foundations can, however, as Marguerite Casey Foundation does, use grantmaking dollars to invest in cornerstone organizations that support family leaders and advocate collective action to solve universal issues. For that reason, it was critical (continued on page 13)

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