

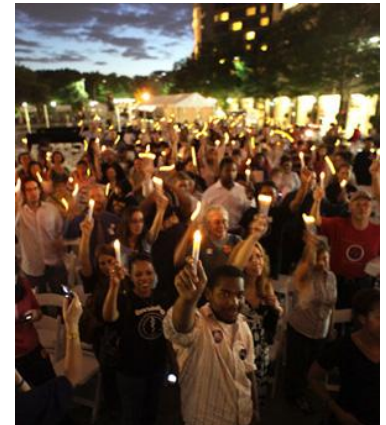


## **The Housestaff Union Confronts Disparities**

### **How do CIR residents work against disparities?**

**In New York** and around the country, CIR is engaged in fights to protect and strengthen safety-net hospitals. When St. John's Queens and Mary Immaculate Hospitals were threatened with closure, CIR residents reacted quickly, writing to elected officials and holding several rallies in Queens and Albany. The two hospitals were vital to the surrounding communities, which were primarily made up of low income and uninsured people of color. Also the hospitals' survival was important because other community hospitals were already overcrowded. Unfortunately, the two hospitals closed in February 2009 and the impact on the community has been significant. However, CIR has helped the residents find new placements in other programs so that they can continue their medical training.

**In California**, CIR members are sending letters to elected officials asking for a balanced approach to the state's budget crisis that looks for new ways to generate revenue instead of cutting vital services like healthcare. In the summer of 2009, CIR members collected stories from residents about the lack of resources in California public hospitals and shared them with Senator Dianne Feinstein. In 2008, CIR members gathered data about low ancillary staffing levels and then used it to lobby in Sacramento for AB13, which would have set safe staffing levels for ancillary staff. They also lobbied statewide with other SEIU members for AB1083, a bill that would ensure that California hospitals have a plan in place to deal with hospital violence. Although the bill has not yet arrived on the Governor's desk, we look forward to the day when it is signed into law.



June 2009, Washington D.C. Candlelight Vigil for Healthcare Disparities

**Nationally**, CIR has been instrumental in organizing a coalition to address the issue of healthcare equality. CIR staff worked in the coalition, called the Healthcare Equality Project, with the congressional tri-caucus, labor organizations, and community based organizations to make sure that healthcare reform addresses disparities that affect women, racial, ethnic, and other minorities. On June 24, 2009, the Healthcare Equality Project mobilized over a thousand people to attend a healthcare candle vigil in Washington D.C. with Congress representatives Lucille Roybal-Allard and John Conyers to demand that healthcare reform address these inequalities.

### **How does the union's structure promote advocacy?**

CIR is an organization that understands the unique demands of residency and ensures that residents make themselves heard in the political arena. As a *physicians'* union, we also have the credibility to make politicians listen to us. We have a strong organization rooted in our hospitals, funded and led by a broad cross-section of residents. We work on issues that impact all our members, we talk with our colleagues about the political issues of the day, and have an experienced staff to help us manage the logistics of mobilizing people to take action. We have the expertise and resources to facilitate residents taking legislative action outside of the hospital. Finally, we have the institutional memory to build relationships with elected officials and learn from our mistakes over time, even though our membership changes yearly.