

**Testimony of Leona P. Thompson**  
**Eligibility Interviewer of the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles**  
**Before the**  
**Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity**  
**House Committee on Financial Services**  
**July 1, 2003**

Good Morning Committee Members,

I am very honored to stand before you today and thank you for this wonderful opportunity to share my personal testimony of how my life was transformed by the Section 8 Housing Assistance Program and the Family Self-Sufficiency Program. As a recipient of these programs I stand before you today as a self-sufficient individual raising two sons in the heart of a very prominent Los Angeles community and helping others to achieve a level of independence that they possibly never imagined could exist.

After separating from my children's father due to unfavorable circumstances, I had to step out on a faith that would propel me into a better way of living and economic security. Not knowing which way to go, nor did my pride allow me to turn to relatives, I ventured out into the deep...with nowhere to go, only a prayer of restoration would be my only consolation.

A dear friend availed herself to me, allowing me to move in with nothing as she and her two children struggled as well. We shared a comfortable, safe and secure place to live, hearty meals and transportation. I became a welfare recipient and fully utilized each opportunity presented to me to make a better life for my children.

My friend told me about a program she was participating in called G.A.P. This program like GAIN provided child care assistance, bus fare, money for books and school supplies just to name a few. With only a high school education and some college, I knew that this would be an excellent opportunity to sharpen my job skills and choose a professional career path that would lead to economic independence. Shortly after enrolling in the G.A.P. program, the Northridge earthquake rocked Los Angeles. Due to the extreme damage of the building that I lived in, I was able to receive an emergency Section 8 voucher. I finally was on the road to self-sufficiency. With the housing assistance payment program I began to have extra money to save and do extra-curricular activities with my children that was almost impossible to do prior.

I was informed about a new program that the Housing Authority was offering to clients who wanted to set further goals for themselves and graduate from all public assistance programs to become totally self-sufficient and homeowners. This program was the Family Self-Sufficiency Program. After mastering many office skills through vocational training I was able to secure

better job positions and higher pay. By leaps and bounds I transcended from extremely low-income to well above the average low-income household. Within 1 year of participating in this program I surpassed the income limit to participate and financially succeeded in stabilizing my family's future. I began to set aside money to purchase our 1<sup>st</sup> home. I received a check from the account that had been set up for me while in the Family Self-Sufficiency program. This was derived from the gradual increase in personal earnings. To date I am in the process of purchasing a new home and owe a great deal of thanks and appreciation to the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles Section 8 program and Family Self-Sufficiency program for providing the resources and information, savings account and self-empowerment to rise above the elements that keep so many people in economic bondage.

My Accomplishments since 1994 are:

- ❑ Certified Medical Assistant (1994 – 1995)
- ❑ Certified Nurse Assistant (1995)
- ❑ Completed G.A.P program
- ❑ Successfully completed job trainings in medical front office, patient relations, and sales
- ❑ Secured enrollment for my sons to attend College Preparatory schools
- ❑ Eligibility Interviewer for the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (2001 – present)
- ❑ Enrolled in PACE program at West Los Angeles College

I thank God everyday for where he has brought me and I am happy and content with who I've become and I plan to continue to help others who wish to step outside of the perimeters of substandard living to well above average living.

Thank you for affording me this great opportunity to share my testimony. Thank You Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles.