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Chicago's Wall: Race, Segregation and the Chicago Housing Authority

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Chicago's Wall:
Race, Segregation and the Chicago Housing Authority

by

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Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of Senior Independent Study

Supervised by

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Department of History

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INTRODUCTION

On March 11, 2011, the last tower of the Cabrini Green public housing complex crumbled to the ground. The city of Chicago had gradually razed the near North Side project since 1995 but the destruction of the last tower seemed to signal the end of an era. For decades, violence, gangs, drugs, poverty, and deterioration plagued the project. Snipers perched in a high-rise shot and killed two police officers in 1970. Stray gun bullets struck and killed a seven-year-old as he walked to school with his mother in 1992. Vacant units were not repaired or refilled. Gangs and squatters moved in. Elevators were broken and graffiti covered the walls. By the time of its demolition, Cabrini Green had come to symbolize everything terrible about Chicago public housing. These problems were by no means confined to Cabrini Green. Other projects like the Henry Horner Homes in the West Side and the notorious Robert Taylor Homes in the South Side were afflicted by the same problems. By 1995, Chicago public housing developments made up eleven of the fifteen poorest census tracts in the United States.¹

Cabrini Green's dysfunction is a metaphor for the entire system of public housing in Chicago. The organization responsible for maintaining public housing, the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) created a system that concentrated low-income African American families in chaotic, disorganized, and very often violent communities. The CHA's failed housing policies created a system that segregated and isolated African Americans from the decentralizing metropolitan economy. African Americans living in

¹ Ben Austen, "The Last Tower." *Harpers Magazine*, May 2012, <http://harpers.org/archive/2012/05/the-last-tower/1/> (accessed February 14, 2013); Susan Saulny, "At Housing Project, Both Fear and Renewal," *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/18/us/18cabrini.html> (accessed, February 23, 2013).

these projects experienced a living standard most would consider unconscionable in the world's wealthiest nation. Political manipulation, white residential resistance, and structural design failures all played a role in the evolution of the CHA from providing affordable housing to state enforced segregation financed by the taxpayers. The great irony is the CHA once was an agency determined to create sustainable and integrated communities as a means of social mobility for poor and working class families. A well-intentioned effort to house low-income families went drastically awry. The CHA is now beginning to recognize the system of segregation, violence, and poverty their public housing policies perpetuated. This thesis is a study of the Chicago Housing Authority and how over its career reinforced the segregation of African Americans.

Chicago is a city defined by its neighborhoods. The emergence of unique and vibrant neighborhoods, combined with industrial expansion and immigration, are the defining trends woven into Chicago's long and detailed history. Rising to prominence at the heart of a continental transportation network stretching from the western plains to the eastern cities, Chicago's neighborhood development, change, and contestation underlie the city's vibrant history and provide essential background for this study. The contestation of Chicago's valuable space allowed the city to pioneer methods of racial containment as a mechanism to control neighborhood transition and the city's escalating population.

Throughout the Chicago's history, waves of immigrants established their own unique and vibrant enclaves across the city. Eventually, these ethnic quarters gradually broke up. The story of one minority group is very different, however. As the number of African Americans in Chicago increased, they were funneled into segregated spaces that

would have remarkable durability and permanence. The African American “Black Belt,” a narrow strip of neighborhoods on the South Side of Chicago, would be home to some of the largest public housing developments in the city. While Chicago’s South Side African American neighborhoods present a fascinating potential topic, this thesis is not a story of the Black Belt or neighborhood change. Instead, this is a story of how a city institution confined and concealed African Americans to a ghetto, with enduring consequences.²

The abundant literature on race, housing, and the decline of urban America after World War II provides context for this study. One of the foremost works on these topics is *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* by Robert Self. Self describes the rise of the Oakland suburbs and the decline of the inner city through the context of New Deal liberalism and race. Through urban planning and federal and local housing policies, Self describes how African Americans were confined to poor neighborhoods with bad schools, no jobs, and limited access to city services. Thomas Sugrue continues the discussion of urban decline in his account of postwar Detroit, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Sugrue focuses on deindustrialization and white flight as two primary reasons for the decline of industrial cities and the disparities in wealth across racial lines. Competition for jobs and housing from African Americans threatened the Detroit white working class and as African Americans pushed for housing outside the ghetto, whites felt threatened. Sugrue argues that the structural roots of urban poverty and racial inequality started in the 1940s and 1950s.

² The word “ghetto” in this study is used in its original connotation to refer to an area of a city where a minority group resides due to legal, economic, or social pressures.

Neighborhood change, the African American Great Migration and the Catholic Church is the focus of the John T. McGreevy's book, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth Century Urban North*. McGreevy's book describes the creation of ethnic parishes in cities like Chicago and how these ethnic enclaves changed with the influx of African Americans. The Catholic Church struggled to reconcile with the newcomers and saw their parishes decline as white ethnics moved to the suburbs, leaving behind homes, schools, and churches that once were foundations of a strong community.

A final book provides context on Chicago's experience with residential integration and public housing in the postwar decades. Arnold Hirsch's *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago 1940-1960* describes the crisis over housing during the Great Migration and how whites used violence and urban renewal to keep African Americans confined to the slum neighborhoods of the Black Belt. Crucial to this study, *Making the Second Ghetto* argues that public housing became a means to segregate African Americans and keep them out of white neighborhoods. Racist politicians restrained the CHA's liberalism and directed the organization to clear Chicago's slums and rebuild them in the form of high-rise public housing developments, the "second ghetto." *Making the Second Ghetto* still resonates today and is the foundation for this thesis. While Hirsch details the process of racial transition through big business interests, public housing, neighborhood associations, and white violence, this thesis instead focuses solely on public housing and the CHA as the institution enforcing African American segregation.

These sources were helpful in explaining the complex issues of neighborhood change and integration in the urban North. They provide a detailed and compelling account of the impact of the Great Migration. They were helpful but as a historian, I was interested in the breakdown of postwar liberalism and the de evolution of the American plan to use public housing to transform race. Instead public housing became a device that went from the best of goals to the most despicable.

This thesis presents a new way of thinking about the CHA by examining three events that changed the course of the organization. Chapter One begins with a history of Chicago. Located near important geographic features that facilitated the emergence of a continental transportation network, Chicago was one of the fastest growing cities in the 19th century. It's constantly increasing population created conflict and neighborhood change was one manifestation. The arrival of large numbers of African Americans in the 20th century would prove to be a tipping point.

After exploring the historical development of Chicago as the center of a continental transportation network with a vibrant and diverse ethnic population, Chapter Two describes the political subjugation of the CHA by the city council in the late 1940s. A combination of racist politicians and legislation meant to hamper the ability of the CHA to select locations for public housing severely weakened the CHA's ability to provide affordable housing for African Americans outside the ghetto.

Chapter Three describes the story of the first African American family to live in an all white CHA project in 1953. The story of the Howard family is a demonstration of the virulent white racism that accompanied any African American family trying to move into white neighborhoods. The outcome of these race riots would continue to weaken the

CHA's ability to integrate public housing as progressive leaders were eventually fired in the aftermath.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the CHA went on a binge of public housing construction almost entirely in African American neighborhoods. Chapter Four describes the epic legal crusade that ended the CHA's discriminatory housing patterns. Lasting nearly twenty years, *Gautreaux v. CHA* is a dramatic story of proving the CHA's discrimination and the complex legal efforts it took to undo decades of segregationist housing policies.

The Chicago Housing Authority was an institution created to house low-income people in a decent and safe community. Instead, the CHA evolved into an institution determined to segregate African Americans. The beginning of this thesis examines the long and detailed history of Chicago's immigration, industrialization, and neighborhood development. The experience of African Americans in Chicago showed how one minority group's ethnic enclaves failed to dissolve. Their neighborhoods became a permanent ghetto. After the political hijacking of the CHA in the 1949-1950 site selection battles, the CHA was slowly drained of its progressive leadership, paving the way for a construction boom that produced high-rise towers with thousands of African Americans packed on top of each other. The disturbances at Trumbull Park in 1953 showed the depths of white resistance and how violence forced city leaders to abandon well-intentioned efforts to integrate. After the firing of Elizabeth Wood in 1955, the CHA's desire to integrate neighborhoods and breakdown the ghetto through public housing disappeared. Through the public housing boom of the 1950s and 1960s, CHA projects became increasingly concentrated in African American neighborhoods, limiting their

housing opportunity. State sponsored and enforced segregation finally ended with the *Gautreaux* victory.

This study traces the segregation of African Americans through the history of the Chicago Housing Authority. The ever-increasing African American population was confined to bad neighborhoods with poor schools and concentrated poverty. This happened because of blatant white racism and a refusal to live near African Americans. Integration was unthinkable. This thesis uses turning point events as a way to conceptualize public housing and segregation differently. This is not an uplifting story. Together, these events provide a disturbing history of Chicago public housing. By examining the political, individual, and legal anchor events of the Chicago Housing Authority's history, this thesis argues that the CHA was instrumental in creating the African American ghetto.

CHAPTER ONE
CONTESTATION, EXPANSION, AND CONFINEMENT:
A HISTORY OF CHICAGO

Positioned on the southern shores of Lake Michigan, Chicago was situated near a confluence of important natural features, facilitating economic and population growth. Chicago's location made it a place of transportation and trade. The Chicago River flowed into Lake Michigan, providing access for farmers in the rural hinterland. The division between the Great Lakes and Mississippi watersheds lay only a few miles west. Rivers flowing west from this ridge poured into the Mississippi River. Rivers to the east of the ridge flow toward Lake Michigan.¹ The Great Lakes facilitated trade between the Midwest and East. Close proximity to the Mississippi River watershed allowed trade with the South. These trading opportunities permitted greater economic growth regional dominance.

In nearly every era of its history, massive population growth driven by immigration and emigration characterized Chicago. In the mid 1830s, after its incorporation as a city, Chicago's population increased by twentyfold.² Less than sixty years after its creation, over one million people resided in Chicago, making the Windy City the second largest in the nation. This quick expansion was made possible by the city's natural waterways, transportation, and geography. As the railroad companies converged on Chicago, they competed for a share of the economy. Railroad companies

¹ William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), 24; hereafter cited as Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*.

² Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, 52.

like the Galena and Chicago Union, Illinois Central, and Michigan Central quickly built branches to Chicago.³ Chicago became a leader in industry as well.

Mass European migration in the late nineteenth century increased the city's population. For most of the 18th century, Chicago was an Irish and German city but by the end of the century, an assortment of ethnic groups resided there. The Irish population from 1850 to 1870 exploded to almost 40,000.⁴ Germans were the second largest minority group. Scandinavians, Italians, Hungarians, Czechs, Poles, and Eastern European Jews all arrived in large numbers as well. From 1860 to 1870, Chicago's population more than doubled, from 112,172 to 298,977. Most new residents were immigrants or first-generation Americans. In 1890, Chicago's population was 75 percent foreign born or children of the foreign born.⁵ These foreign born residents shaped the neighborhoods they lived in.

As African Americans arrived in large numbers from 1910 to 1970, their increasing presence on the South Side threatened Chicago's hardened ethnic equilibrium. World War I halted European immigration to Chicago, allowing African Americans to migrate northward. Higher wages in industrial jobs coupled with increased labor demand made migration a practical decision.⁶ The Illinois Central Railroad's penetration into

³ Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, 68-70.

⁴ Dominic Pacyga, *Chicago: A Biography*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 31; hereafter cited as Pacyga, *Chicago*.

⁵ St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1945), 8; hereafter cited as Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*.

⁶ James R. Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 13-14; hereafter cited as Grossman, *Land of Hope*.

Mississippi provided convenient transportation for rural African Americans as well.⁷ Mississippi was by far the largest state exporter of African Americans to Chicago and the social and familial connections between the two entities are well documented. Upon arrival in Chicago, most migrants generally knew State Street as the heart of the established African American corridor on the South Side. Word spread through friends or relatives living in Chicago and new migrants sought them out. A “Black Metropolis,” rivaled only by Harlem, appeared in Chicago.

The first settler of the land was Jean Baptiste Point du Sable, a black settler from Quebec. Du Sable established a trading post at the point where the shores of the river emptied into Lake Michigan. This trade made it a place of many peoples. In the early 18th century, Europeans, Americans, and Native American all utilized the land for raising cattle, growing corn, and trading beaver pelts. A fusion of cultures based on trade emerged as American settlers and Indians interacted peacefully. Trade was important to maintaining this cultural fusion. Prior to its founding as a city, Chicago was a space shared by these different groups.⁸

Unfortunately, the brief Black Hawk War shattered the peaceful trading paradise in 1832. As Native American tribes moved across the Mississippi River into western Illinois to reclaim territory recently ceded to the United States, hostilities soon erupted. This violent conflict over trading routes and territory was a colonial precursor to future battles over Chicago’s space. The American victory in the war reflected their political and military dominance in an area that they had not before. The conclusion to the war

⁷ Grossman, *Land of Hope*, 100.

⁸ Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis*, 26-29.

saw the acceleration of the United States' effort to move Native Americans to land west of the Mississippi River.⁹

The defeat of the Native Americans allowed the federal government to consolidate its control of their territory in present day Illinois and spurred settlement. By 1833, almost all territory around Chicago had been ceded to the United States government through treaties with Native Americans. As more and more eastern settlers arrived, Chicago's population quickly increased. In 1833 the village population was less than five hundred. Four years later, a village had become a city, with a population of over four thousand.¹⁰

Settlers worked to take advantage of the area's location on lake and river. Water borne connections between East and South laid the groundwork for future development. Inhabitants realized that a canal connecting the Great Lakes with the Mississippi River would open new trading opportunities to the South, especially New Orleans. Land speculators proposed a canal to connect the Chicago River with the Illinois River. Since the Illinois River flows into the Mississippi, the canal would connect the Mississippi River, the primary western north-south waterway with the Great Lakes, the main transportation route of the northern U.S. Moreover, this canal would connect New Orleans to New York, which would make Chicago the crux of this massive waterborne transportation network. It could become one of the most important cities in the world. Construction on the Illinois-Michigan Canal began in 1836 and twelve years later,

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Pacyga, *Chicago*, 16-18.

Chicago became the center of a transportation network that connected most of the West with the East.¹¹

Complementing the river, canal, and lake triumvirate would be a network of railroads that expanded the nation's infrastructure. Railroads connected the city to the wheat growing regions in northern Illinois and further points west. Chicago emerged as the center of western agriculture. By 1850, all new rail lines in the west had their terminus at Chicago. As more and more railroads converged on Chicago, the city's economic power and population grew. Railroad efficiency quickly made the old river and canal transportation system all but obsolete. Lake Michigan however, remained vital. Large shipping containers easily accessed Chicago's harbor. Between the railroads and lake, Chicago emerged as the gateway between east and west.

The railroads brought industry to the city. Small scale manufacturing industries included foundries, shipbuilding, and breweries.¹² Small shops produced agricultural tools. Consistent demand from farmers for new tools made the agricultural implement industry vital. In 1859, McCormick Reaper Works was the first large-scale factory in the city, making grain reapers and employing hundreds of people.¹³ The brick industry was crucial as well in a city with a rapidly expanding built environment. Prior to the Civil War, Chicago had developed a diverse industrial economy that included chemicals, furs, iron works, railroad cars and many others.¹⁴ These industries needed labor and people from the New England and New York migrated to take advantage of these opportunities. Soon European immigrants seeking a better life and opportunity followed them.

¹¹ Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, 64-65.

¹² Pacyga, *Chicago*, 40.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

The influx of Yankees from New England, New York, and Pennsylvania in the 1850s was soon dwarfed by European immigration. Foreign-born migrants from Great Britain, Ireland, and Scandinavia predominated. In 1850, half of Cook County was foreign born.¹⁵ The Irish were the first sizeable immigrant community. From 1850 to 1870, the Irish foreign-born population exploded to 40,000. Native whites and European ethnics contested Chicago's space. Key to understanding the early narrative of Chicago is, "the struggle, sometimes violent, of the first-comers and native whites against the later immigrants."¹⁶

Chicago's foreign born population exploded after the Civil War. From 1860 to 1870 the foreign born population tripled from around 100,000 to almost 300,000. Immigrants made up 80 per cent of Chicago's population until World War I.¹⁷ They worked on the railroads that sliced through the South Side; they worked in the steel mills, the packing houses, and the factories that made agricultural machines.¹⁸ Throughout the city, immigrants worked in unpleasant and laborious conditions. Their work was dirty, dangerous, and difficult. Their hard labor was crucial to Chicago's industrial growth.

Central to Chicago's emergence as an industrial powerhouse was the opening of the Union Stockyards on the South Side of the city in 1865. Located three and a half miles from both Lake Michigan and the western city limits, and four miles from the central city, the Stockyards occupied around 320 acres of South Side land west of Halsted

¹⁵ Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, 104.

¹⁶ Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 17.

¹⁷ Pacyga, *Chicago*, 71.

¹⁸ Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 17-18.

Street.¹⁹ Situated between the livestock rich plains of the Midwest and the urban centers of the east, the stockyards grew rapidly, reinforcing Chicago's place in the nation's transportation network. By 1900, nearly 14 million head of stock passed through on their way to the slaughter. The stockyards grew geographically as well. In 1865, the stockyards occupied 320 acres but by 1900 had enlarged to 475 acres, a massive facility. At the turn of the century, 32,000 people worked in the stockyards and 47 percent of the city's population lived in the surrounding neighborhoods.²⁰

Immigrants from Eastern and Southern European quickly filled slaughterhouse jobs. They found housing in the Bridgeport, Back of the Yards, and Canaryville neighborhoods. Plenty of housing allowed second and third generation families to remain in the area, solidifying an ethnic culture. As African Americans arrived during World War I however, the limited vacancies in these working class neighborhoods restricted them to an area of neighborhoods called the "Black Belt" on the near South Side. African Americans of all classes lived together. This prevented upward mobility. Consequently, the African American middle class was more willing to pay higher prices for the same housing. They wanted out of the slums. Landlords took the great African American demand and made a profit. In order to pay for the housing families "doubled up," overcrowding the units similar to white ethnics. Since poor and middle class African Americans lived together in the Black Belt at the turn of the century, whites perceived their arrival as an imminent transformation of the neighborhood into a slum.²¹

¹⁹ Glen E. Holt and Dominic A. Pacyga, *Chicago: A Historical Guide to the Neighborhoods The Loop and the South Side* (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1979), 29-30.

²⁰ Ibid; Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, 212.

²¹ Holt and Pacyga, *Chicago: A Historical Guide to the Neighborhoods*, 11.

The city's spatial orientation reflected the sudden and constant strain of rapid population growth. Real estate speculation, industrial expansion, neighborhood development, industrial plants, and railway lines that popped up with no discernable pattern allowed the city to develop haphazardly.²² The city had little power and less interest in changing these patterns. Even if planners could regulate the city, they deferred, fearing claims of manipulation. Chicago had no visionary plan for development and growth.

Consequently, two basic patterns emerged that characterized Chicago. First, as people grew wealthier, they fled the center of the city and moved to the urban periphery. Poor workers lived and worked amongst the factories. Second, the immigrant communities joined the outward stream as soon as they assimilated into American society.²³ This pattern of social and spatial mobility resulted in zones of growth. Chicago followed an expanding concentric zone pattern with a central city, working class neighborhoods, residential neighborhoods, and a small suburban commuter zone inhabited by the wealthy in the late 19th century. This trend would be the rule after the city rebuilt after the Fire of 1871.

Chicago, a city of wooden buildings, was easily susceptible to fire. When the Fire of 1871 started, whole acres burned to the ground. Much of the northeastern district of the city burned. This "burnt district" included twenty-eight miles of streets and three and

²² Charles Merriam, *Chicago: A More Intimate View of Urban Politics* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929), 73.

²³ Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 13.

a half square miles. 17,000 buildings were destroyed and a third of the city was homeless.²⁴ The government was completely unable to respond to the destruction.

The aftermath of the Chicago fire led to a period of reinvestment in the city and a newfound commitment to urban regulation. Like a phoenix resurrected from its own ashes, Chicago would rise again.²⁵ While Chicago rebuilt itself quickly, the progress was undermined by decades of urban chaos that continued to reshape the city's spatial development.

Despite regulation, urban chaos and near constant economic disruption changed the nature of the relationship between Chicago's government and the people. People looked to the government to alleviate social and economic problems caused by the fire. After the debris and rubble from the fire was dumped into the lake, the city council authorized new public works projects for the burnt land. The city government created a department of inspection and the government took a proactive approach towards preventing further fires by outlawing the construction of wooden buildings.²⁶ Unfortunately these tactics were unpopular with the working classes, since they could not afford to build their homes with more expensive bricks. The poor saw this as undeserved retribution for causing the fire.²⁷

Chicago's regeneration was further disrupted by the economic depression in 1873. The economic slow down hurt the working classes the most. As laborers moved into the city to assist in the fire cleanup, lower wages, higher rents, and class divisions appeared.

²⁴ Pacyga, *Chicago*, 77.

²⁵ Lisa Krissoff Boehm, *Popular Culture and the Enduring Myth of Chicago, 1871-1968* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 23-24.

²⁶ Pacyga, *Chicago*, 82.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 82.

Tensions were high. Chicago's elite feared a revolution similar to the recent Paris Commune.

Slowly but surely a combination of midwestern labor and eastern capital worked to rebuild the city. The result was a more modern urban environment. Business and government were centralized. The Loop, Chicago's central business district, emerged. Industry and residential use were scattered across the city. Chicago's fire leveled the city, but provided an opportunity to reshape patterns of growth and development.²⁸ As the decades of urban chaos gave way to unrestricted foreign-born migration into the city, Chicago would face a new element to spatial development.

By 1890, the city had recovered and emerged as the center of meatpacking, steelworks, railroads, retail, and many other industries. New immigrants poured into the city. These Eastern and Southern European immigrants arrived in large numbers. From 1880-1890, the foreign born population increased by 245,000 and the total population doubled within ten years, propelling Chicago's rise to second largest city in the nation by the turn of the century.²⁹ Nearly 78 per cent of its population was either foreign born or had foreign-born parents.³⁰ Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, Italians, Hungarians, Lithuanians, and Jews from Russia all passed into the city. Struggling to find their way in a confusing American culture and urban environment, these immigrants sought out a recreation of familiar community that would help assimilate newcomers while maintaining a sense of culture and identity.³¹

²⁸ Ibid., 100.

²⁹ Thomas Lee Philpott, *The Slum and the Ghetto Neighborhood Destruction and Middle-Class Reform, Chicago 1880-1930*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 7-8.

³⁰ Spear, *Black Chicago*, 4.

³¹ Ibid.

Chicago's urban space began to be divided by ethnicity. The North Side had large populations of Germans, Poles, and Scandinavians. The West Side consisted of a scattering of Czechs, Poles, and Italians. On the South Side, the Irish, Polish, and Lithuanian communities bordered the narrow African American Black Belt. Substantial Polish immigration at the turn of the century turned the Northwest side neighborhood bordered by Chicago Avenue, Clybourn Avenue, and Carpenter Street into Polonia.³² The Polish Triangle, at the intersection of Milwaukee, Ashland, and Division on the near Northwest Side became the cultural center of the community.³³ The area surrounding the intersection of Clark Street and Lincoln Avenue contained the highest density of Germans. A small Swedish colony formed around the junction of North Ashland and Foster Avenues in the North Side. Pilsen, a neighborhood south of 16th Street between Halsted and Ashland, had the largest number of Czechs with a scattering of Poles as well.³⁴

The South Side was a diverse mixture of many different ethnic groups who worked in the steel mills and packinghouses.³⁵ The Irish maintained their dominance in Canaryville and Bridgeport just east of the Stockyards between 43rd and 47th Streets. Another patch of Polish neighborhoods emerged in Brighton on the western edge of the Stockyards between Western and Pulaski Avenues. Irish and Poles on either side surrounded a solid block of Lithuanians living in Bridgeport.³⁶ Although many of these neighborhoods were poor, it was possible for these immigrants that found jobs to find

³² Robert A. Holland, *Chicago in Maps 1612 to 2002*, (New York: Rizzoli, 2005), 173.

³³ Dominic Pacyga, *Polish Immigrants and Industrial Chicago: Workers on the South Side 1880-1922*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1991), 41-42.

³⁴ Pacyga, *Chicago*, 186.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Holland, *Chicago In Maps*, 174.

better housing outside of the central city. This pattern of social mobility emerged at least by the second generation of immigrants. The distinct exception to this was African Americans who did not have the same opportunity. No matter how prosperous they became, opportunity to relocate was denied.³⁷

These ethnic environs provided a source of character, created unity, and inspired loyalty. The creation of these ethnic spaces reinforced cultural solidarity. Constant population growth made the intrusion of different ethnicities inevitable, creating conflict. Religious, ethnic, regional and language divisions all made the establishment of a unique homogenous ethnic neighborhood difficult. The contestation over space in creating these neighborhoods increased the immigrants' sense of community and loyalty. When newcomers encroached on their space, sometimes violent conflict would erupt.

Across the city, many neighborhood boundaries reflected those established by Catholic parishes. Often street gangs patrolled the spaces. As the ethnicity of neighborhoods solidified, immigrants fought to defend their neighborhood space from intrusion. Streets separated ethnic enclaves and crossing into these areas if you did not belong could be dangerous. Students maintained a strict loyalty to the neighborhood based on parochial school attendance. In these schools, native languages were taught, further reinforcing the ethnic identity of the immigrants.³⁸ As the decades passed, however, the city expanded, people's class status changed and many of the old neighborhoods' residents died or moved away. The neighborhoods broke up.

In the decades after World War I, Chicago's neighborhoods began to take on more importance as a result of public transportation. The construction of suburban trains

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Pacyga, *Chicago*, 186-187.

allowed the wealthy to move to the outskirts of the city. These new developments also allowed lower and middle class workers to leave the center city and create new neighborhoods. Milwaukee Avenue provided a primary means of egress. The street, which extends diagonally from the city center to the northwest, gave Germans, Swedes, Poles and Jews an avenue out of the center city. New neighborhoods straddled this corridor. St Boniface Catholic Church on Noble and Chestnut Streets became the heart of the German community.³⁹ Polish Catholics arrived in large numbers as well and while some Germans welcomed their fellow Catholics, disputes over the parish language often erupted. Poles soon built their own two Catholic Churches down the block from St. Boniface.

World War I provoked economic expansion, which sparked a new wave of internal migration that would fundamentally change the city. Mass European immigration to Chicago and the United States ended because of the war. Factory owners no longer had a steady stream of low skilled immigrant workers from Europe. Demand for military arms from European nations increased. Factory owners needed more workers. They turned to African Americans from the South to meet this demand for labor. Labor agents roamed the southern states advertising job opportunities in Chicago's factories. This industrial expansion during the wartime economy created opportunity for blacks to move north that might not have occurred.⁴⁰ When African Americans arrived however, they faced discrimination and segregation unmatched by earlier European immigration. Efforts to create a neighborhood space by African Americans were contested.

³⁹ Pacyga, *Chicago*, 74.

⁴⁰ Grossman, *Land of Hope*, 13-14.

It was not only the demand for labor that encouraged black migrants to move to Chicago. Higher wages, less oppressive race relations, and the allure of the urban environment helped. But there was also the promise of “the North.” Indispensable in describing Chicago was the African American newspaper, the *Chicago Defender*. Black southerners turned to the paper before ever leaving the South. The circulation of the *Defender* was extensive. African Americans from Louisiana to Georgia read about Chicago. Glowing images of Chicago’s industrial might and its promise as a land of freedom led many to dream of moving there.⁴¹ Oppressive race relations were another major “push” factor. The *Chicago Defender* railed against the racist white supremacy of the South while the threat of lynching was more than enough for blacks to consider moving northward.

Most African Americans moved to an area of the South Side along State Street called the Black Belt. During World War I, the Black Belt stretched from 22nd to 31st Street. Seven miles long and only one and a half miles wide, the Black Belt was forced into this narrow strip by the Irish neighborhoods on either side.⁴² This population density was a result of the first Great Migration in World War I. When a few African Americans moved out of the Black Belt to isolated homes in all white neighborhoods, other African Americans quickly replaced them. As long as the number of African Americans remained small, there was no cause for concern. Conditions changed when over 65,000 African Americans arrived in Chicago between 1915 and 1920.⁴³ African Americans were forced to find housing in the adjoining white neighborhoods. The arrival of that many African

⁴¹ Grossman, *Land of Hope*, 68-69.

⁴² Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 12.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 175-176.

Americans caused more affluent whites to leave, while the working class, who could not afford to flee, defended their neighborhoods from a perceived invasion.

White residents in areas with isolated African American residents resorted to violence and containment to keep their community homogenous. They organized property owner's associations to keep out African Americans. They exaggerated the threat of African American "invasion." Bombings were frequent. Between 1917 and 1921, fifty-eight homes were bombed, an average of one every twenty days.⁴⁴ The worst of these violent episodes occurred in 1919.

⁴⁴ William M. Tuttle Jr., *Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919* (New York: Atheneum, 1972), 159.

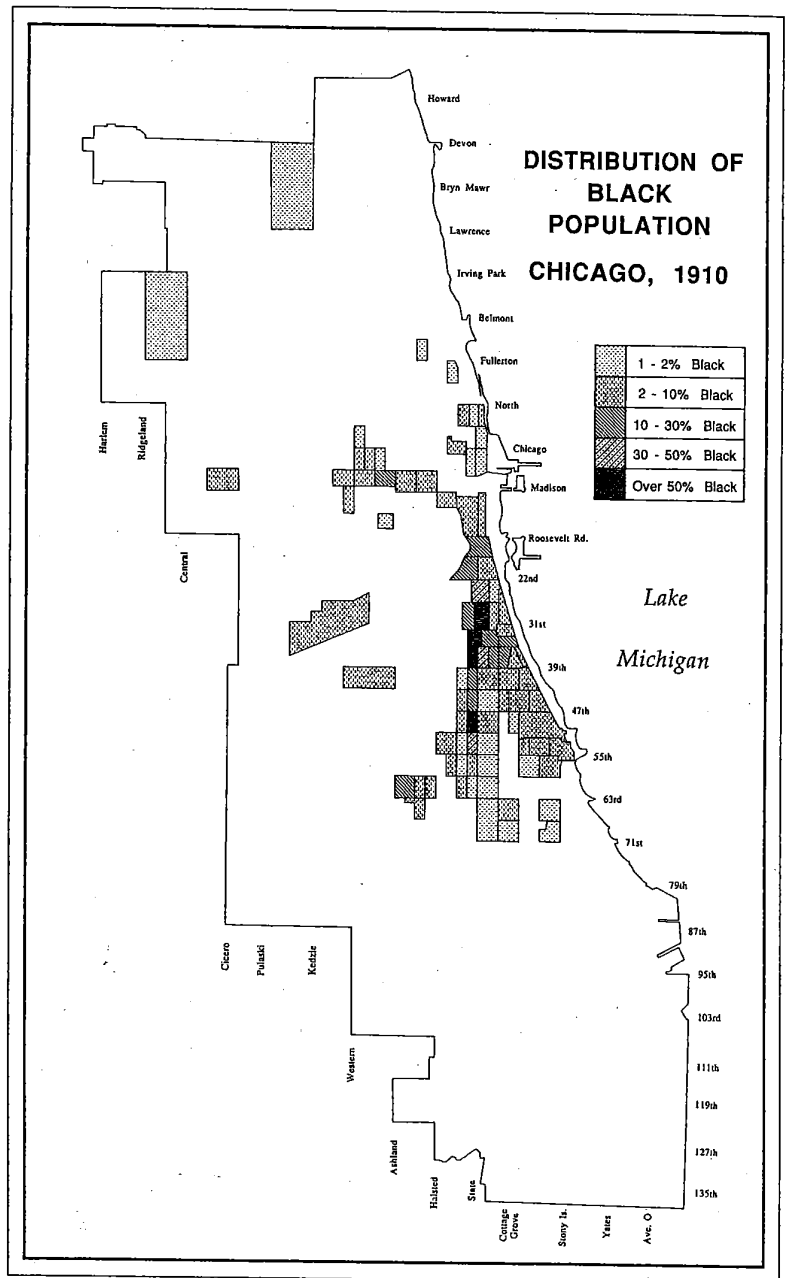
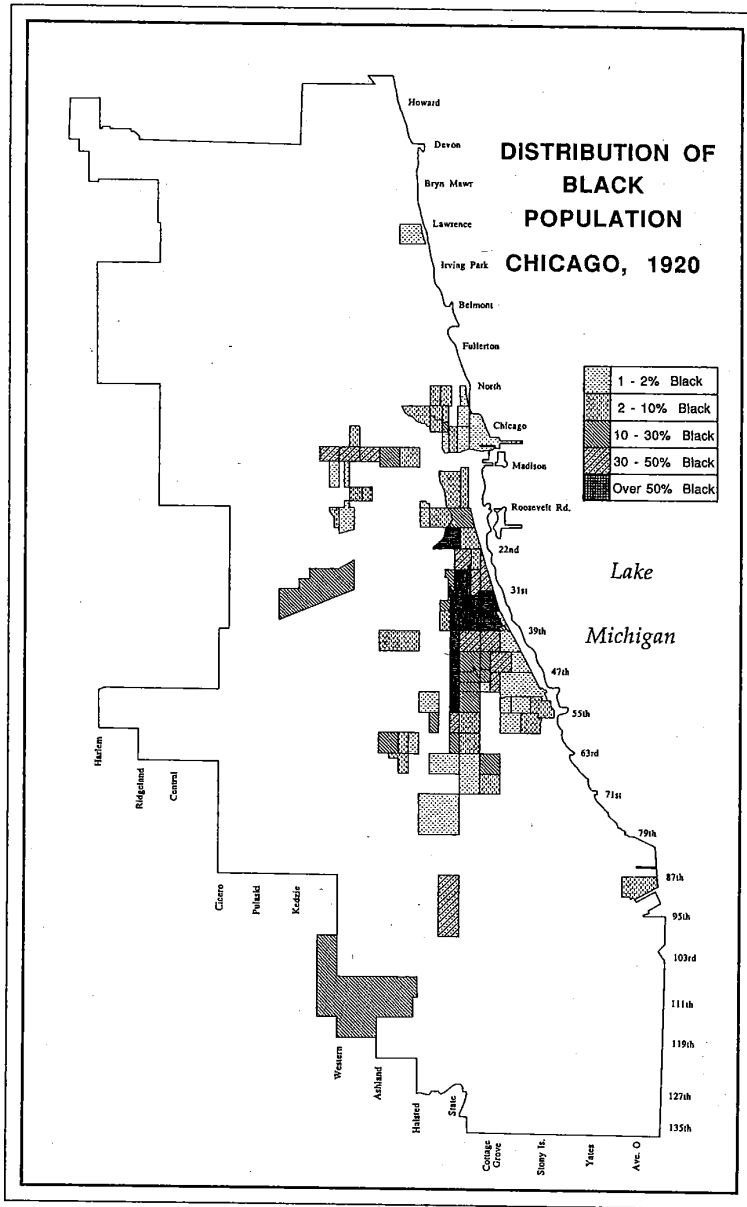


Figure 1. Distribution of Black Population Chicago, 1910.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Grossman, *Land of Hope*, 124.



Distribution of black population in Chicago, 1920.

Figure 2. Distribution of Black Population Chicago, 1920.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Grossman, *Land of Hope*, 125.

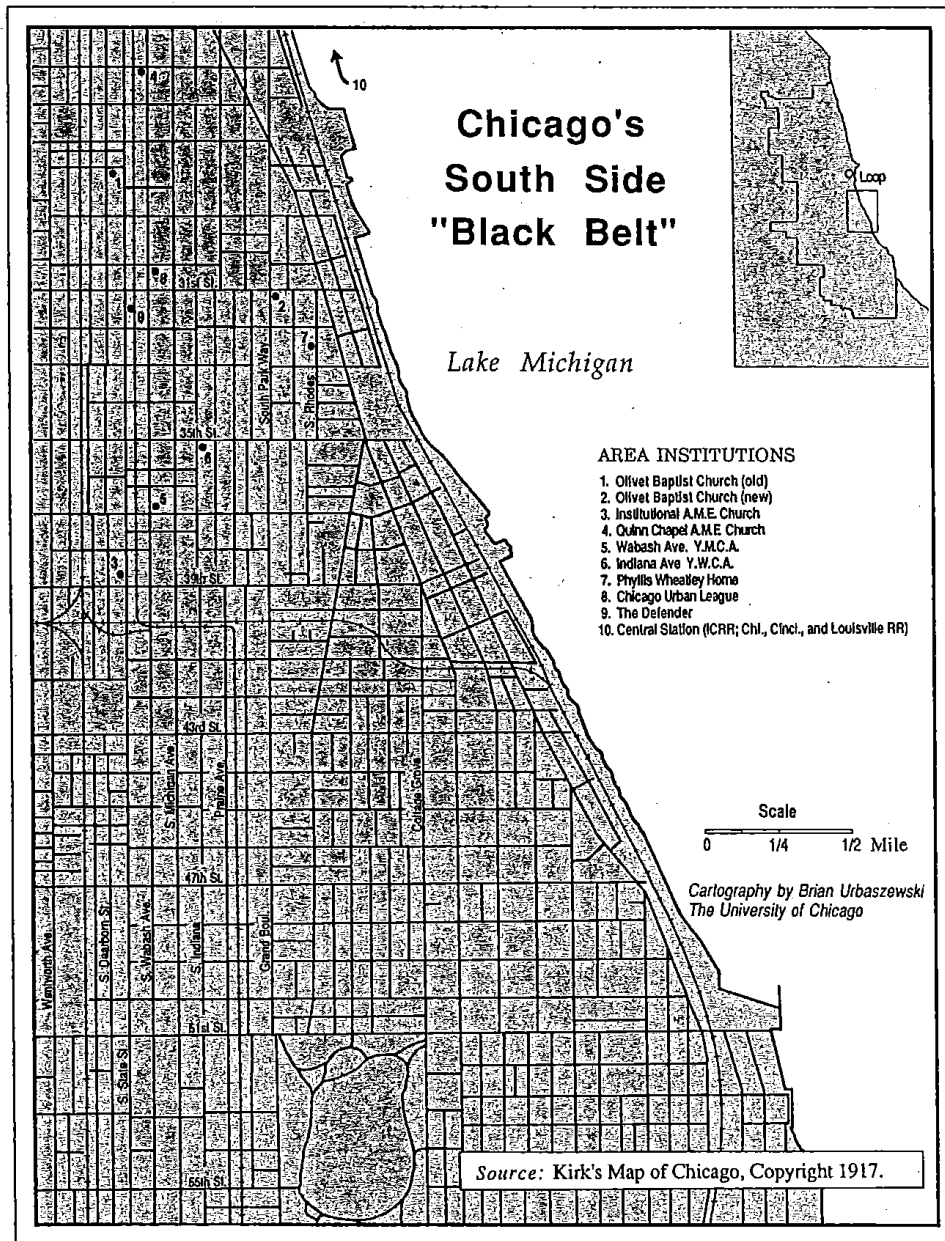


Figure 3. Chicago's Black Belt.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Grossman, *Land of Hope*, 126.

The summer of 1919 was exceptionally hot. People needed a way to cool down. Lots of Chicagoans patronized a local beach on Lake Michigan. On July 27, with a temperature in the nineties, five male black teenagers decided to escape the insufferable heat by going to the beach. As the boys swam in the lake, a lone white man started throwing rocks at them. A rock struck one of the boys, knocking him out. He drowned after his friends and a lifeguard failed to get him back to the beach in time. The police were called, but they were already in the area dealing with another disruption at the white beach, a few blocks away. A black police officer tried to arrest the white man but his white superior overruled. Soon a crowd of angry African Americans had formed on the beach demanding justice. The white policemen, undeterred by the angry mob, arrested an African American man, further infuriating the crowd. As the arrested black man was escorted into a police wagon, someone fired a gun into the police officers. The policemen returned fire, fatally injuring an African American man. The gunfire signaled the start of Chicago's worst race riot.⁴⁸

Following the confrontation at the beach, white and black mobs roamed their respective neighborhoods beating, stabbing, and shooting anyone of the opposite race. The violence spread across the city into the North and West Sides and the Loop. Chicago's undermanned police force was ill equipped to handle the situation. Cooling rains and the arrival of several regiments of the state militia finally halted the worst of the violence. When the riots ended, seven black men had been murdered by police officers and mobs had killed sixteen African Americans and fifteen whites. Over 500 Chicagoans

⁴⁸ Tuttle, *Race Riot*, 8.

were injured.⁴⁹ The race riots of 1919 represent the violent culmination of a long period of white resentment and anger at the expanding presence of African Americans in Chicago. The relatively peaceful 1920s were characterized by simmering racial tensions, which would continue to manifest itself until the end of the decade. By 1925, the bombings had mostly ended and the restrictive covenant, an agreement between homeowners not to sell to African Americans, was the popular form of racial containment.

The stock market collapse of 1929 and the Great Depression hurt Chicago particularly hard because of the city's reliance on manufacturing and industry. The city's unemployment rate was high. Sixty percent of the unemployed in the state of Illinois lived in Chicago. By 1931, Chicago's thirty percent unemployment rate was higher than the national average.⁵⁰ The downturn hurt the African American community hardest. 50 percent of African Americans had no job.⁵¹ People relied on assistance from traditional sources like churches, homeless shelters, and state relief agencies. Both public and private organizations struggled to meet the needs of the unemployed.⁵² Chicago faced unprecedented economic crisis during the Great Depression and this led to political change that would last for the rest of the century.

Depression era Chicago was transformed by stark poverty and unemployment. People looked to the government for assistance and elected a new Democratic regime that would rule the city for decades. Ethnic groups became increasingly assimilated into American society. Their neighborhoods lost ethnic character as residents left. The

⁴⁹ Ibid., 10

⁵⁰ Pacyga, *Chicago*, 252-253.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² *Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago*, s.v. "Great Depression."

African American population was growing in the Black Belt. It was visible and hard to ignore. The outbreak of war in Europe would again instigate greater social, economic, and racial change. Competition and contestation of Chicago's space entered a new and confusing era.

World War II impacted Chicago on social, economic, and demographic levels. The city played a prominent role in the wartime economy and industrial production. After the German invasion of Poland in the fall of 1939, Chicago's Polish community mobilized to protest and demonstrations were held. Eastern European Jews actively encouraged American intervention in the war on behalf of their oppressed brethren in Germany. Similar to World War I, Chicago's ethnic groups were actively engaged in the events in Europe, unlike the disengaged American population.⁵³ These groups tried to influence American opinions toward intervention in the war. It was obvious to Mayor Edward Kelly that America was going to be involved and he worked to make Chicago a city that would be central to the home front, even before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Organizing industries and businesses to prepare for wartime was a major part of his plan.⁵⁴

With its diverse industrial economy, Chicago's companies produced all kinds of military goods and services. Field rations, parachutes, and airplanes were manufactured. Chicago was the second most productive city in the nation. High levels of production reinvigorated the economy. This created a labor shortage that would be filled by women and African Americans. Black workers comprised almost fourteen percent of the labor

⁵³ Pacyga, *Chicago*, 273.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

force of Cook and Dupage Counties.⁵⁵ Unfortunately they still faced residential segregation and labor discrimination. Because of all the workers coming to Chicago, the city faced a housing crisis. After the war, the housing shortage was compounded by the return of war veterans and their expanding families. Crucial to remedying this crisis would be clearing the slums, allowing low income residents, especially African Americans, to get decent housing.⁵⁶

After migration decreased during the Great Depression, World War II saw a resumption of African American mass migration to Chicago. This second Great Migration saw the largest increases to Chicago's black population in history. In fact, Chicago became the epicenter of the greatest demographic shift in American history. During World War II over 60,000 African Americans arrived to work in factories producing airplanes, munitions, and parachutes. In the 1940s, the black population grew from 278,000 to 492,000.⁵⁷ In the twenty years after the war, migration continued unabated. The black population of Chicago increased to over 800,000.⁵⁸ The massive influx of African Americans began a new and troubling chapter in the story of Chicago's neighborhood development and spatial contestation. The rapidly increasing African American presence, "put Chicago in the same position of having to respond to the issue of race in a comprehensive way that would affect the whole fabric of life there."⁵⁹ The

⁵⁵ Pacyga, *Chicago*, 284-285.

⁵⁶ Martin Meyerson and Edward C. Banfield, *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest The Case of Public Housing in Chicago* (London: The Free Press, 1955), 29-30.

⁵⁷ Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How it Changed America*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 70-71.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

enormity of the African American presence was the tipping point, upsetting Chicago's fragile racial dynamic, which had defined so much of the city's vibrant history.

From the Great Depression until the end of World War II, the only available housing for African Americans was in the Black Belt. Still only a few blocks wide, the Black Belt stretched southward for thirty blocks.⁶⁰ Geographically confined, new migrants amplified the density of the Black Belt and accelerated the deterioration of the housing stock. The situation was compounded by Chicago's wartime housing crisis. The influx of workers and no housing construction made conditions treacherous.⁶¹ African Americans lived in deteriorating apartments and tenements. Many kitchenettes apartments were divided in half to accommodate more tenants, had no plumbing, electricity, or even adequate sanitation. Unable to expand and under constant pressure from newcomers, the black belt got only worse which made white residents even more determined to prevent the Black Belt's expansion. The government seemed to be the only entity able to remedy the situation.

Established in 1937, the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) was the only city agency that could fix the housing crisis and the Black Belt conditions. Designed by Mayor Edward Kelly to clear the city's slums and build affordable public housing projects, the CHA was a progressive institution that championed the housing rights of African Americans. As African American demand for CHA projects rose, integration

⁶⁰ Ibid., 123.

⁶¹ Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 16.

with white neighborhoods was particularly difficult. By the 1952, nearly 6,000 African American families lived in public housing.⁶²

The United States Housing Authority was an agency created under the New Deal. Increased funding for the USHA made possible the construction of four projects across the city. In 1938, the Jane Addams Homes were built on the West Side, Lathrop Homes on the North Side, and Trumbull Park on the South Side. These projects were all white, while a fourth and largest, the Ida B. Wells Homes was constructed in a predominantly African American neighborhood. The racial segregation complied with federal housing policy, which mandated projects maintain the same racial composition as the surrounding neighborhoods. During and after World War II, the CHA built housing projects for workers and returning veterans. Attempts at integration of these projects failed. In 1949, after federal legislation provided funding for public housing, the CHA proposed new sites for public housing scattered across the city that were rejected by the city council. From then on, CHA policy became to build projects only in African American neighborhoods. The 1950s and 1960s saw the CHA build high-rise projects, especially concentrated along a four-mile corridor of State Street, the heart of the Black Belt.⁶³ These projects combined with the Dan Ryan Expressway to form a figurative “wall” dividing the African Americans neighborhoods and white neighborhoods.

⁶² Chicago Housing Authority, *Annual Reports 1946/47-1960/61*, Families in CHA Homes By Race, 1938-1952, Harold Washington Public Library, Chicago, Illinois. Municipal Documents Collection.

⁶³ *Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago*, s.v. “Chicago Housing Authority.”



Figure 4. Stateway Gardens at Dawn, 1981. The beginning of Chicago's "wall" stretching southward toward the Robert Taylor Homes.⁶⁴

The second mass migration of African Americans to Chicago from the South between 1940 and the late 1960s was a process that completely changed the social, demographic, and spatial patterns of the city. Spatial contestation and competition took a much more sinister turn. By World War II, the Black Belt had enlarged to occupy neighborhoods from the Loop to 55th Street. As more African American workers arrived daily to fill jobs in the factories, overcrowding in black neighborhoods became a huge problem. The expanding community continued to encroach on the white ethnic neighborhoods. When the number of African Americans became too large, whites responded in violent and discriminatory ways. The white reaction to the influx of African Americans would define the postwar era.

⁶⁴ Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 244.

Especially on the South Side, white ethnics felt threatened by the emergence of a new minority group. They reacted by creating legal methods to keep African Americans out of their neighborhoods. Through neighborhood covenants, legal discrimination, and violence, whites resisted the African American presence. Whites feared the invasion of their neighborhoods by African Americans. At the same time, African Americans felt a strong ethnic connection with fellow Black Belt residents. Cultural and institutional development created a space more attractive for blacks looking to avoid white prejudice. This combination of exclusion from white neighborhoods and ethnocentrism propelled migrants into the ghetto.⁶⁵

The end of World War II was the beginning of a new era in Chicago's history. Prolonged African American migration combined with political maneuvering to segregate them in public housing, became a disturbing pattern. In 1965, more African Americans lived in Chicago than in Mississippi. Chicago public housing alone had a higher population than Selma, Alabama.⁶⁶ Chicago's long and storied history entered an ominous new era that would define the city for decades. The Chicago Housing Authority would play a pivotal role in shaping housing policy and integration. The steady increase in African Americans forced city leaders to make significant decisions about housing and integration, which would have a lasting impact on the future of African Americans in Chicago.

⁶⁵ Grossman, *Land of Hope*, 127.

⁶⁶ Pacyga, *Chicago*, 284-285.

CHAPTER TWO

POLITICAL HIJACKING: THE 1949-1950 SITE SELECTION CONTROVERSY

Located in the heart of Chicago's Black Belt on a narrow strip of land between State Street and the Dan Ryan Expressway stood the Robert Taylor Homes, the largest public housing project in the world. Named after the Chicago Housing Authority's first African American chairman, the Robert Taylor Homes consisted of twenty-eight identical sixteen-story buildings and contained 4,415 units. They were home to 27,000 residents.¹ Nearly all of the residents were poor and African American. Stateway Gardens, another high-rise public housing project just north of the Robert Taylor Homes, extended this ominous stretch of public housing for over two miles.² Their location in Chicago's Black Belt was not an accident but a result of a series of decisions made by city leaders and financed by taxpayer dollars. The conflict between those who wanted to breakdown the walls of the ghetto through scattered site public housing and racist city leaders who wanted to confine the African American to the ghetto resulted in these high-rise projects, which effectively isolated thousands of African Americans. The towers of the projects combined with the Dan Ryan expressway concentrated, segregated, and isolated African Americans within Chicago.

¹ Devereux Bowly Jr., *The Poorhouse Subsidized Housing in Chicago 1895-1976* (London: Feffer & Simons, Inc., 1978), 124, 128. For more information on the Robert Taylor Homes see D. Bradford Hunt, "What Went Wrong With Public Housing in Chicago? A History of the Robert Taylor Homes," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* (1998-) 94, no. 1 (Spring 2001) and Sudhir Alladi Vankatesh, *American Project: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Ghetto* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

² *Ibid.*, 115.

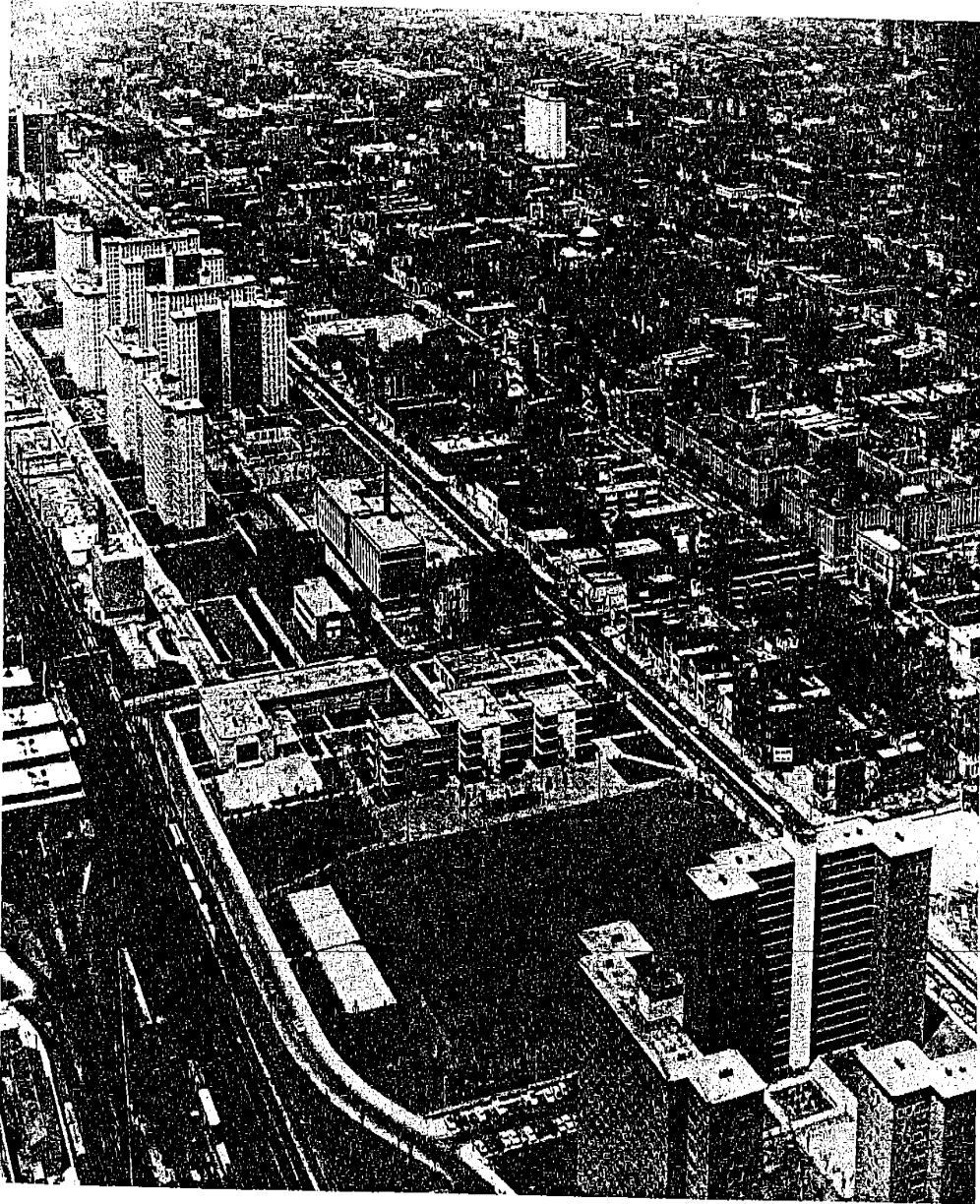


Figure 5. Robert Taylor Homes.³

³ Bowly Jr., *The Poorhouse*, 125.

The location of these sites in predominantly African American neighborhoods was the result of a protracted battle over site selection between the Chicago Housing Authority and the city council in 1949-1950. Passage of the 1949 Federal Housing Act provided cash grants to municipalities for public housing construction. President Harry Truman's Housing Act intended to provide affordable housing for every American by increasing the role of the federal government. This started a scramble among municipalities across the country to obtain funding to build new public housing projects.

Able to acquire federal funding for 21,000 units, the CHA submitted a list of potential sites to the city council for approval in August 1949. The CHA's proposal contained a number of sites for public housing to be built on vacant land in outlying areas of the city in mostly white neighborhoods. This would be a way to break up the deteriorating housing conditions in the Black Belt and force some means of residential integration. Instead the CHA was forced to accept a program of sites that were confined directly to African American neighborhoods. This would ensure that African Americans would remain isolated and segregated from the rest of Chicago. From 1950 onwards, CHA housing policy would be to build large housing projects in predominantly African American neighborhoods.

The location of the Robert Taylor Homes, Stateway Gardens and many other public housing projects on the South Side would have significant social and economic consequences for African Americans. The high-rise towers concentrated low income African Americans and prevented them from obtaining jobs in a decentralizing postindustrial economy. The high density of low-income people strained public services and schools. Structurally, the high-rise projects housed large numbers of people on small

plots of land, but lacked the comfortable feeling of a home. Ironically, high-rise public housing projects were built during a time when most new residential construction was the single-family home in the suburbs. By their demolition in 2000, the Robert Taylor Homes had become a symbol for the failure of public housing in the United States. Finding the reasons for this failure lies in the decisions made by the Chicago Housing Authority and city council in 1949.

After World War II Chicago faced a housing crisis. The Great Depression, the influx of African Americans from the South, widespread poverty, and a lack of housing construction resulted in a severe housing shortage. In the middle of the 1930s, one third of Chicago's families had incomes of less than \$1,000 a year. The income of many Chicago families put them in a position where they could not afford decent housing. Because of the economic downturn, housing construction failed to keep up with population increases. 7,619 homes were built in Chicago between 1930 and 1938 and it was estimated that 150,000 housing units would be needed to eliminate the shortage.⁴ The lack of housing construction due to the Depression meant a housing shortage for low-income families. This forced them to live in dilapidated and overcrowded tenements and slums. The housing shortage was most acute in African American neighborhoods where residents could not escape the slums to better neighborhoods because of white restrictive covenants. Living in dense, overcrowded, kitchenette apartments, often with multiple families sharing one bathroom, African Americans inhabited the worst housing in the city.⁵

⁴ Bowly Jr., *The Poorhouse*, 17.

⁵ Carl Wiegman, "Story of City's Big Problem: Negro Housing," *Chicago Tribune*, December 30, 1949.

Creation of the Chicago Housing Authority in 1937 met some skepticism from conservatives. People were wary of the federal government providing housing for the poor. It was unheard of for the government to provide housing for the poor. Before the New Deal, many low-income residents lived in squalid tenements and slums. In response to the skepticism, the CHA was presented as a vital city agency that would clear Chicago's slums, build public housing projects, and provide jobs for the unemployed.⁶

Before World War II, the CHA built Trumbull Park Homes and Julia Lathrop Homes on vacant land in white areas on the far South Side and North Side of the city.⁷ These projects were far away from African American neighborhoods and the CHA intended to keep them all white due to the neighborhood composition rule. This unwritten rule stated no housing project could alter the racial composition of the surrounding neighborhood through integration.⁸ The CHA followed this rule but began to admit African Americans into all white projects gradually.

The CHA experimented with integration at the new Cabrini Green project on the near North Side in 1942. The CHA sought a one to four ratio of African Americans to whites in the new project. Plenty of African Americans applied, but a dearth of white applicants made meeting the quota difficult. Whites viewed public housing as a step down while African Americans were desperate to move out of the slums into new units. African Americans pushed hard to gain priority in the projects while the Italian residents of the surrounding neighborhood greatly resented the CHA's integration policies. After a

⁶ Bowly Jr., *The Poorhouse*, 18.

⁷ D. Bradford Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster: The Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 54-55

⁸ Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 179.

public relations campaign to attract whites, the CHA managed to gain enough suitable whites to achieve their quota at Cabrini Green a year later.⁹ Integrating projects would continue to be an issue for the CHA.

The CHA's experience with integration before World War II was a precursor to the challenges they would face in the postwar decades. Under the leadership of African American chairman Robert Taylor and Executive Secretary Elizabeth Wood, the CHA embarked on an effort to breakdown the walls of the African American ghetto through integrated public housing built on vacant land across the city. Building sites on vacant land would not displace African American families and provided an opportunity to, "break down ancient prejudices."¹⁰ Taylor, a Harvard educated architect, understood both issues facing African Americans and the poor quality of housing in Chicago. Elizabeth Wood was a passionate progressive who advocated for the housing rights of African Americans. Both Wood and Taylor would lead the CHA during the battles with the city council over site selection for public housing in the late 1940s.¹¹

The Chicago housing shortage hurt African Americans the most. The Great Migration drastically increased Chicago's African American population and housing construction failed to keep up in proportion to the increase. As a result, many lived in overcrowded and crumbling tenements. White residents blocked racial transition and integration into neighborhoods. In order to remedy the situation, Taylor pursued a policy of building projects in areas of limited white resistance in order to expand black housing opportunity.

⁹ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 56.

¹⁰ Carl Wiegman, "Story of City's Big Problem: Negro Housing," *Chicago Tribune*, December 30, 1949.

¹¹ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 36.

In the CHA's ten projects, African Americans occupied 60 percent of the units.¹² White residents perceived the organization as serving only African Americans. This perception shaped the battle between the CHA and city council over site selection in 1949. In fact, the CHA took a middle course. The CHA saw no advantage in reinforcing the scattered projects of the blighted neighborhoods because that would only reinforce segregation. At the same time, the CHA did not want to fully integrate their projects because of white backlash.

The end of World War II saw the CHA change their racial policy more out of circumstance than a desire to integrate their projects. Returning war veterans to Chicago needed housing and the CHA was forced to set aside the neighborhood composition rule. The CHA built twenty-one temporary veterans projects in eleven different wards. Most of this housing was built on vacant land in outlying white neighborhoods. In order to reduce potential violence from white residents opposed to African Americans living in their neighborhoods, the CHA encouraged African American veterans to live in larger projects like the Airport Homes and Fernwood Homes in order to dilute their presence.¹³ The number of African Americans was kept small. They only made up 10 percent of the projects. Even still, the presence of African Americans in white neighborhoods instigated violent backlash.

¹² Carl Wiegman, "Story of City's Big Problem: Negro Housing," *Chicago Tribune*, December 30, 1949.

¹³ Martin Meyerson and Edward C. Banfield, *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest The Case of Public Housing in Chicago* (London: The Free Press, 1955), 124; hereafter cited as *Politics, Planning and the Public Interest*. Meyerson and Banfield's work is a comprehensive description of the CHA, politicians, planning interests, public opinion, and settlement of the entire site selection controversy in 1949-1950.

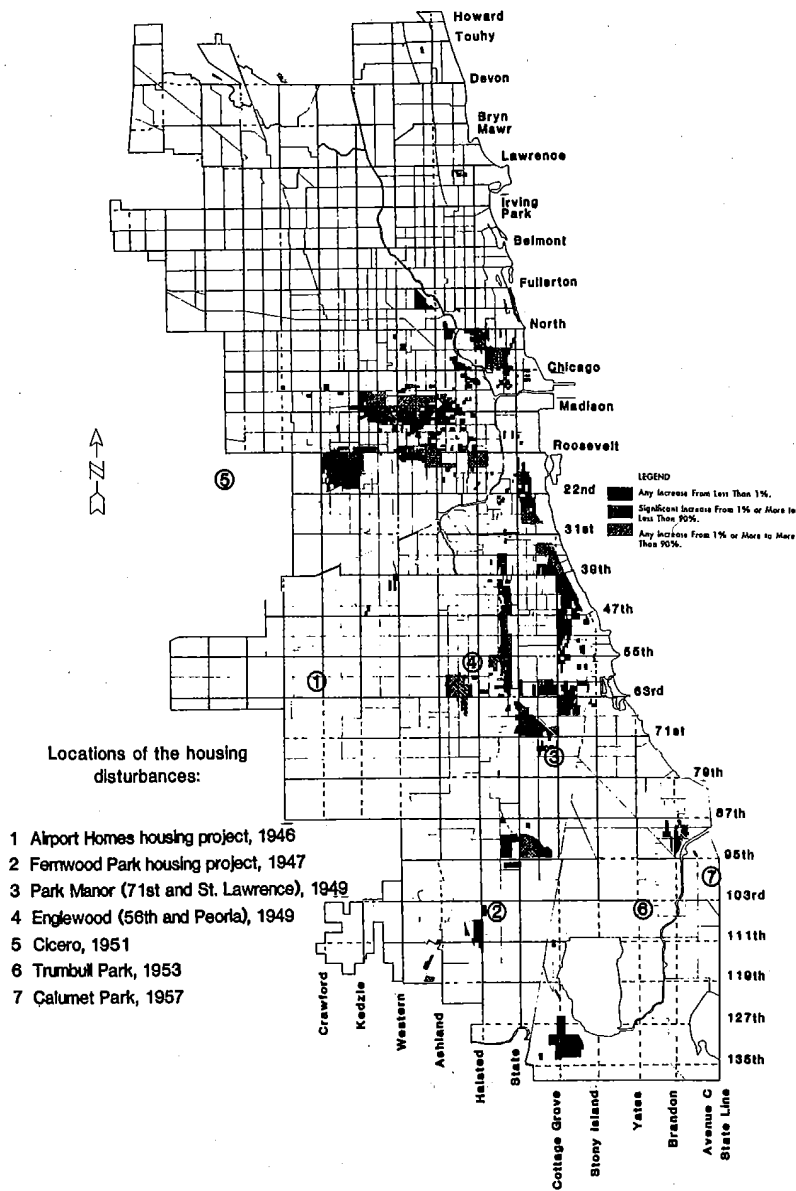


Figure 6. Location of housing disturbances.¹⁴

¹⁴Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 57.

Unfortunately, the presence of African American veterans caused violence and rioting at both Airport Homes and Fernwood. The Airport Homes rioting was the worst racial violence Chicago had seen in thirty years. The arrival of two African American families in 1946 sparked immediate hostile reactions from white residents. 200 people threw stones, shouted profanity, and threatened the families.¹⁵ 400 policemen were required to maintain the peace for nearly a month. Finally, the African American families succumbed to the pressure and moved out. Airport Homes remained all white.

Violence erupted again at the Fernwood Homes in August 1947. When eight African American families moved into the projects, a mob of 5,000 angry white residents greeted them. Over the next three nights, sporadic acts of violence occurred and one thousand policemen were required to keep some semblance of order.¹⁶ Six months later, the worst violence had finally subsided and the police presence was reduced. The African American families could finally feel safe living in Fernwood.

The significance of these two riots lies more in the change in occupant of the mayor's office than in the white violence towards African Americans. Between the Airport Homes riot and the Fernwood riot, Democratic Mayor Edward Kelly, a longtime supporter and protector of the CHA, resigned. His successor, Martin H. Kennelly, a wealthy businessman handpicked by the Democratic machine, had no sympathy for the CHA. Kennelly issued no public statement condemning the riots at Fernwood and instead tried to force the CHA to pursue another integration policy.¹⁷ The Airport Homes and Fernwood Riots were a response to the CHA's abandonment of the neighborhood

¹⁵ Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning and the Public Interest*, 125-126.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 128-129.

composition rule. The election of Martin Kennelly meant the CHA no longer had support from the mayor's office. The CHA lost a political ally in Mayor Kelly and simultaneously realized the implications of white resistance and racism.¹⁸ While ethnic whites used violence to defend their neighborhoods, Chicago's business owners marshaled their considerable resources to fight back against neighborhood change.

The Illinois legislature passed the Illinois Blighted Areas Redevelopment and Relocations Act of 1947 as a way to stimulate private development in slum cleared areas. The state would provide funding to clear slum land, which would then be sold to private companies who would then redevelop the land. In addition to providing funding for urban redevelopment, the Relocations Act gave the city council control and veto power over the CHA in site location for public housing because it wanted to decide the location for new public housing.¹⁹ The CHA's ambitious agenda to breakdown the ghetto through public housing projects in white neighborhoods scared the council. Now with passage of the Relocations Act, the CHA was beholden to the city council. Locations for new projects now had to be approved by the council.

Innovative and groundbreaking, the Relocations Act brought business into the process of fighting neighborhood change. By combining public funds with private enterprise, investment, and development, the legislation was the first of its kind in the country and allowed greater business influence in urban renewal.²⁰ The Act would allow public funds to buy and clear land, which could then be sold for private development. It created the Chicago Land Clearance Commission (CLCC), which now became

¹⁸ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 81-82.

¹⁹ Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 112; 223.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

responsible for slum clearance and redevelopment instead of the CHA.²¹ After making improvements on the land, the CLCC would then sell the land to private developers. The flip side of this process was clearing the land would involve displacement of former residents, mostly African American. These residents would either have to find housing in the private market or turn to the CHA.

The first project developed after passage of the Relocations Act was the Lake Meadows site on the near South Side. New York Life Insurance was contracted to build new housing and redevelop the site. Costing twenty two million dollars, the Lake Meadows project was a significant investment in housing and redevelopment. Clearing the land cost taxpayers eleven million dollars. New York Life only had to pay two million. New York Life built two twenty-three-story apartment buildings with 1,500 dwelling units.²² African Americans protested the Lake Meadows project. Before the project could begin, the families living in the blighted areas had to be relocated. Only twenty five percent of the residents could afford the rent in the new apartments. The remainder were housed by the CHA or had to find housing in the private market. In order to accommodate the Lake Meadows project, 3,600 African American families were relocated.²³

The displacement of African American residents by private development created new demand for public housing.²⁴ Fear of finding new housing in a city that did not seem to want them prompted many African Americans to turn to the CHA. Top priority was

²¹ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 82.

²² Chicago Housing Authority, *Annual Reports 1946/47-1960/61*, 31. Harold Washington Public Library, Chicago, Illinois. Municipal Documents Collection Fifth Floor.

²³ Carl Wiegman, "Story of City's Big Problem: Negro Housing," *Chicago Tribune*, December 30, 1949.

²⁴ Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 133-134.

given to attracting private development, not the relocation of residents.²⁵ The forced relocation of African American residents showed the lack of empathy of big business and city leaders to people losing their homes. African Americans were largely shut out of the decision making process. This process of slum clearance, redevelopment, and displacement began in Chicago. This formula would be replicated in other cities across the country.

By decentralizing public housing in the United States, the 1949 Federal Housing Act gave control over site selection to localities.²⁶ With the Relocations Act already in place, the passage of federal housing legislation started a rush for local agencies to get federal money to build public housing. The housing agencies would control where they built the projects. Originally, the power over site selection would be given to the CHA under the Federal Housing Act but the Illinois Relocations Act included a provision giving the power of site selection to governing bodies of municipalities in Illinois over 500,000 people.²⁷ Of course, Chicago was the only city in the state that size. For the first time in its history, the CHA was beholden to the city council.

The massive 16 billion dollar national housing program would provide funding to build 810,000 homes over six years.²⁸ The CHA of course, wanted its share of the money flowing from the federal government and submitted a proposal for funding in 1949. Chicago was such a high need area that according to CHA estimates, 40,000 units would

²⁵ Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 120.

²⁶ Albert Barnett, "More Housing Projects, Few Individual Homes," *Chicago Defender*, March 5, 1949.

²⁷ Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest*, 136.

²⁸ Chicago Housing Authority, *Annual Reports 1946/47-1960/61*, Harold Washington Public Library, Chicago, Illinois. Municipal Documents Collection Fifth Floor.

be appropriate based on the funding the state of Illinois was expected to receive.²⁹ In June of 1949, the City Council approved the CHA's request for funding to build 40,000 units. However, the CHA only received funding for 21,000 units at a cost of 210 million dollars because the federal government had to evenly distribute the money across the entire nation.³⁰

The funding the CHA received would be the first for a major metropolitan area and the second largest allocation in the nation. In order to receive the full funding, the CHA needed to select sites for 12,000 housing units by August 1950 and 9,000 by August 1951.³¹ The CHA presented a list of seven sites to Mayor Kennelly in October of 1949. Four sites for 5,000 units would be built on blighted land in African American areas and three sites on vacant land in white neighborhoods for 5,000 units.³² The council and mayor immediately met the CHA's vacant land sites with skepticism. The ensuing ten-month controversy from the time the CHA first submitted their package of sites to the mayor in October of 1949 to the compromise with the city council in June 1950 was a drawn out, disorganized, mess that left the CHA with little political power.

The Chicago city council would have to pass any CHA site selection package under the new Illinois legislation. The city council was made up of fifty Aldermen who were elected to four-year terms from wards of roughly 25,000 to 65,000 registered voters.³³ One third of the city council was Irish. The remaining were descendants of

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Chicago Housing Authority, *Annual Reports 1946/47-1960/61*, 31. Harold Washington Public Library, Chicago, Illinois. Municipal Documents Collection.

³¹ "U.S. Approves 21,000 Chicago Housing Units," *Chicago Tribune*, August 18, 1949.

³² Chicago Housing Authority, *Annual Reports 1946/47-1960/61*, 31. Harold Washington Public Library, Chicago, Illinois. Municipal Documents Collection Fifth Floor.

³³ Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest*, 65.

Southern and Eastern European immigrants. Two were African American.³⁴ Once elected to the city council, most Aldermen became more concerned with affairs in their respective wards and wished to remain in office by appealing to the ward's interests. If time permitted, they would consider the interests of the city as a whole. Aldermen were responsible for looking out for the special interests of their constituents and were important members of the community. Public housing was an issue that would intimately change neighborhoods. Alderman would be more likely to respond to their constituent voices against low rent housing than to consider the city's overwhelming need for public housing.

The leadership of the council would have great influence in determining the location for public housing projects. At the time of the site selection controversy, six Aldermen called the "Big Boys" dominated the city council.³⁵ These Aldermen were the most powerful machine politicians in the city and worked closely with Mayor Kennelly on interests pertaining to their wards. The two most powerful "Big Boys" on the council were John J. Duffy and Clarence Wagner. Both represented wards on the South Side of Chicago. Their predominantly white wards included vacant land that was targeted by the CHA for public housing.³⁶ Aldermen from the South Side feared the building of public housing in their wards would bring African Americans and other "undesirable" people into their neighborhoods. The Aldermen distrusted the CHA and remained skeptical of public housing.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 67.

³⁶ Ibid., 87.

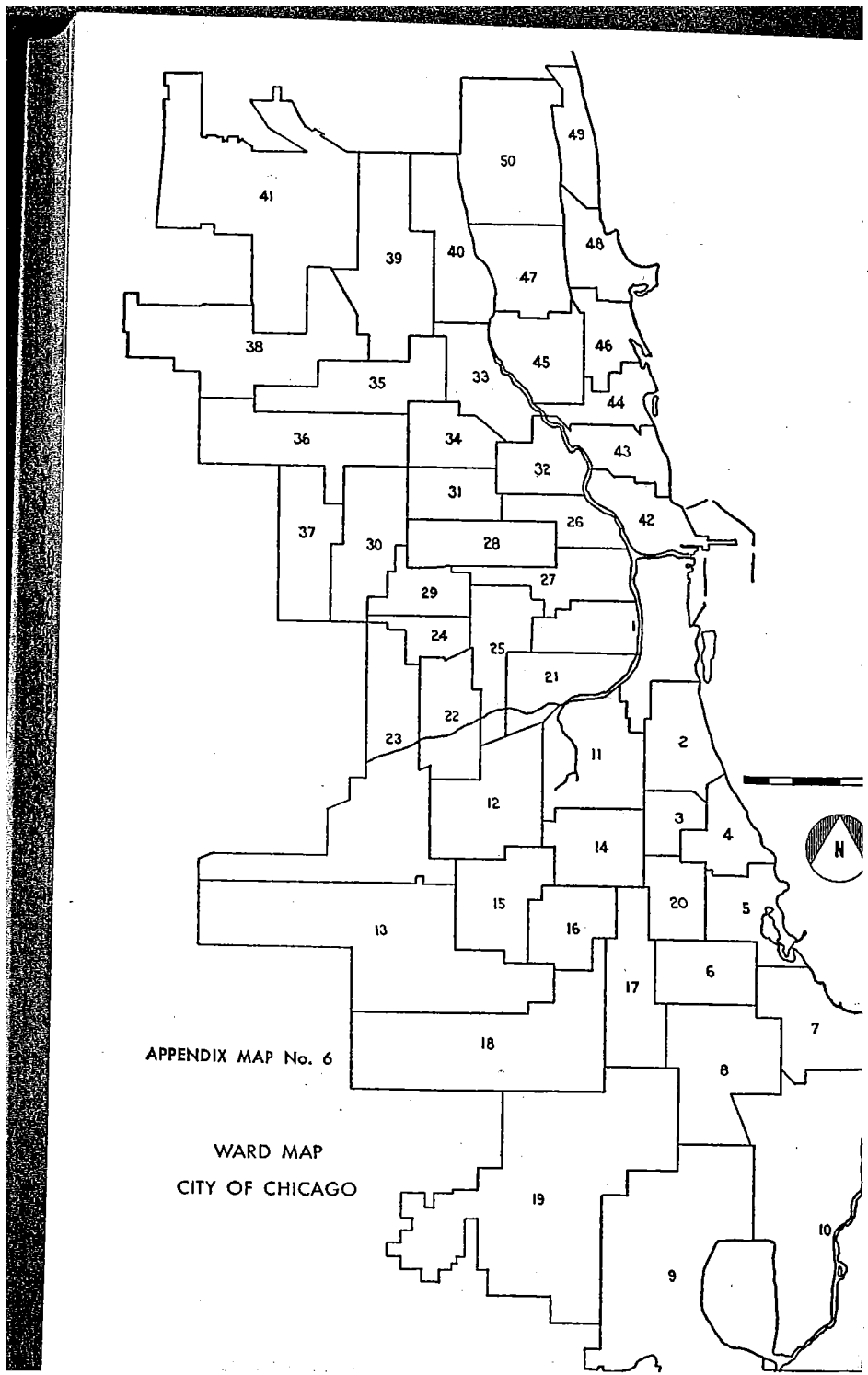


Figure 7. Chicago Ward Map.³⁷

³⁷ Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest*, 336.

The city council detested the CHA because it was a “clean” organization. With thousands of jobs, thousands of units of housing, and millions of dollars in contracts, the CHA had the potential to be a powerful patronage tool.³⁸ However, the CHA refused to give patronage to the “Big Boys” or give them any leverage over the Authority. Patronage was a powerful tool in Chicago politics and the purity of the CHA was a reason the council prolonged the controversy over public housing sites.³⁹ The city council wanted some matter of revenge against the Authority for not providing patronage. Stymieing their site selection package was a way to get back.

There was smaller African American representation in the city council than their numbers in Chicago would indicate. By the end of the 1940s, nearly 500,000 African Americans lived in the city.⁴⁰ Four wards in the city had a population that was predominantly African American. African American Aldermen, Archibald Carey Jr. (R) and William Harvey (D) represented two of these wards. The explanation for the small African American representation is that African Americans were concentrated in the wards of the Black Belt on the South Side. African Americans were located in a small number of wards instead of being distributed throughout the city.⁴¹ Consequently, their power in the city council was diminished.

The Democratic Party machine had dominated Chicago politics since 1923.⁴² During the Great Depression, the Democratic machine was able to get votes in exchange

³⁸ Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest*, 82-83.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁴⁰ Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How it Changed America*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 70-71.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁴² Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest*, 65.

for dispensing jobs, welfare, favors and the prospect of social mobility to immigrants.⁴³ At a time when there was not much offered in the way of public services, the Democratic Party was able to cultivate a loyal multi ethnic coalition. The machine forced Ed Kelly to resign because of his views on racial integration and handpicked Martin Kennelly to run for office in 1947. During the site selection battles, the Democratic machine was able to corral wayward Aldermen who hesitated to vote for the compromise package of sites, reminding them no Alderman could get elected without the support of the Democratic machine. The people did not choose the politicians that ran for office. The machine did.

The resignation of Mayor Edward Kelly in 1947 signaled a change in relations between the executive office and the CHA. Kelly had been mayor of Chicago for fourteen years through the Great Depression. As mayor, Kelly controlled all patronage in the city and was the undisputed boss of the Cook County Democratic Machine. Kelly used his power to support the CHA and racial integration. He isolated the organization from the city council. He was their sponsor and protector.⁴⁴ Elizabeth Wood did not have to provide patronage jobs to Kelly's supporters and was able to have free rein over whomever she chose to hire.⁴⁵

The Democratic Party machine handpicked Martin H. Kennelly to run for mayor and he was elected in 1947. His election jeopardized the relationship between the CHA and the city council. Kennelly decided to let the hostile city council operate independently, meaning that the powerful South Side Aldermen would be able to control

⁴³ *The Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago*, s.v. "Machine Politics."

⁴⁴ Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest*, 83-86.

⁴⁵ Bowly Jr., *The Poorhouse*, 77.

legislation and committee appointments.⁴⁶ Kennelly was invested in maintaining the status quo and was reluctant to pressure racial boundaries. Kennelly and Robert Taylor agreed on very little when it came to public housing.⁴⁷ In addition to Kennelly's election, the passage of the Relocations Act in 1947, giving the council veto power over site selection, presented a challenging environment for the CHA to present their list of public housing sites.

Within the Chicago Democratic machine was the African American sub machine coordinated by Congressman William Dawson. Representing most of Chicago's Black Belt district in the House of Representatives, Dawson was able to build a strong political organization by dispensing favors to his supporters.⁴⁸ In return for giving the Democratic Party the votes of African Americans, Dawson was provided federal patronage.⁴⁹ He was also vice chairman of the Cook County Central Committee and of the Democratic National Committee. Dawson was also the committeeman for Alderman William Harvey's ward.⁵⁰ As committeeman, Dawson made all the important political decisions for the party in the ward. This particular ward was located in the heart of the Black Belt and allowed Dawson to expand his political empire over the entire African American community. Dawson was the most important African American politician in Chicago and would remain in Congress for a quarter century.

The passage of the Federal Housing Act and the CHA acquiring funds for 21,000 units at a cost of 210 million dollars in August 1949 for public housing was the beginning

⁴⁶ Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest*, 86-87.

⁴⁷ Roger Biles, "Race and Housing in Chicago," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society (1998-)* 94, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 35. <http://jstor.org/> (accessed January 1, 2013).

⁴⁸ Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 129-130.

⁴⁹ Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest*, 76-77.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 67.

of the site selection controversy.⁵¹ After a few months of survey and research on possible sites for the housing, the CHA believed that the best way to go about re housing residents displaced by slum clearance and urban redevelopment was through vacant land public housing. Residents displaced by slum clearance such as those from the Lake Meadows Project, would need a place to live before the redevelopment could begin. Also, housing could be built on vacant land faster and cheaper than on blighted land. This would increase the housing supply faster. Clearing slums would just reduce the number of units in the city and would not solve the housing shortage.⁵²

The Authority presented their proposal for seven sites to Mayor Kennelly in October 1949. Four sites on blighted land would contain 5,000 units while three sites on vacant land would have 5,000 units costing 100 million dollars.⁵³ After Robert Taylor presented the plan to Kennelly, the mayor did not even bother to read the list.⁵⁴ Kennelly claimed he did not want to endorse the sites and commit himself. He did not even read the newspaper articles on them. Kennelly maintained a hands off approach towards public housing site location and could not be convinced to support either the City Council or the CHA. Lacking Kennelly's endorsement, the proposal proceeded to the City Council Housing Committee in December 1949.⁵⁵

In a meeting between the CHA administration that included Robert Taylor and Elizabeth Wood, and the council housing committee, Taylor outlined the vacant land

⁵¹ "U.S. Approves 21,000 Chicago Housing Units," *Chicago Tribune*, August 18, 1949.

⁵² Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning and the Public Interest*, 34.

⁵³ "Propose 7 Sites for \$100,000,000 Public Housing," *Chicago Tribune*, November 7, 1949.

⁵⁴ Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest*, 174.

⁵⁵ CHA Annual Report 1950, Harold Washington Public Library, Municipal Documents Collection.

policy. He detailed the desire to build on vacant land but did not articulate why. He also said the projects would result in well-integrated and complete neighborhoods but also failed to describe what this meant. Finally, Taylor urged haste before the federal funding ran out.⁵⁶

After scrutinizing the list of sites, the housing committee decided they would need more information from the CHA about the quality of the sites. Three South Side Aldermen on the committee came out in strong opposition to the package. Most of the criticism came from Reginald DuBois. DuBois had a long-standing bias against the CHA. Two years earlier he had claimed the CHA was guilty of inefficiency and mismanagement in an investigation of their operating procedures.⁵⁷ Another Alderman who opposed the list of sites was the African American Democrat William Harvey.⁵⁸ Harvey was particularly resistant to tearing down structurally sound buildings in slum neighborhoods.⁵⁹ He feared the disintegration of strong African American communities. The criticism coming from the council centered on the CHA for overlooking the areas of greatest need for public housing and using vacant land that could be used for private development. After scrutinizing the list of sites, the housing committee concluded that the list included too many sites on vacant land in white neighborhoods and rejected the proposal.⁶⁰

In February of 1950, five days of public hearings were held on the list of sites. On one side of the debate were the opponents of public housing. The most active opposition

⁵⁶ Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest*, 174.

⁵⁷ CHA Annual Report 1948.

⁵⁸ Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest*, 174.

⁵⁹ Thomas Buck, "Aldermen Tell Flaws in Sites Chosen By CHA," *Chicago Tribune*, December 18, 1949.

⁶⁰ Bowly Jr., *The Poorhouse*, 78.

came from neighborhood organizations in white and predominantly Irish Catholic areas. White Irish Catholics just one or two generations earlier had managed to escape the ethnic ghettos and dismayed at the perceived invasion of the slum into their nice neighborhoods. This fear fueled their vocal opposition during the public hearings.⁶¹ These groups were mostly from the South Side and far Southwest Side of the city. The Southwest Neighborhood Council, the Southtown Planning Association, and the Taxpayers Association Committee organized homeowners to protest public housing.⁶² They argued that low rent housing would decrease the property value of their homes. Changes in property value would change the character of the neighborhoods. White homeowners wanted to maintain the status quo of their neighborhoods. In reality, African Americans moving into white neighborhoods would actually increase property values since they were willing to pay more for the same housing.⁶³

African American activists, liberal city planners and the CHA supported public housing but African American support was mixed. Low income African Americans could not articulate their views while the middle and upper classes remained disinterested. African American Republican Alderman Archibald Carey supported public housing but also realized that whites would control it. As long as African Americans faced hostility from moving into white neighborhoods, they would want to live closer to African American cultural and social life. Other African American leaders, such as Reverend J.C. Austin criticized the Lake Meadows Redevelopment Project for its displacement of African American residents. The slogan, “Slum clearance is Negro clearance” appeared

⁶¹ Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning and the Public Interest*, 102-103.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning and the Public Interest*, 106.

across the Black Belt. Austin believed that public housing would be the same. It would displace more African Americans and allow whites to retake the centrally located land.⁶⁴ The divergent opinions of African Americans on public housing and slum clearance show a community that was divided and skeptical about the ability of public housing to breakdown residential segregation.

After the public hearings in February, the housing committee presented the original proposal of seven sites to the city council. Bitter opposition forced the council to reject five of the seven sites. Two slum land sites were approved for only 2,665 units. If all seven sites had passed, there would have been a total of 10,000 units.⁶⁵ The housing committee suggested two more slum land sites and seven on vacant land. After studying the sites, the CHA resubmitted their original seven sites and two additional sites on vacant land for a total of 12,000 units. 8,000 would be on vacant land and 4,000 on slum-cleared land.⁶⁶

After the hearings and CHA's submission of a second package of sites, there was still no agreement. Recognizing the stalemate, two of the most powerful Aldermen on the city council, John J. Duffy and William Lancaster, decided to recalibrate the proposal. They knew the politics of public housing and how difficult it would be to pass a proposal with too many sites on vacant land. Duffy and Lancaster increased the number of sites on slum-cleared land in the African American ghetto. The Duffy-Lancaster plan included 10,000 units on slum-cleared land and 2,000 units on vacant land.⁶⁷ Eight of the sites

⁶⁴ Ibid. 101-102.

⁶⁵ L. Alex Wilson, "Race Hate Blocks 7,300 Housing Units in Chicago," *Chicago Defender*, March 11, 1950.

⁶⁶ CHA Annual Reports 1950.

⁶⁷ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 89-90.

were in the African American neighborhoods and seven were on small vacant land sites on the Southwest side of the city.⁶⁸ The plan would displace over 12,000 African American families yet provide relocation housing for only 2,112. When the projects were eventually built, the net addition to the housing supply was only 47 units.⁶⁹ The Duffy-Lancaster plan was almost the complete opposite of the CHA plan and would allow more public housing in African American areas.

The only way any package of sites could pass the city council would be to make the list attractive to Aldermen. The Duffy-Lancaster plan largely kept African Americans in their previous neighborhoods and prevented the white exaggerated fear of deteriorating property values. This made their plan attractive to Aldermen. The great irony of the Duffy-Lancaster plan was that it called for more slum clearance, which would push African Americans into white areas since there was a shortage of relocation housing. Obviously, this was something the Aldermen definitely did not want.⁷⁰ Additionally, Duffy and Lancaster overlooked the high cost of city services for high-density public housing projects. The Duffy-Lancaster public housing plan would put new public housing in neighborhoods that already had public housing and all of the sites were located in black communities. Extensive demolition and displacement of residents was required.⁷¹ The plan was the beginning of a committed process by the city council to restrict the location of public housing to African American communities.

Supporters of public housing were put in a difficult position with the Duffy-Lancaster plan. African American leaders, liberal planners, and the CHA opposed the

⁶⁸ Bowly Jr., *The Poorhouse*, 78-79.

⁶⁹ Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest*, 199-200.

⁷⁰ Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest*, 219-220.

⁷¹ Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto* 228-229.

package on the basis that it would solidify segregation and prevent African American residents from leaving the ghetto.⁷² However, rejection of the plan could risk losing all federal money for public housing in Chicago. They appealed to the Public Housing Administration (PHA) for help.

Federal public housing officials were well aware of what was going on in Chicago but their response failed to initiate any substantial change. The PHA required the city council to change the plans to meet racial equity. More sites in white neighborhoods were needed but no specification on how many units. Duffy and Lancaster then added on a site in a white neighborhood. In reality, this neighborhood was in rapid racial transition but was still white.⁷³ This lone adjustment was good enough for the PHA. The CHA's hope for support from the federal government ended.

Finally, in June 1950, the CHA's Board of Commissioners accepted the Duffy-Lancaster Plan. All but one commissioner voted to accept the plan. All in all, the Duffy-Lancaster Plan contained thirteen sites. Eight sites were in the inner city on slum cleared land for 8,000 to 11,000 units. Of the five sites in outlying areas on vacant land, only three projects were actually built and two were extensions of existing projects.⁷⁴ Duffy and Lancaster half-heartedly included vacant land sites in order to appease the CHA and the federal government. The CHA's original list asked for 4,000 units in the slums and 8,000 units on vacant land. The Duffy Lancaster Plan delivered 10,250 units in the slums and 2,100 units on vacant land.⁷⁵

⁷² Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 90.

⁷³ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 90-91.

⁷⁴ Bowly Jr., *The Poorhouse*, 80.

⁷⁵ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 90-91.

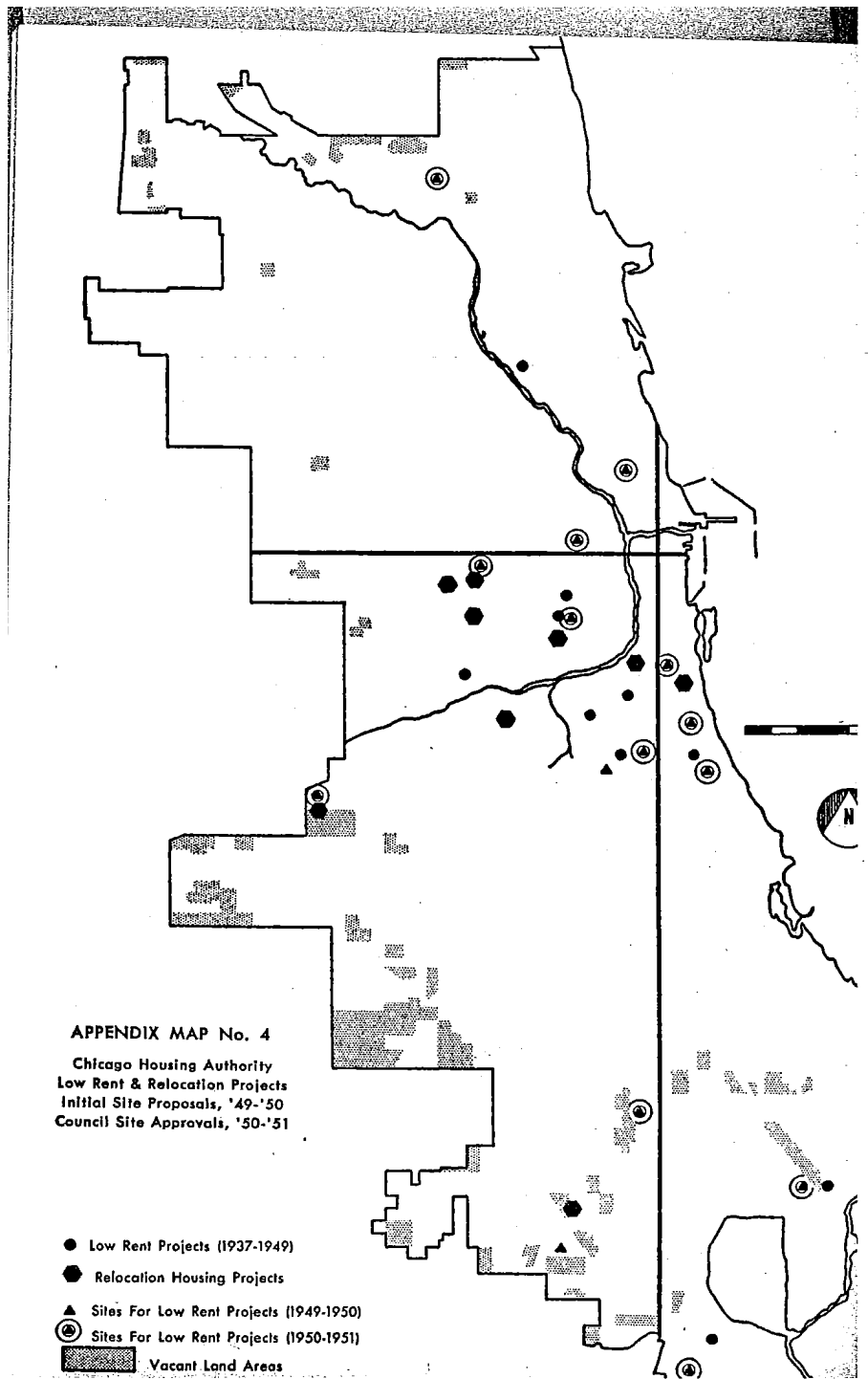


Figure 8. Chicago Housing Authority Initial Site Proposals and Council Site Proposals, 1949-1950.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest*, 334.

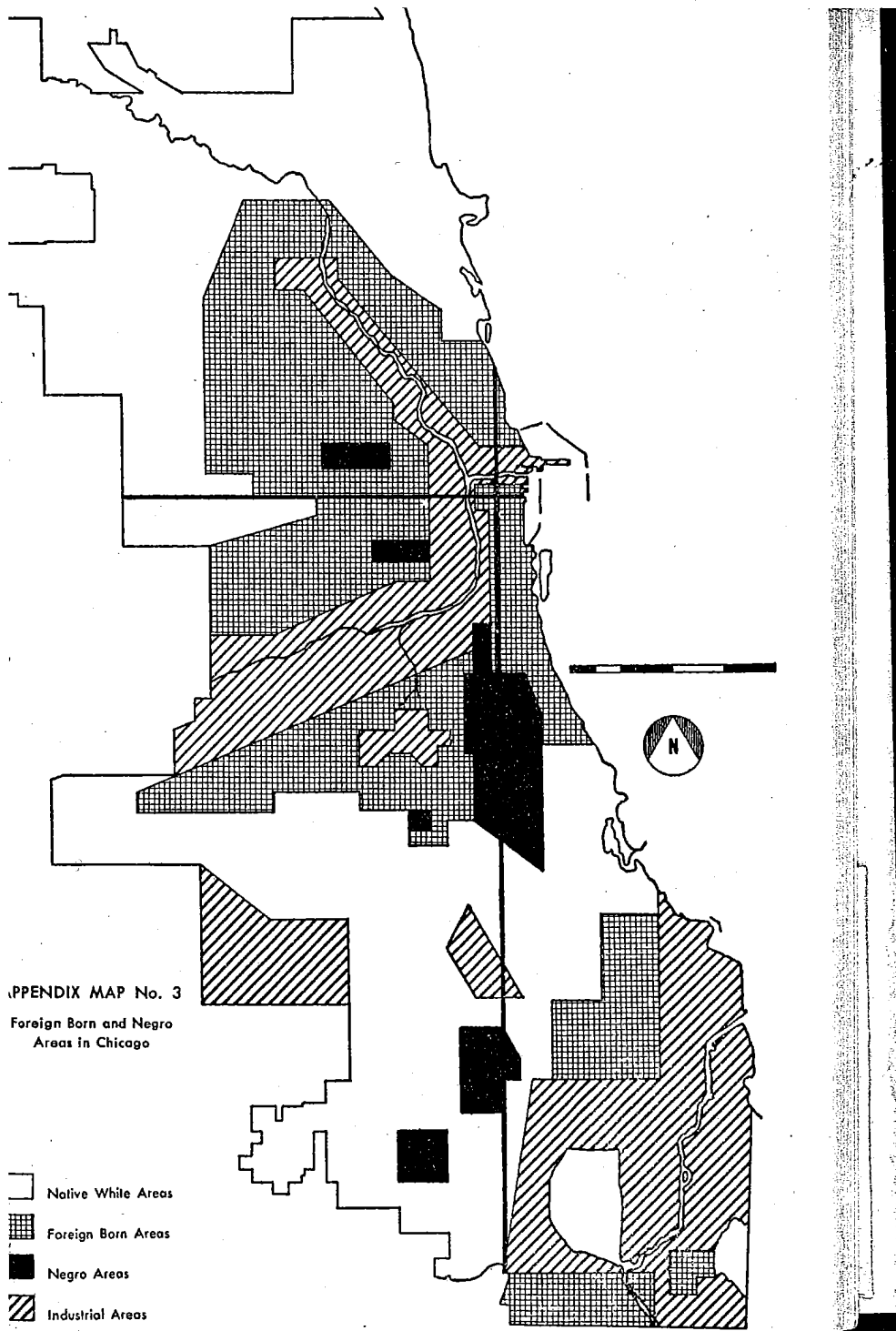


Figure 9. Foreign Born and African American Areas of Chicago, 1949-1950.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest*, 333.

In July, public hearings on the Duffy-Lancaster plan were held yet again and the anti public housing forces were stronger than ever. Homeowners argued there was no need for another project, despite the housing shortage in Chicago. They claimed there would be school shortages with the influx of new children. Other opponents argued that projects did not do enough to relieve congestion, density, and segregation. There was not going to be enough public housing for all of the displaced families either.⁷⁸ The White Circle League, a race hate group, spread propaganda about public housing. They wanted to confine African Americans to the ghetto and keep them out of white areas.⁷⁹

The blatant racism in the location of the sites worried three Aldermen supporters of public housing. In a report, Aldermen Becker, Carey, and Merriam argued that the number of units on vacant land should be increased to 9,200. They urged the council to reject the proposal saying, “It is clearer than ever, that the selection of any vacant site will arouse the opposition of the surrounding community. Nevertheless, the problem of slum clearance and providing decent housing for low income families is ours....the acceptance of this program will constitute a blow at the principles and practices of public housing and slum removal. It will permanently freeze a vicious pattern of segregation. *Not even the impelling need for housing justifies compromise with such basic principles.*”⁸⁰ Unfortunately these principled Aldermen were the only ones on the council who spoke out against the plan.

After another vociferous round of public hearings, the Duffy-Lancaster plan went to the city council for a vote in August. The outcome was hardly determined. Many

⁷⁸ Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning and the Public Interest*, 231-232; 236.

⁷⁹ L. Alex Wilson, “Race Hate Blocks 7,300 Housing Units in Chicago,” *Chicago Defender*, March 11, 1950.

⁸⁰ Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest*, 238.

wayward Democratic Aldermen had to be forcefully persuaded by Democratic leaders the day of the vote.⁸¹ Ultimately, the Democrats had little to fear as the plan passed 35-12. Interestingly, the machine allowed the South Side Democrats to vote against the plan because of their tenuous position in their wards. The machine worked and the controversial Duffy-Lancaster plan was passed.

The passage of the Duffy-Lancaster plan in August 1950 began a pattern of building public housing in neighborhoods that already had public housing and were located in African American neighborhoods. Building these projects would require extensive demolition and displacement of residents. These residents would then go to the CHA for relocation housing. This process of slum clearance and displacement was the beginning of urban renewal in Chicago.⁸²

After passage of the Duffy-Lancaster plan, the CHA lost two out of the four sites planned for white neighborhoods. The Chicago Sanitary Board owned one of the tracts of vacant land and refused to sell to the Authority after Republicans replaced Democrats on the Board. The Chicago and Western Indiana Railroad prevented an extension of the Trumbull Park project on the far South Side as well. The CHA even tried to redraw the plans to satisfy the railroad. It is unclear whether race or other outside pressures contributed to the removal of the two white sites.⁸³ Ultimately, the CHA lost potentially one thousand units of housing on white sites, while all the sites in African American neighborhoods were eventually constructed.

⁸¹ Ibid., 238-239.

⁸² Hirsch *Making the Second Ghetto*, 228-229.

⁸³ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 91.

Robert Taylor and several other progressive leaders frustrated by their defeat left the CHA in 1950. Taylor's resignation was the culmination of years of frustration with the city council to recognize and remedy the terrible housing situation for African Americans. The *Chicago Defender* praised Taylor's service writing:

With great intelligence and a vast knowledge of housing, Mr. Taylor has made a magnificent contribution to our city and he has done it against great odds. Every advancement in public housing has been fought step by step. Almost every new project drew opposition from those who could not or would not see the true picture of Chicago's plight in housing.⁸⁴

It was clear with Taylor's resignation that plans for slum clearance and public housing were not worked out by the CHA, but by selfish interests and racial divisions. Taylor understood the problems of race and housing in Chicago and his resignation was the end of his crusade to breakdown residential segregation through public housing. Following Taylor's departure, new and more conservative members gained positions at the CHA.⁸⁵ Eventually, the CHA would be drained of its progressive housing leaders.

The conflict with the city council badly damaged the CHA's relationship with the city and this impacted their ability to obtain funding to build public housing. The CHA administration was effectively cut off from decisions made by the council. In order to get federal money for their plans, the CHA needed permission from the city council. In late 1950, when the CHA asked for funding for 10,000 units, the council ignored them. A later proposal for 3,500 units was also ignored. Finally, the CHA developed a list of sites they thought could pass the council and were approved. 2,000 units for three sites in the Black Belt were passed.⁸⁶

⁸⁴“Robert R. Taylor Resigns,” *Chicago Defender*, September 30, 1950.

⁸⁵ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 91.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 92-93.

The election of mayor Richard J. Daley in 1955 allowed the city council to completely control public housing site selection. Daley appointed Alvin Rose to head the Authority in 1956. Rose was able to refine the process of site selection between the CHA and council.⁸⁷ Whenever there were disagreements about a site, Rose immediately shelved the plan. Additionally, Daley staffed the CHA with people who remained loyal to him and were able to accelerate the process of site selection.⁸⁸ Rose and Daley streamlined the site selection process between the CHA and city council allowing more public housing to be built in African American neighborhoods.

Through public housing site selection, Daley and the CHA were able to keep African Americans away from whites.⁸⁹ In 1955, two thirds of CHA tenants were African American and non-whites made up 73 percent of applicants trying to live in the projects.⁹⁰ By 1959, this number had risen to 85 percent. As the city council made more choices about the location of public housing, projects were almost exclusively built in the African American ghetto. By 1968, of the 54 CHA projects, 91 percent were located in predominantly African American neighborhoods.⁹¹

The decision to build massive projects like the Robert Taylor Homes in the ghetto was a concerted effort by racist politicians and whites that outright refused to live near African Americans. Well-intentioned advocates of public housing stood no chance in the face of such determination and resistance. The combination of private and public interests to effectively conceal, confine, and contain the African American community into a

⁸⁷ Roger Biles, "Race and Housing in Chicago," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* (1998-) 94, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 36. <http://jstor.org/> (accessed January 1, 2013).

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Biles, "Race and Housing in Chicago," 36-37.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

ghetto would have long-term impacts for Chicago and American society. The outcome of the site selection battles between the CHA and the city council and the decision to build public housing in African American neighborhoods was the beginning of state sponsored segregation.

CHAPTER THREE

TRUMBULL PARK: THE COLLAPSE OF THE CHICAGO HOUSING AUTHORITY

After decades of contestation over housing, employment, and neighborhood space, Chicago's racial equilibrium was upset once again. The prolonged migration of African Americans from 1940 to 1960 had made Chicago the epicenter of racial tension and conflict. African Americans, who had arrived in large numbers looking for work in wartime industries, instead found a severe lack of affordable housing and terrible living conditions. The only place they were welcome, the Black Belt, quickly deteriorated into an overcrowded slum. Since the geographic boundaries of the Black Belt had not expanded in relation to the growing population, African Americans were confined to deteriorating housing with minimal opportunities for relief. African Americans found themselves trapped.

The Chicago Housing Authority was the only agency able to help relieve the housing crisis. Returning war veterans, expanding families, and combined with the emigration, made the housing shortage worse. Initially organized to clear the slums and build affordable public housing, the CHA eventually became a progressive institution fighting for the housing rights of African Americans. This evolution not surprisingly opened the CHA to criticism from whites determined to keep African Americans out of their neighborhoods. Public housing was a controversial program in the United States because of the expanded powers of the federal government and CHA efforts to integrate these scrutinized projects met swift backlash. Their efforts to integrate public housing

failed after astonishing white resistance during the disturbances in the Trumbull Park neighborhood in 1953-1954.

During World War II, 65,000 African Americans migrated to Chicago looking for work.¹ From 1940 to 1950, Chicago's black population grew by 77 percent, from 278,000 to 492,000.² Around 2,200 African Americans arrived in Chicago every week.³ In the next decade the black population had almost doubled again. By 1960, 812,637 African Americans lived in Chicago and made up 30 percent of Chicago's population.⁴ Yet available housing had not increased. The overcrowding created terrible conditions; poverty, crime, gambling, and prostitution plagued the South Side Black Belt. Yet it was better than the conditions in the South.

Encompassing only six square miles, the Black Belt's borders had not changed significantly since the end of World War I, despite the rapid increase in population. In 1920, the district stretched from 31st Street to 60th Street and was bordered on the west by State Street and the east by Cottage Grove Avenue. Between 1920 and 1930, the Black Belt expanded to include a small section of neighborhoods east of Cottage Grove. By 1940, the Black Belt had only added one section between 60th, 63rd, South Parkway, and Cottage Grove.⁵ Surrounded on the west by hostile Irish residents and the east by upper

¹ Dominic Pacyga, *Chicago: A Biography*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 284-285.

² Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How it Changed America*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 70-71.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 2-3.

⁵ St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis A Study of Negro Life in A Northern City* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1945), 63.

class whites, the only direction the Black Belt could expand was south. As more and more migrants arrived, this was the general pattern of Black Belt expansion.

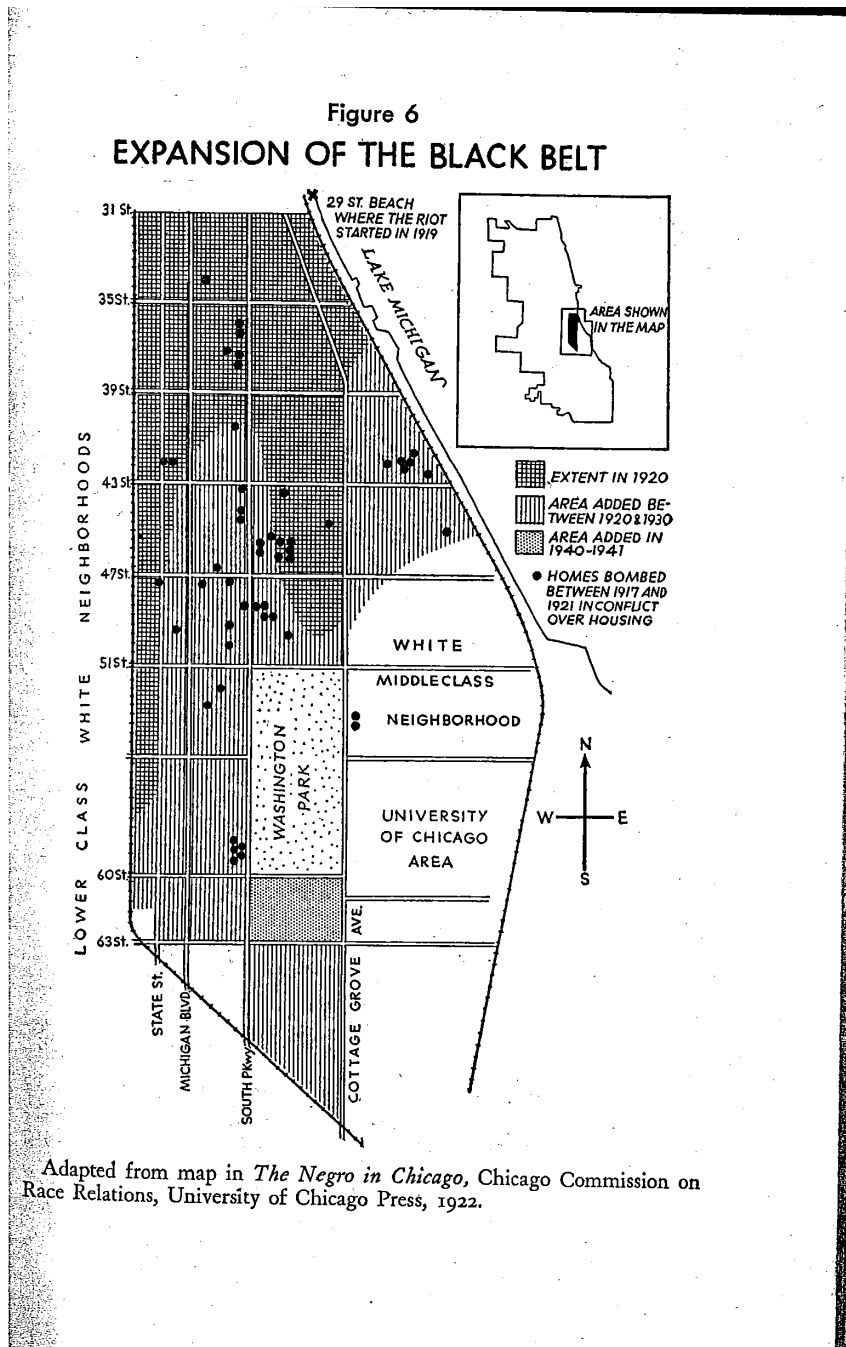


Figure 10. Expansion of the Black Belt.⁶

⁶ Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 63.

Upon arrival in Chicago, migrants temporarily moved in with friends or relatives, increasing the number of people per housing unit and leading to overuse. Consequently, migrants lived in old and rundown housing. Crumbling tenements endangered residents. Collapsing porches were common and many fell to their death.⁷ The surge of new residents enabled landlords to divide apartments in half to accommodate more tenants and double the rents. These kitchenette apartments often had no water, electricity, or heating. In some cases, nine families had to use one bathroom.⁸ The Chicago Housing Authority became responsible for alleviating these conditions.

The appalling housing conditions aggravated poverty and social disorder. The black belt had the highest proportion of families on welfare in Chicago. Over 50 percent of families relied on public assistance.⁹ Widespread poverty created other social problems like prostitution and gambling. High density and overcrowding facilitated the spread of diseases like tuberculosis, resulting in high sickness and death rates.¹⁰ Juvenile delinquency and high rates of illegitimacy damaged families. No recreational facilities and decaying infrastructure compounded the problems. Structurally, half of the Black Belt was considered blighted by city planners.¹¹ There was no garbage disposal, the schools were overcrowded, the crime rate was high, and police enforcement was non-existent.

The African American community's living conditions affected their perception in mainstream society. The media played a critical role in perpetuating images of poverty

⁷ Frank London Brown, *Trumbull Park*, (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1959), 1-12; hereafter cited as Brown, *Trumbull Park*.

⁸ Satter, *Family Properties*, 36.

⁹ Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 203.

¹⁰ Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 202

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 202.

and disorder in African American neighborhoods. Newspaper images of African Americans living in terrible housing conditions unfairly connected race and class with housing.¹² People assumed if you lived in the slums it was because of your character. In reality African Americans aspired to be socially mobile. They wanted to escape the slums. When African Americans moved into CHA projects in white neighborhoods, however, whites resisted because they associated slum conditions and neighborhood decline with African Americans. They believed integrating neighborhoods through public housing would destroy their valuable space. The CHA therefore faced the difficult task of integrating public housing projects in areas where whites feared and detested the thought.

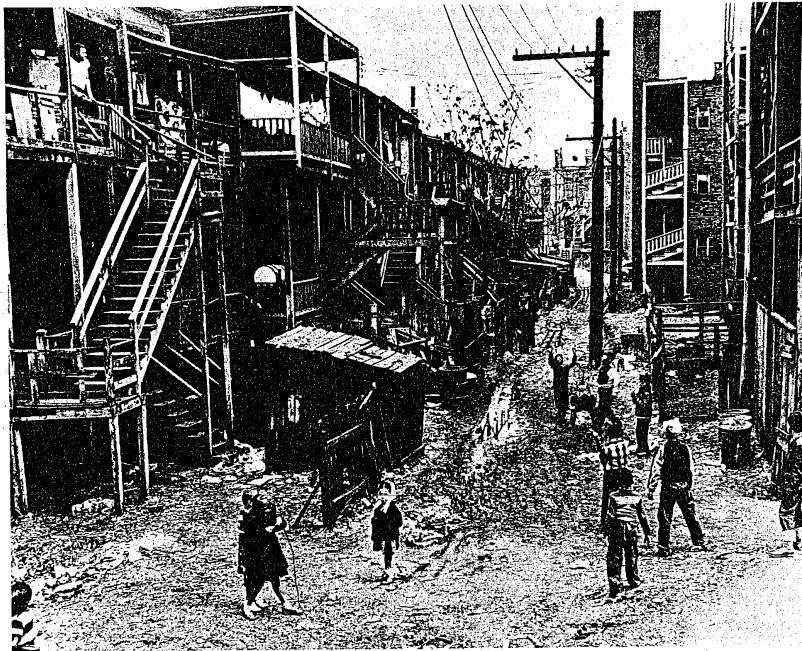


Figure 11. Black Belt slum.¹³

¹² Marlene Kadar, Jeanne Perreault, and Linda Warley, ed., *Paragraphs, Histories, and Meanings* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 114-115.

¹³ Devereux Bowly Jr. *The Poorhouse: Subsidized Housing in Chicago 1895-1976* (London: Feffer & Simons, Inc., 1978), 29.

Incorporated in 1937 by Mayor Edward Kelly, the Chicago Housing Authority worked to improve the housing circumstances for African Americans through slum clearance and building affordable housing for displaced slum dwellers. At the conception of the agency, slum clearance was the priority. However, before the slums could be removed, the CHA needed to find housing for the displaced residents. Their solution was to build integrated public housing on vacant land near the outskirts of the city in predominantly white neighborhoods.

Under the leadership of executive secretary Elizabeth Wood, the CHA initiated prewar slum clearance in 1937. Using state funds and with guidance from the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the CHA demolished over 8,000 units primarily in the Black Belt.¹⁴ Once clear, public housing projects were built on the sites. Essentially, the CHA was clearing slums in black neighborhoods and displacing African American residents who then looked to the CHA for public housing.¹⁵ The CHA was rather effectively ensuring sustainability by constantly displacing residents who then needed public housing.

Complicating the issue for the CHA was the wartime housing crisis and suburban development. The return of war veterans created new demand for housing. Families began to grow and needed more space. Over 1.1 million families needed housing yet there were only 900,000 available units.¹⁶ In addition, the only housing construction occurred in the suburbs. 20,000 housing units were built in the suburbs compared to only

¹⁴ D. Bradford Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster: The Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 44.

¹⁵ Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 230.

¹⁶ Martin Meyerson and Edward C. Banfield, *Politics, Planning and the Public Interest: The Case of Public Housing in Chicago* (London: The Free Press, 1955), 29-30.

6,000 in the city.¹⁷ By clearing the slums, the CHA would lower the number of units in the city at the precise moment these units were most needed. Realizing this, the CHA built public housing to increase the number of units in the city. The CHA requested funds for 40,000 units from the federal government. They received money to build 20,000. Despite not receiving funds for half of the units they desired, Chicago still acquired more money for public housing than any other city.¹⁸ The combination of suburban housing construction and federal funding for public housing gradually relieved Chicago's housing crisis.

Since racial transition and integration of white neighborhoods was blocked for a number of reasons, African Americans turned to the CHA for housing. The CHA was the only organization able to address the slum conditions in the ghetto and provide decent housing for African Americans. Consequently, whites viewed the organization as favoring African Americans. Low rents made CHA projects attractive to poor African Americans and 92 percent of residents living in CHA projects from 1937-1945 were African American.¹⁹

The CHA was caught in a struggle between two views of integration; open occupancy and planned quotas. Open occupancy, the idea that African Americans could live anywhere regardless of race was popular among civil rights leaders. Open occupancy would relieve restrictions to African American housing by allowing them to determine their housing choices without concern for the prejudices and skin color of their

¹⁷ Bowly Jr. *The Poorhouse*, 55.

¹⁸ Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest*, 32-33.

¹⁹ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 65-66.

neighbors.²⁰ Open occupancy however would result in African Americans choosing public housing and whites fleeing the developments because of their many housing options. Planned quotas, while somewhat unsettling to civil rights leaders, would ensure a certain percentage of the tenants of a project were African American or white. For instance, if a white family left a CHA unit, the unit would remain vacant until another white family was found. Quotas would be the only way to integrate the developments. Instead of open occupancy, the CHA placed quotas on some of their projects. Federal reports recommended 40 to 60 percent total black occupancy for a single project yet discouraged quotas.²¹

African American embrace of public housing, combined with white resistance made integration difficult. For African Americans, a move to public housing was a step up from the decaying slums. CHA projects had more amenities, space, and better utilities. Whites had more housing options and, for the most part, could afford better housing. They viewed public housing as a step down in status. Attracting whites to public housing was the challenge for the CHA. When projects became majority African American, it was almost impossible for the CHA to find whites willing to live there. Essentially, “African Americans were willing to be pioneers in largely white projects, but whites would not stay long in black-majority projects, even when located close to white neighborhoods.”²² African Americans held no qualms about living as a minority in a project because their previous housing situation was so terrible. Whites felt uncomfortable as soon as the racial balance reached a point where they became the minority. The CHA had to deal with

²⁰ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 100.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 105-106.

²² Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 57.

white resistance to integrated public housing and great African American demand for their units. Racial quotas attempted to portray an illusion of integration when in reality whites wanted no part in the effort. As the episode at Trumbull Park would show, integration even when unplanned was extremely dangerous for African Americans.

Donald and Betty Howard, and their two young children, lived in a small apartment on South Parkway in the Black Belt with Mrs. Howard's grandmother.²³ Fruitless in their search for more spacious accommodations, Donald and Betty Howard applied for public housing their only alternative. The Howard's motivation for moving to Trumbull Park was a desire to escape their cramped housing situation. Low rents and more amenities were attractive as well. The first African American family to live in the Trumbull Park Homes, the Howard's arrival showed that massive white resistance to the presence of African Americans could end even the most noble integration efforts.

Built in the far South Side community of South Deering in 1938, Trumbull Park Homes was one of Chicago's first public housing projects. Constructed on vacant land in a predominantly white neighborhood far away from the Black Belt, the projects included three story apartment buildings and row houses.²⁴ The surrounding community consisted of second and third generation immigrants who resisted change and were suspicious of low-income people. The CHA cautiously approached integration at projects like Trumbull Park fearing another race riot like the infamous uprising in 1919. As early as 1940, whites living in the project feared integration when three Latinos were admitted.²⁵

²³ L. F. Palmer Jr., "Family Prisoner of Mob Two Weeks," *Chicago Defender*, August 22, 1953, National edition, p.4, col.3.

²⁴ J.S. Fuerst, *When Public Housing Was Paradise: Building Community in Chicago*, (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2003), 22.

²⁵ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 54-55.

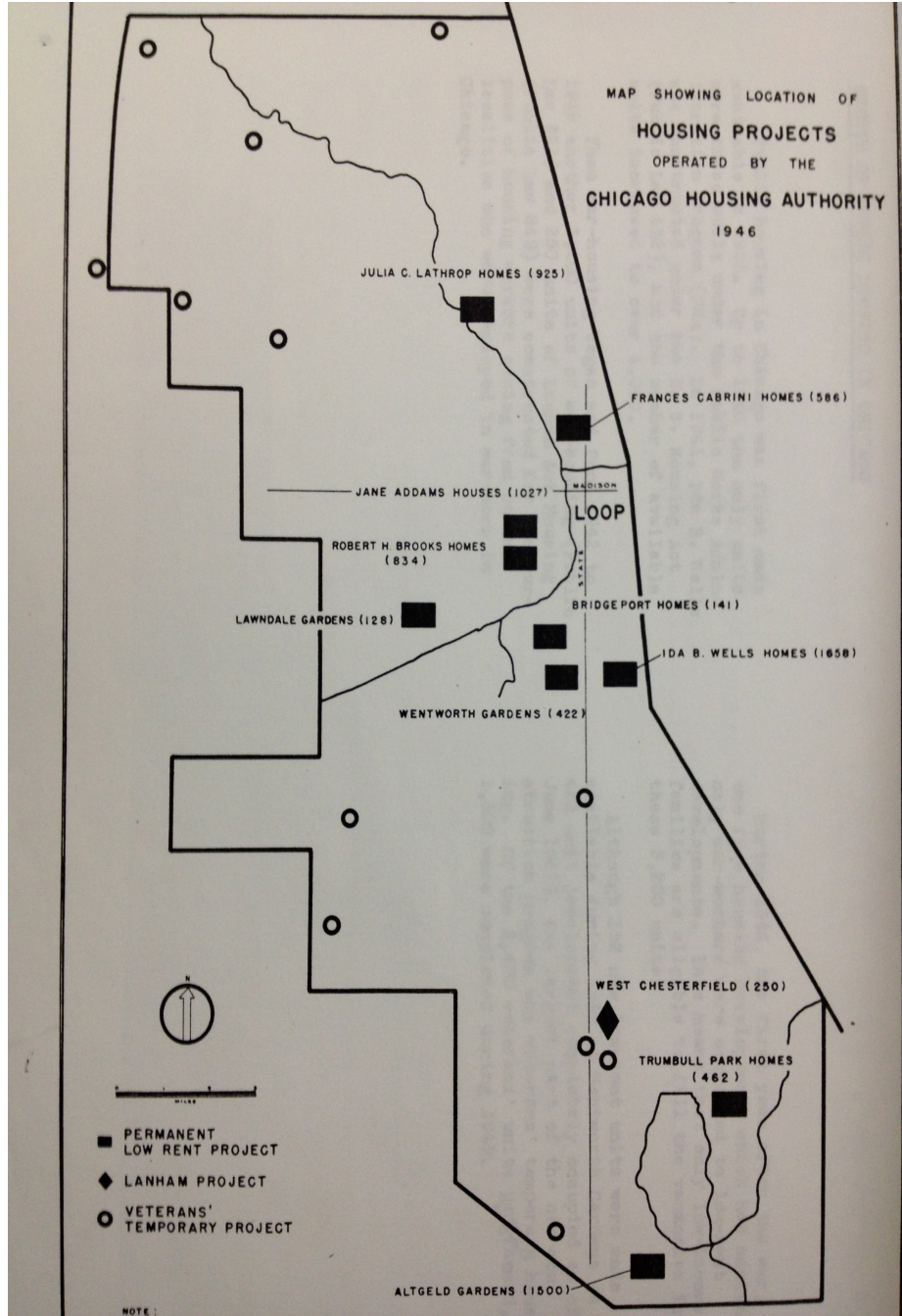


Figure 12. Location of Chicago Housing Authority Developments, 1946.²⁶

²⁶ Chicago Housing Authority Annual Reports 1946/47-1960/61. Harold Washington Public Library Municipal Documents Collection.

Early in 1953, Donald and Betty Howard applied for public housing with the CHA and were placed on a waiting list. Not content to wait, the Howards decided to drive around Chicago looking for vacancies. They found a vacancy in the all white Trumbull Park Homes. In May 1953, Betty, a very light skinned African American, applied and was admitted into the Trumbull Park Homes. Donald, who was a much darker skin color, was not present at the time of the application.²⁷

On July 30, 1953, the Howard family moved into their new apartment. At first, the Howard's experienced no trouble from their neighbors. A few Latinos lived alongside them who even appeared to be darker than the Howards.²⁸ A few days after the Howards arrived, the project manager visited their apartment and was surprised to discover an African American family. News that a black family was living in the projects spread into the surrounding community. On August 5, 1953, an unidentified resident hurled a brick through the front window of the Howard's apartment. For the next two weeks the Howards barricaded themselves in their home as white residents heaved bricks at their apartment.²⁹

Whites used many forms of violence and intimidation to threaten the Howards and even African Americans who lived outside the neighborhood. White violence included throwing bricks at the apartment, slashing tires, verbal intimidation, and attacking the police.³⁰ Cars and buses driven by African Americans were stoned and

²⁷ L. F. Palmer JR., "Family Prisoner of Mob Two Weeks," *Chicago Defender*, August 22, 1953, National edition, p.4, col.3.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ By North American, Newspaper Alliance. "Site of Race Riots in 1953 Now Calm." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Feb 24, 1957.

whites burned convenience stores patronized by African Americans.³¹ Going for a walk was dangerous and traveling to work required a police escort.³²

Nearly one thousand rioters from the surrounding community packed the outskirts of the project for two weeks. The South Deering Improvement Association (SDIA) declared the neighborhood all white and organized bombings to intimidate the Howards and other African American families. Providing legal and financial assistance to those arrested in connection with the bombings, the SDIA was instrumental in organizing and maintaining the intensity of the rioting.³³ 700 policemen attempted to protect the family and their home. Between August 1953 and May 1955 over 200 adults were arrested. The CHA declared that any tenants of the Trumbull Park homes arrested and convicted in connection with the disturbances would be evicted.³⁴ Since most rioters did not live in the projects, the CHA's threats did not deter them. Whites created an inhospitable, violent, and chaotic living environment for the Howards and other African Americans who were caught nearby.

In the fall of 1953, as the violence continued to threaten the family, the Howards reached out to the NAACP for assistance. Already active working with white and African Americans on integration in the city, the Chicago branch of the NAACP provided vital legal protection and assistance to the Howard family. The NAACP paid for the Howard's legal fees and court costs when Donald was falsely accused of discharging a firearm at

³¹ Bowly Jr., *The Poorhouse*, 80.

³² Arnold R. Hirsch, "Massive Resistance in the Urban North: Trumbull Park Chicago 1953-1966," *Journal of American History* 82, no. 2 (1995): 524, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2082185> (accessed 4 October 2012).

³³ Hirsch, "Massive Resistance," 531.

³⁴ Author Unkown, "Order Eviction of Convicted In Trumbull Row," *Chicago Tribune*, August 25, 1953.

white rioters in April 1954. Pressuring the CHA to end segregated housing, the NAACP even filed suit to end all white projects. As it became clear the white violence was not dissipating, the Howard's considered leaving Trumbull Park. As their move became imminent, the NAACP became more intimately involved with the family. Organizers held meetings at the Howard's home and a demonstration was held at a local baseball field. When the CHA evicted the family for false income statements, the NAACP suspected discrimination and prejudice from the SDIA.³⁵ After an unsuccessful meeting with Mayor Kennelly to stop the violence, the NAACP sent memos to the national offices in New York and Washington D.C. The FBI and the Justice Department's Civil Rights Unit was asked to investigate and letters were written to President Eisenhower and Attorney General Herbert Brownell.³⁶

The stress of coping with the constant rioting took a toll on the Howard family. Donald lost ten pounds and Betty was angry and resentful towards the rioters. They both struggled to sleep at night.³⁷ The police escorts to the grocery store became a nuisance. In addition, the Howard's presence created a chaotic and disorderly environment and the CHA realized the Howards would eventually have to leave. As early as October 1953, CHA Board Chairman Henry Kreuse was quoted in the *Chicago Tribune* remarking, "Eventually the Howards will have to go."³⁸ On October 29, 1953 the CHA unceremoniously evicted the Howards because of a false statement about the family's income. NAACP legal action prolonged their dismissal and prevented their eviction.

³⁵ Christopher Robert Reed, *The Chicago NAACP and the Rise of Black Professional Leadership 1910-1966* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 168.

³⁶ Reed, *The Chicago NAACP*, 169.

³⁷ L. F. Palmer JR., "Family Prisoner of Mob Two Weeks," *Chicago Defender*, August 22, 1953, National edition, p.4, col.3.

³⁸ "Trumbull Park Ouster Action Delayed by CHA," *Chicago Tribune*, October 27, 1953.

Police and the other African American tenants at Trumbull Park believed that once the Howard's left, the violence would subside.³⁹ The inevitable removal occurred in May 1954. The Howards left Trumbull Park after months of chaos, violence, and disorder.

Difficulties between the CHA and the SDIA were resolved and integration of Trumbull Park continued. Mayor Kennelly forged an agreement with the SDIA to limit black occupancy in Trumbull Park to six percent.⁴⁰ Violence slowly began to subside.⁴¹ Meanwhile, Donald Howard, innocent victim of mob violence, issued a statement in the *Chicago Defender*: "The residence of my family in Trumbull Park apartment has caused us great physical suffering and mental anguish...Despite the suffering undergone with my family, I had hoped that with the passage of time this organized form of barbarism would subside. Instead the violence has grown with intensity."⁴² The simple fact of the Trumbull Park episode was that violence triumphed. Even though African Americans remained in the projects, by the 1960s whites had maintained a racial homogeneity in the neighborhood.⁴³ Sustained, intense, and violent rioting proved successful in maintaining white dominance in the community.

The removal of the Howards did not completely end the violence in Trumbull Park. Between 1953 and 1958, sporadic harassment continued for African Americans. One year after the Howard's arrival, over 2,000 police had been deployed to Trumbull Park to protect African Americans. Many police officers were sympathetic to the white

³⁹ "Can't Take it Any Longer," *Chicago Defender*, May 15, 1954, p.4, col. 3.

⁴⁰ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 103.

⁴¹ Hirsch, "Massive Resistance in the Urban North," 540.

⁴² "Can't Take it Any Longer," *Chicago Defender*, May 15, 1954, p.4, col. 3.

⁴³ Hirsch, "Massive Resistance in the Urban North," 549.

rioters and the only major arrests were made by African American police officers.⁴⁴ In 1955, three African American men were stoned by a mob of thirty people as they walked to work.⁴⁵ Two years after the rioting began, when African Americans showed their faces around the South Deering neighborhood, they were treated as a, “public enemy, by red-faced belligerent white Americans who stare, glare and threaten them.”⁴⁶ The *Chicago Defender* continued to document examples of hostility towards African Americans in the years after 1953. Ultimately, the end of 1955 saw the worst rioting come to an end. Twenty-eight African American families lived in the projects and seemed content to remain. A police presence was maintained until the late 1950s.⁴⁷

The CHA’s response to the Trumbull Park fiasco changed the nature of its progressive leadership. The downfall of Elizabeth Wood, the CHA executive secretary and fierce supporter of African American rights, reflected a significant change. A progressive and motivated leader, Elizabeth Wood was determined to provide affordable integrated housing to Chicago’s poorest residents. Her attitudes reflected a strain of postwar racial liberalism that intended to remedy the contradiction between American values and the treatment of African Americans.

Elizabeth Wood’s background in social work and experience with low-income communities gave her the motivation to provide affordable housing. Educated at the University of Michigan, Wood taught poetry at Vassar College before moving to Chicago during the Great Depression. In Chicago, she became a social worker who witnessed

⁴⁴ George Daniels, “One Year Later...Trumbull Park Fiasco,” *Chicago Defender*, August 14, 1954 p.12, col.2.

⁴⁵ “Violence Flares Anew,” *Chicago Defender*, March 12, 1955, p.1, col.6.

⁴⁶ Audrey Weaver, “Shades of Dixie Terror Seen at Chicago Project,” November 5, 1955 p.4, col. 4.

⁴⁷ Bowly Jr., *The Poorhouse*, 82.

some of the worst living conditions in the Black Belt. Her firsthand experience with the appalling housing conditions motivated Wood to get into housing reform.⁴⁸ She became executive secretary of the Chicago Housing Authority in 1937.

Wood and her cohorts at the CHA constituted a part of American postwar liberalism that endeavored to solve the “American Dilemma.” The term, coined by Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal in 1944, refers to the contradiction between American values and the treatment of African Americans.⁴⁹ Postwar liberalism strove to solve this enduring contradiction using the expanded powers of the federal government after the New Deal. The CHA is a perfect example. Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Public Works Administration (PWA) built three new housing projects in Chicago in the 1930s administered by the CHA.⁵⁰ However, liberals faced an emerging African American ghetto that showed no signs of dissolving.

As African American ghettos emerged across the urban North in the 1950s, postwar liberals were confronted with a vexing problem never before seen in America. These ghettos, “because they were located in the urban centers of the North and West—far away from the Jim Crow South that represented the American dilemma in the eyes of postwar liberals—these ghettos remained outside of the purview of national political attention.”⁵¹ American society had never experienced the postwar African American ghettos. Ethnic ghettos had eventually broken up and lost their character. Liberals recognized the problem but failed to identify complex economic, social, and political

⁴⁸ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 36-37.

⁴⁹ Carol A. Horton, *Race and the Making of American Liberalism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 121-122.

⁵⁰ Bowly Jr., *The Poorhouse*, 18.

⁵¹ Horton, *American Liberalism*, 130.

changes creating the postwar ghettos. Labor market segregation and the impact of deindustrialization on African Americans coupled with complex forms of racial discrimination in housing and employment confined and concealed African Americans to the ghetto.⁵²

Wood believed that public housing was essential to providing opportunity for disadvantaged residents. Integrated public housing would further increase economic opportunity for disadvantaged residents by placing them in a structured, safe, and sanitary environment. She successfully integrated the Cabrini Green on the near North Side, LeClaire on the western edge of the city, and Archer Courts in the South Loop by placing black and white families into a carefully managed racial balance. The optimal African American occupancy of a project was 20 percent.⁵³ This policy would not last. Whites could afford to leave the inner city. This resulted in the CHA having to carefully select whites that valued integrated housing. As whites left the city for the suburbs, the CHA had to choose from an ever-decreasing number of suitable whites. African American demand for public housing was much greater than white demand, making Wood's effort to integrate CHA projects very difficult.

The passage of legislation in 1948 to give the city council control over the placement of public housing projects and the Trumbull Park disturbances in 1953 effectively ended the CHA's effort to integrate public housing. Wood and the CHA desired to build integrated public housing on vacant land in the southwest and northwest sides of the city. Building on vacant land would not require the demolition of black housing and displacement of the residents. The sites for public housing were in white

⁵² Ibid., 131-132.

⁵³ Fuerst, *Public Housing was Paradise*, 9.

neighborhoods and the aldermen representing these areas in the city council protested. Their reaction prompted the passage of the Relocation Acts of 1948, giving the city council veto power over the CHA in site selection.⁵⁴ Elizabeth Wood and the CHA lost the battle over site selection for their projects. From then on, public housing projects were built exclusively in the black ghetto.

The Trumbull Park disturbances forced the removal of Elizabeth Wood from the CHA, prompted changes in leadership and the abandonment of Wood's passion for social justice. When the Trumbull Park disturbances began in August 1953, Wood was on vacation. She immediately returned to Chicago to deal with the situation. Following the beginning of the commotion, the CHA decided to integrate all their projects. More African American families moved into Trumbull Park and Wood was accused of trying to incite racial violence.⁵⁵

All of the violence and uproar surrounding Trumbull Park and the CHA took a toll on Elizabeth Wood's health. In 1954, she became ill with bronchitis and was hospitalized.⁵⁶ Taking the opportunity of Wood's absence to perform an internal review, the CHA Board of Commissioners published a report recommending she be removed. In 1954, Wood was fired.⁵⁷ Wood was a determined progressive who, "went down fighting for the rights of African Americans, but in the end, the Trumbull Park Homes mob riot

⁵⁴ Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 223-224.

⁵⁵ Bowly Jr., *The Poorhouse*, 80-81.

⁵⁶ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 103.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

triumphed.”⁵⁸ Violence, racism, and discrimination overcame progressive attempts to fix the disastrous housing conditions for African Americans.

The CHA Board of Commissioners rationalized Wood’s dismissal as a business move. At the time of Wood’s firing, the CHA had become a multi million-dollar corporation. Collecting more than \$500,000 in rent per month, the CHA was the largest landlord in Chicago.⁵⁹ The CHA Board reasoned that a strong businessman was needed to manage the organization. Former Korean War General William Keane was hired in 1954 to run the CHA. Keane quickly changed the CHA’s integration policy from carefully managed quotas to open occupancy. Now whenever a white occupied unit went vacant, the unit would immediately be provided to an African American. Under Wood, this unit would have remained empty until a suitable white family was found. Quickly, CHA projects became nearly all African American.⁶⁰

With the abandonment of informal racial quotas, the CHA’s priorities shifted from social justice and affordable housing, to values of production, stabilization, and profit. Keane incorporated these values consistent with his military background. When Richard Daley was elected Mayor in 1955, the CHA became his vehicle for urban renewal. Daley authorized urban renewal funds to build massive public housing projects in the existing black ghetto. Under Daley, CHA projects, such as the eight building Stateway Gardens, and the Robert Taylor Homes, the largest public housing complex in the United States, became depressing symbols of the entrapment of African Americans

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Bowly Jr., *The Poorhouse*, 84.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

inside huge concrete buildings. By 1960, CHA projects were all African American and Wood's mission and passion for integration had been abandoned.⁶¹

The decrepit housing conditions in the Black Belt, the attempt to integrate Trumbull Park, the experience of the Howard family, the dismissal of Elizabeth Wood, and the ensuing collapse of the CHA as a vehicle for social justice were all parts of a reaction to Chicago's expanding African American population. Chicago's black population from 1940 to 1960, increased from 14 percent to 33 percent.⁶² By 1960, over 800,000 African Americans lived in Chicago. The Windy City had a higher African American population than Mississippi and public housing contained more black residents than Selma, Alabama.⁶³ Confined to dense and decaying neighborhoods, African Americans looked to the Chicago Housing Authority to improve their situation. The CHA took on the burden of clearing the slums and building affordable public housing in their place.

Projects on the outskirts of the city, such as a Trumbull Park, slowly became integrated. Donald and Betty Howard represented the first wave of dozens of African American families who bravely integrated public housing projects in hostile white neighborhoods. The explosive white reaction to the Howard's arrival in Trumbull Park sparked institutional change at the CHA, forever altering the priorities of the organization. While African Americans never left Trumbull Park, white homogeneity was maintained. At the CHA, Elizabeth Wood's unceremonious removal ushered in a new era. Under new leadership, the organization became closely allied the Mayor Richard J.

⁶¹ Kadar, *Paragraphs, Histories, and Meanings*, 132.

⁶² Horton, *American Liberalism*, 132.

⁶³ Pacyga, *Chicago*, 284-285.

Daley. His urban renewal projects reshaped the ghetto into concrete high rises, allowing all kinds of social problems. The Trumbull Park episode represents the beginning of the complete collapse of Chicago public housing.

CHAPTER FOUR

A PYRRHIC VICTORY: *GAUTREAUX V. CHICAGO HOUSING AUTHORITY*

“What white Americans have never fully understood but what the Negro can never forget – is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it.”¹ When African American chairman Robert Taylor resigned in 1950, the CHA became a nearly all white organization, intimately influencing the location of public housing in African American neighborhoods. The CHA became an institution dominated by whites that accelerated and cemented Chicago’s racial and economic segregation. The appointments of Alvin Rose, Mayor Richard J. Daley’s former top welfare official and Charles Swibel, a lawyer and Daley supporter, allowed Daley’s cohorts to outnumber the board’s more liberal members. The only African American member of the CHA board was conservative lawyer and war veteran Theophilus Mann, who had little appreciation for public housing. Through these changes, Daley was able to deplete the CHA of its progressivism with more conservative and loyal board members.²

With the city council and Daley’s appointments to the CHA board controlling site selection, the Authority embarked on a massive decade long public housing construction program that lasted from 1957 to 1968. This unprecedented binge of public housing occurred at a time when the housing shortage in Chicago had eased substantially. Over

¹ National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968); also known as the Kerner Commission Report.

² D. Bradford Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster The Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 116-117.

the previous six years the total number of housing units in the city had increased by 5.3 percent. At the same time, the total number of families had increased by only 4.2 percent, or 45,000. Moreover the number of vacant units in the city increased from 0.8 percent in 1950 to 1.7 percent in 1956.³ More vacant units meant more available housing. Despite these promising developments in Chicago's housing situation, the CHA still planned a massive public housing construction program.

This public housing boom occurred at the same time as the climax of the civil rights movement. Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights movement had finally dismantled legal segregation across the South. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 extended true democracy to the American South. The era of institutionalized white supremacy was over. However, the same month the Voting Rights Act was passed, rioting erupted in the Watts section of Los Angeles. Two years later, rioting exploded across cities in the Northeast and Midwest. The rioting in northern cities shifted the focus of the civil rights movement to social and political inequalities for African Americans in the urban North. While legal discrimination was being destroyed in the South, a new form of urban residential segregation was being created. A combination of public policy and private exclusion created inner cities all but devoid of economic opportunity and metropolitan areas divided by race and class. This process began when African Americans started leaving the South and heading north.

The second African American Great Migration from 1940 to 1960 drastically changed the demographics of many Northeastern and Midwestern cities. In twenty years, New York City's black population increased by 137 percent, Chicago's by 193 percent,

³ Devereux Bowly Jr. *The Poorhouse: Subsidized Housing in Chicago 1895-1976* (London: Feffer & Simons, Inc., 1978), 111.

Buffalo's by 301 percent, and Milwaukee's by 607 percent.⁴ By the mid 1960s, African Americans made up 30 percent of Chicago's population.⁵ The sheer numbers of African Americans moving to these cities made it incredibly difficult to house them. A combination of real estate discrimination, urban renewal, and federal policies that allowed whites to move to the suburbs, and kept African Americans from joining them, created metropolitan areas divided by race and class.

White reaction to the surge of African Americans in cities was born out of a desire to protect their most valuable asset, their home. Before World War II, whites used restrictive covenants to keep African Americans out of their neighborhoods. Restrictive covenants were agreements between homeowners to not sell to African Americans or others. In 1948, the Supreme Court declared restrictive covenants illegal, but this hardly stopped the practice.⁶ Restrictive covenants sent a message to African Americans that they were not wanted in the neighborhood.

⁴ Alexander Polikoff, *Waiting for Gautreaux: A Story of Segregation, Housing, and the Black Ghetto* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2006), 7. Hereafter cited as Polikoff, *Waiting for Gautreaux*, 16. Polikoff's work tells the story of his legal journey to end and remedy housing discrimination. The book is a first person account of the litigation with brief anecdotes on America's long history of racial discrimination. Polikoff's book is a compelling and disturbing account of housing discrimination in America and the lengths at which he went to achieve change.

⁵ Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 2-3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 245.

6 Making the second ghetto

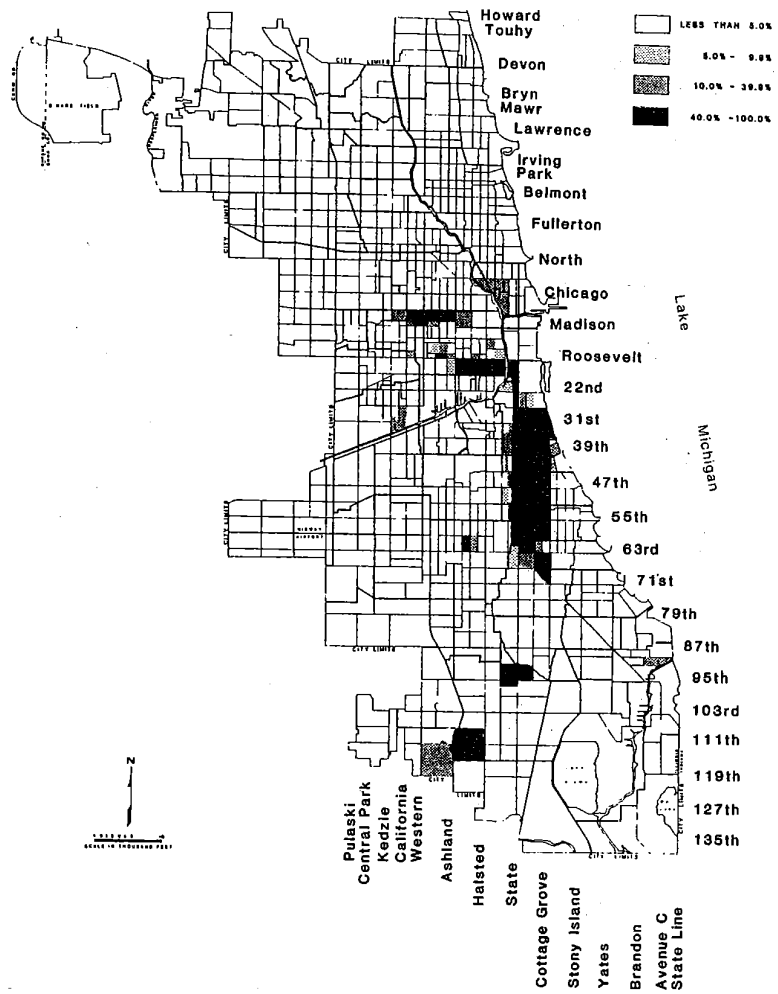
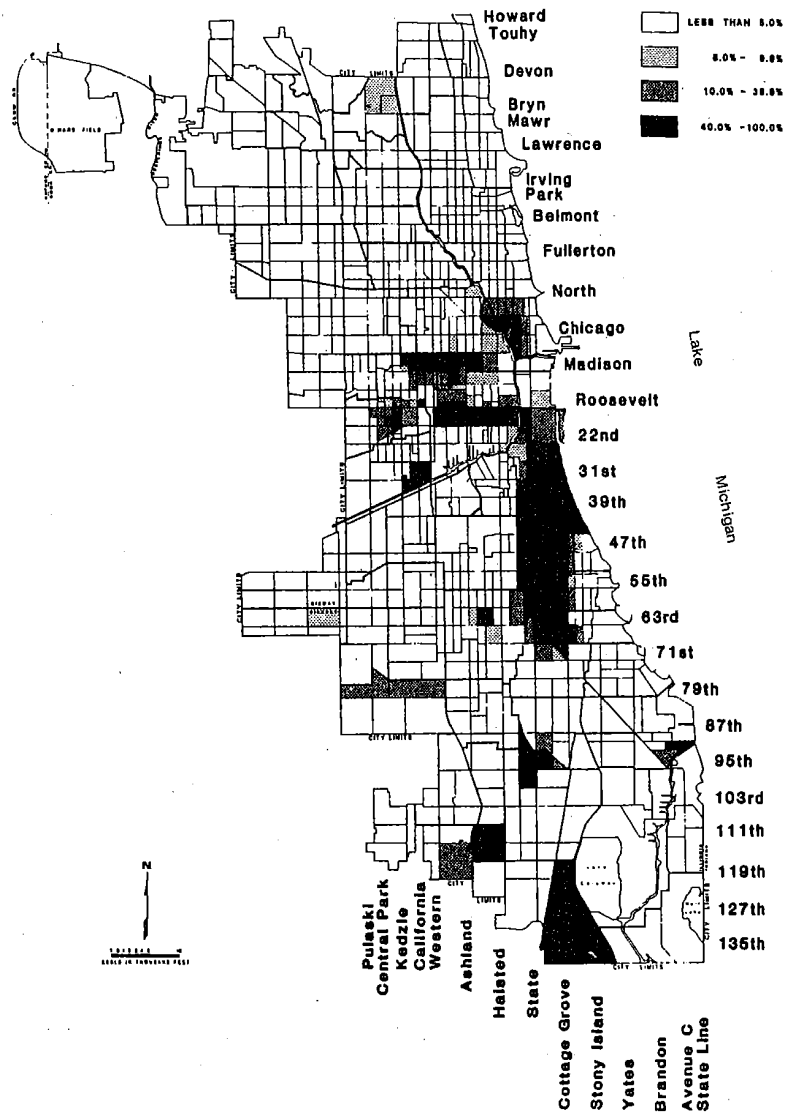


Figure 13. Percentage of African American Population by Census Tract Chicago, 1940.⁷

⁷ Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 6.

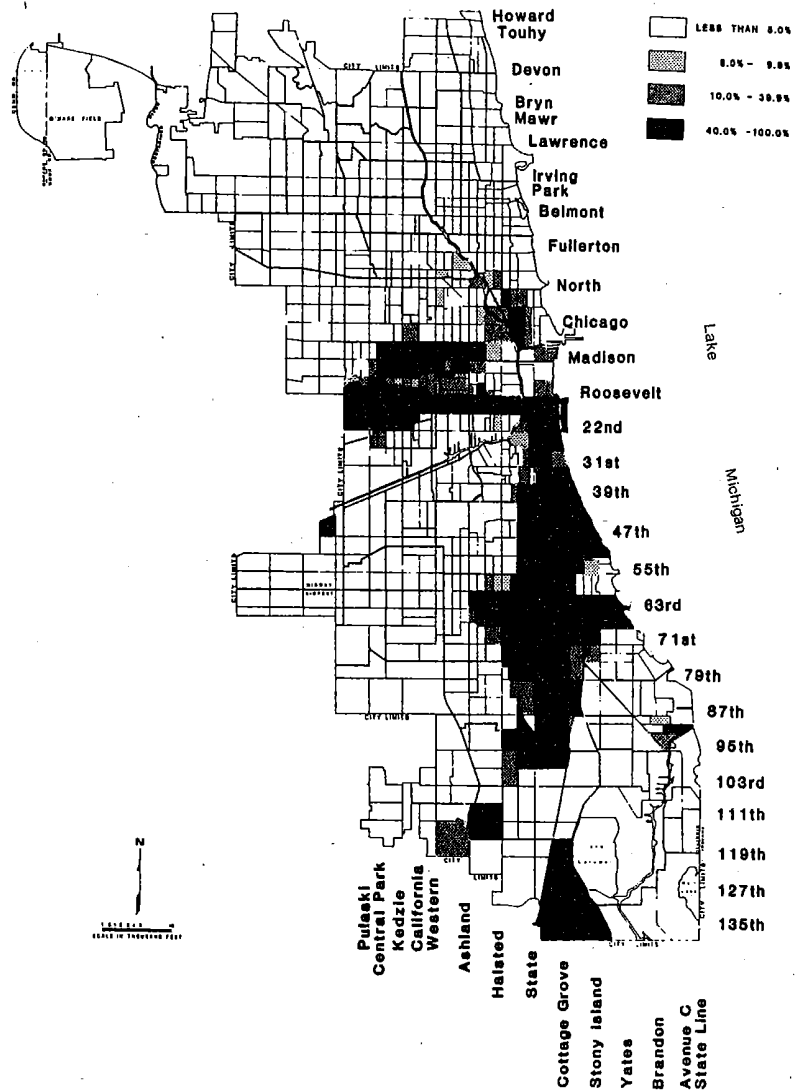


Map 2. Percentage of black population, in census tracts, city of Chicago, 1950. (Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Population and Housing Characteristics*, 1960.)

Figure 14. Percentage of African American Population by Census Tract Chicago, 1950.⁸

⁸ Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 7.

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Map 3. Percentage of black population, in census tracts, city of Chicago, 1960. (Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Population and Housing Characteristics*, 1960.)

Figure 15. Percentage of African American Population by Census Tract Chicago, 1960.⁹

⁹ Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 8.

Racial transition during the Great Migration years played a major role in the segregation of the metropolitan area. As Chicago's Black Belt expanded geographically and increased in population, whites no longer bought homes in the area. Even when homeowners and landlords lowered prices to try and attract whites, banks refused to give whites mortgages in declining neighborhoods. As a result, African Americans were able to enter these neighborhoods. Because there was so much African American demand, owners and landlords were able to charge more for the same housing. Landlords did not maintain properties, knowing there was a captive market for housing, resulting in deterioration.¹⁰ Construction costs, local zoning and building laws also contributed to the physical deterioration of African American areas.¹¹ When African Americans tried to leave these bad neighborhoods, discriminatory mortgage lending practices kept them from fleeing to the suburbs.

Real estate practices like redlining ensured African Americans could not move out of their neighborhoods. Redlining was the practice of marking neighborhoods on a map to indicate areas a bank would not provide a mortgage. For some real estate agents, it was considered a breach of ethics to provide loans to African Americans seeking homes in white neighborhoods. In some states, a real estate agent's license could be revoked if they provided a mortgage to African Americans.¹² The federal government's discriminatory mortgage practices allowed many middle class whites to flee to the suburbs. Poor minorities were prevented from doing the same.¹³

¹⁰ Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 31.

¹¹ Alexander Polikoff, "Opening the door to housing," *Chicago Tribune*, May 26, 1976.

¹² Polikoff, *Waiting for Gautreaux*, 17-23.

¹³ Alexander Polikoff, "Opening the door to housing," *Chicago Tribune*, May 26, 1976.

From the end of Reconstruction to the 1960s, white violence was the most evident strategy employed to keep African Americans out of white neighborhoods. Homes purchased by African Americans in white areas were razed, fire bombed, and stoned. White residents yelled racial slurs and profanity at their new neighbors. The Chicago riots of 1919 and the Trumbull Park disturbances of 1953-1957 are prominent examples of the shameful behavior of whites in response to the presence of African Americans in their neighborhoods.¹⁴

Urban renewal was another white response to the burgeoning black population. The city cleared the slums and the residents were relocated into concrete housing developments. Industrial warehouses and superhighways surrounded these projects. These new projects housed thousands of residents but their consequences were far more painful. These new projects produced, “something of a historical geographical paradox: the new projects were far superior to the horrendous slums they replaced, but inscribed a more severe isolation from the decentralizing urban economy.”¹⁵ Slums were cleared and replaced by concrete public housing monoliths, housing thousands of low income African Americans. Chicago historian Arnold Hirsch calls these projects the “second ghetto.” The first ghetto was the slums, tenements, and kitchenette apartments. The second ghetto was enshrined in the form of massive concrete housing projects.

¹⁴ Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*; Polikoff, *Waiting for Gautreaux*, 17-23; for more information on racial conflict and neighborhood transition see: Stephen Meyer, *As Long as They Don't Move Next Door: Segregation and Racial Conflict in American Neighborhoods*. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000).

¹⁵ Elvin K. Wily and Daniel J. Hammel, “Capital Metropolis: Chicago and the Transformation of American Housing Policy,” *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 82, No. 4 (2000): 183. <http://jstor.org/> (accessed January 1, 2013).

Construction of the second ghetto began in earnest in the 1950s and 1960s. The CHA planned to nearly double the total units they managed to 27,026 within four years at a cost of \$317 million dollars.¹⁶ Authority reports estimated that one new public housing development would be built each month.¹⁷ From 1954 to 1956 the number of people on the CHA wait list dropped from 45,000 families to only 15,000. So why would the CHA plow ahead with more public housing? The answer was twofold: increased federal money and the still deplorable conditions in most housing for the poor.¹⁸ Federal funding had strict cost and land use requirements. In order to accommodate the requirements for density and land use, the CHA decided to build large high-rise projects that could hold thousands of low-income people on small blocks of land.

The concentration of high-rise structures along State Street is a prominent example. The Dearborn Homes (1950), Harold Ickes Homes (1955), Stateway Gardens (1958) and the Robert Taylor Homes (1962) created an ominous corridor known as the “Chicago Wall” that stretched for miles.¹⁹ When the Raymond Hilliard Center was constructed in 1966, the row of public housing stretched for a total of thirty-four blocks and housed nearly 30 percent of all CHA residents. Twenty-eight sixteen-story buildings made up the Robert Taylor Homes, which housed 27,000 residents in over 4,000 units.²⁰ The ten-story tall Stateway Gardens had over 1,600 units. Harold Ickes had 797 units

¹⁶ Bowly Jr., *The Poorhouse*, 111; April 1960 edition of the Chicago Housing Authority Times.

¹⁷ Chicago Housing Authority Times, “Authority Launches Record Construction Year,” March 1959, Chicago History Museum Research Center Archives.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁹ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 240.

²⁰ D. Bradford Hunt, “What Went Wrong With Public Housing in Chicago? A History of the Robert Taylor Homes,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* (1998-) 94, no. 1 (Spring 2001).

over eight buildings, three of which were over nine stories tall. Built in 1957, Henry Horner Homes on the near West Side consisted of 920 units in nine elevator buildings. On the near North side, extensions to Cabrini Green gave it 3,607 units in fifteen buildings.²¹ These tall structures proved to be an efficient and cost effective method to house low-income people.

By the late 1950s the CHA was fast moving towards all African American occupancy. In 1955, two thirds of CHA tenants were African American and African Americans made up 73 percent of the families moving into CHA units. By 1959, 85 percent of CHA tenants were African American. Additionally, the CHA's infatuation with high-rise structures in inner city neighborhoods ensured that all of its family housing would be African American. Lawyer and public housing historian, Devereux Bowly Jr. writes, "the conclusion is inescapable that the locations for new projects were selected by the CHA, and the by the political leadership of Chicago, to contain and segregate the poor, black population."²² This great era of public housing construction systematically segregated African Americans into what they thought were cost effective high-rises despite the fact that these buildings isolated residents from the decentralizing metropolitan economy. The social, economic, and political costs of this terrible public housing failure are still evident.

²¹ *Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago*, s.v. "Chicago Housing Authority."

²² Bowly Jr., *The Poorhouse*, 112.



Figure 16. Stateway Gardens.²³

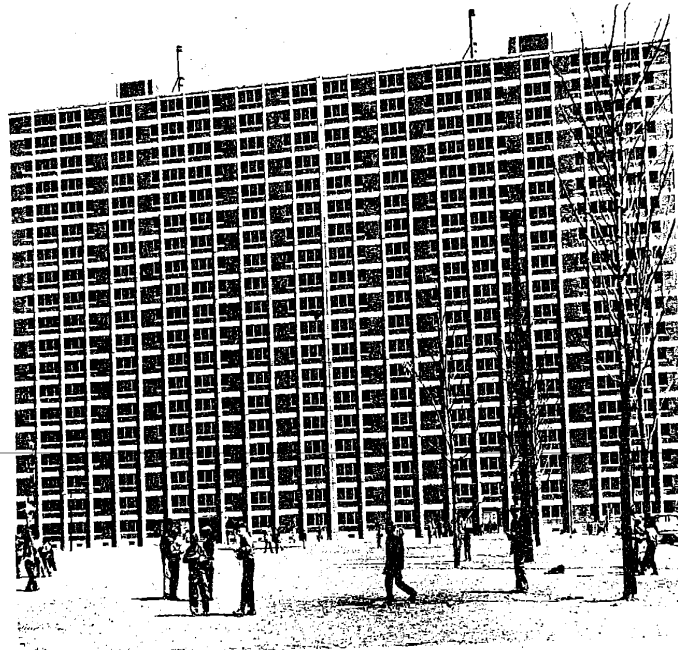


Figure 17. Cabrini Green Extension, 1958.²⁴

²³ Bowly Jr., *The Poorhouse*, 116.

²⁴ Bowly Jr., *The Poorhouse*, 117.

This was the housing situation in Chicago in 1966; the year Martin Luther King Jr. brought the civil rights movement to the Windy City. While King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) campaigned against school and housing segregation, a new generation of African American activists, black and white liberals, and other community groups began to fight Chicago's racist housing policies.²⁵ They fought primarily through litigation. In August 1966, a group of CHA tenants filed a class action lawsuit in federal court against the CHA and executive director Alvin Rose charging that the CHA since 1950 had built projects exclusively in African American neighborhoods and the ghetto. They claimed the CHA tried to avoid constructing projects in white neighborhoods.²⁶ The tenants also filed a separate lawsuit against the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for funding the discriminatory public housing projects. The lengthy *Gautreaux v. CHA* lawsuit was an epic case of litigation contested all the way to the Supreme Court. Some observers even consider it more important than the school desegregating case *Brown v. Board of Education*.²⁷

In 1965, the Chicago Housing Authority was planning another public housing development. The proposed State Street-Cermak project would further extend Chicago's "wall" of public housing along State Street. Critics panned the State Street-Cermak development as an unnecessary extension of the ghetto that did not account for large families and would add to the economic and racial segregation in Chicago. More low-income people with similar social and economic problems would be concentrated in high-

²⁵ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 239.

²⁶ Bowly Jr., *The Poorhouse*, 189-190.

²⁷ Hanna Rosin, "American Murder Mystery," *The Atlantic*, July/August 2008, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/07/american-murder-mystery/306872/2/> (accessed February, 11 2013).

rise buildings.²⁸ Harold Baron, leader of the Chicago Urban League and organizer in the West Side Federation, an African American activist group, complained about the city's pattern of building public housing in low income and blighted African American neighborhoods. For years, the media and other civic groups had complained about the discriminatory public housing patterns but without effect. This time the difference would be that the complaint was based on the recently passed Civil Rights Act of 1964.²⁹

Baron wrote a letter of complaint to the Housing and Home Finance Agency (HHFA) in 1965.³⁰ He complained that CHA site selection discriminated against African Americans by not giving them an opportunity to live outside the ghetto. Marie McGuire at the HHFA wrote back that the sites in Chicago were acceptable by federal standards. 94 percent of CHA applicants were African American and indicated a preference to live on the West and South Sides. Most of the CHA projects were located in these areas. She also noted that the city council had control over site selection, not the CHA. She concluded that denying the State Street-Cermak project would mean denying thousands of low income Chicagoans much needed housing. As far as the federal government was concerned, the locations of CHA projects were fine.³¹ Later on, McGuire's letter would be important evidence showing the federal government was compliant with Chicago's discriminatory housing policies.

Baron was disappointed by McGuire's logic. By her reasoning, a local governing body, like the city council, could trump Section VI of the Civil Rights Act. Section VI

²⁸ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 240.

²⁹ Polikoff, *Waiting for Gautreaux*, 7.

³⁰ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 243.

³¹ *Ibid.*; Polikoff, *Waiting for Gautreaux*, 26-27.

prohibits discrimination in programs funded by the federal government.³² Baron sought legal counsel. In January of 1966, Baron met Alexander Polikoff, a corporate attorney in Chicago who also worked public interest cases. During the meeting, Baron introduced the basics of his complaint and the letter in response from the HHFA. The main problem for Baron was the logic that local governing bodies could impose “local approval requirements” on federally funded programs. Agencies would not have to comply with Section VI of the Civil Rights Act because they were acting under local laws. Recognizing the legitimacy of Baron’s complaint, Polikoff agreed to take on Baron’s case with a team of ACLU lawyers.³³

Polikoff directed Baron to find potential plaintiffs for the lawsuit. He needed African Americans who lived in CHA projects and had been forced to live in African American areas but who preferred to live elsewhere.³⁴ One of the tenants found was Dorothy Gautreaux. A resident of Dearborn Homes, Gautreaux was a neighborhood leader who had fought for housing rights.³⁵ Because her name stood out, Polikoff decided to place her name at the front of the lawsuit. *Gautreaux v. CHA* became the name of the case.

The problem with the case would be proving the CHA had intentionally discriminated against African Americans. Another question for Polikoff was whether CHA site selection denied African American equal housing opportunity. Polikoff would need evidence proving the CHA purposefully segregated African Americans.

³² The United States Department of Justice, “Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964,” <http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/cor/coord/titlevi.php>.

³³ Polikoff, *Waiting for Gautreaux*, 27.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 33.

³⁵ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 244.

In addition to the CHA lawsuit, Polikoff decided to file a separate suit against the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The HHFA had been reorganized into HUD in the 1965 Housing and Urban Development Act.³⁶ Arguing that the federal government was complicit in the CHA's discrimination because it funded the construction of public housing, Polikoff believed he had a strong case. McGuire's letter to Baron showed the federal government was aware of the discrimination. Suing the federal government however, was more complex and difficult than suing the Chicago Housing Authority. Federal lawyers had more legal resources and were more resourceful.³⁷ There was no question the cases against both the CHA and HUD would be incredibly difficult.

³⁶ National Archives, "General Records of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)," <http://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/207.html>. (accessed February 11, 2013)

³⁷ Polikoff, *Waiting for Gautreaux*, 48.

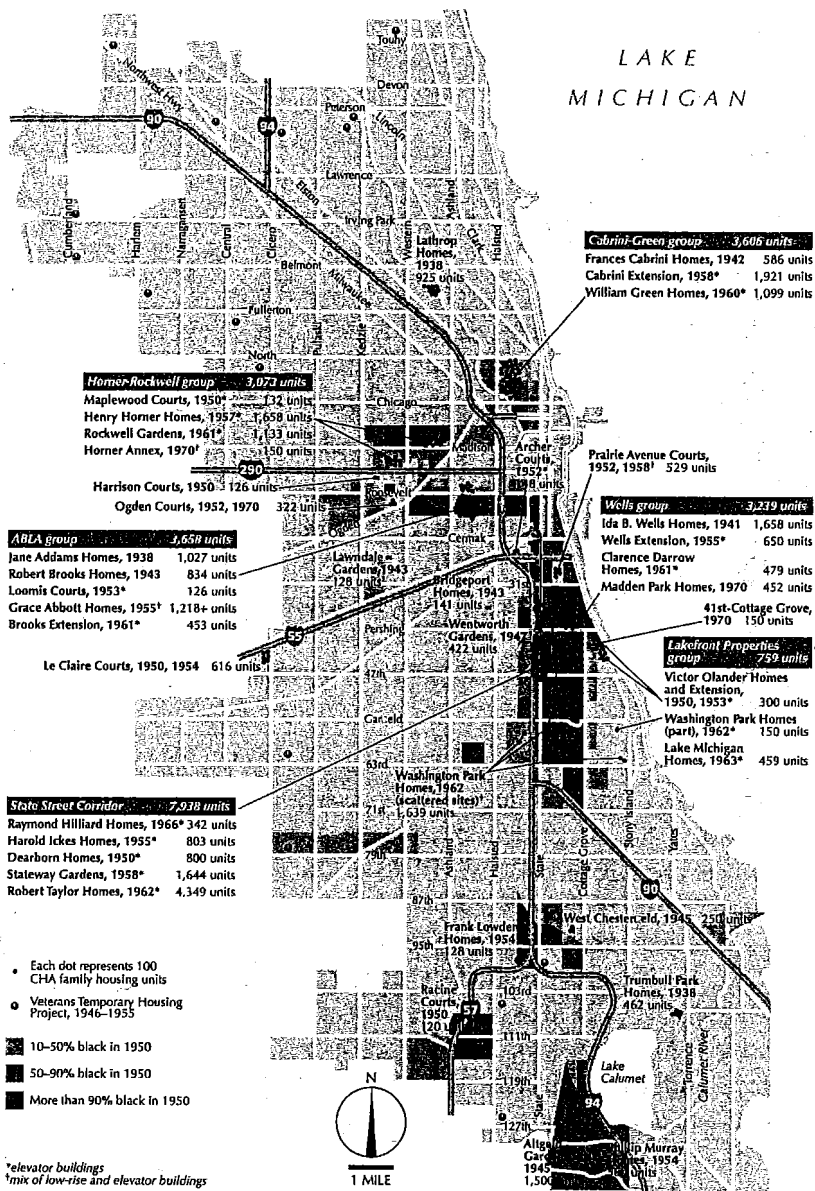


Figure 1. Chicago Housing Authority family projects, 1938-70. Map by Dennis McClendon.

Figure 18. Chicago Housing Authority Project Map, 1938-1970.³⁸

³⁸ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 2.

On August 9, 1966, Polikoff filed two class action lawsuits in Chicago federal court, one against the CHA, and the other against HUD. The plaintiffs charged that the CHA since 1950 had intentionally built public housing projects in African American neighborhoods. In addition, the lawsuit charged the CHA had deliberately tried to avoid putting projects in white neighborhoods. This had prevented the plaintiffs and other African American tenants from the right to live in public housing outside African American areas.³⁹ The lawsuit charged that the CHA and HUD had violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and Section VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. *Gautreaux v. CHA* had begun.

By the time Polikoff filed the lawsuit in 1966, a surprising shift had occurred in American opinion towards public housing. In the early years of the CHA, when Elizabeth Wood and Robert Taylor championed public housing as a means of social mobility for African Americans, social reformers strongly supported public housing. Conservatives, on the other hand, despised it. Government intrusion into the housing market would hurt the private market, they argued. Twenty years later when *Gautreaux v. CHA* was filed a fascinating switch had occurred. Some of the defenders of large-scale public housing were old conservatives. Social reformers, on the other hand, strongly criticized the high-rise projects.⁴⁰ The high-rise public housing construction boom of the 1950s and 1960s had changed the terms of debate on public housing. This unbelievable switch in support for public housing created the background for Polikoff's lawsuit against the CHA.

By 1966, the Chicago Housing Authority's tenants were virtually all African American. All of its applicants were African American. All of its projects were located in

³⁹ Bowly Jr., *The Poorhouse*, 189-190.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 190.

African American neighborhoods.⁴¹ Part of Polikoff's lawsuit against the CHA borrowed from the iconic *Brown v. Board of Education* opinion saying, "segregation in the black ghetto had detrimental effects on the blacks who lived there, including isolation from the larger society and school segregation for the children."⁴² Polikoff knew he could prove the statistical outcomes of the CHA's public housing projects were discriminatory. It would be more difficult however, to prove their intent was discriminatory. Complicating the issue was the selection of Judge Richard B. Austin to hear the case. Austin was known as a tough, law-and-order judge and was far from liberal on issues of race.⁴³ Polikoff knew he would have a difficult case in court.

In response to the lawsuit, the CHA's attorneys presented evidence in their defense showing they had not intended to discriminate against African Americans. First, the CHA argued that the city council was the institution segregating African Americans, not the CHA.⁴⁴ Since the city council had veto control over site selection, the CHA could submit as many projects in white areas as they wanted and they still would be rejected by the city council. The CHA did not do that. The CHA also argued that the plaintiffs had no right to complain about housing discrimination because they had chosen to live in African American neighborhoods when they applied.⁴⁵ In Dorothy Gautreaux's case, Dearborn Homes was located in a community that was 95 percent African American. Finally, the CHA presented a map of Chicago's community areas and the location of CHA projects across the city. Since 1950, the attorney's argued the CHA had developed

⁴¹ Polikoff, *Waiting for Gautreaux*, 48.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁴⁴ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 244.

⁴⁵ Polikoff, *Waiting for Gautreaux*, 50.

20,000 apartments. Almost 30 percent of the units were constructed in majority white neighborhoods at the time.⁴⁶ The map did not show that most of these neighborhoods were undergoing rapid racial transition.

Polikoff countered the CHA arguments with evidence of CHA discrimination. His legal assistants uncovered a memo from 1955 between CHA executive director William Keane and an alderman agreeing to a veto system that would keep CHA projects out of white areas. This veto system would prevent the CHA from submitting a list of sites until the aldermen representing the specific wards for planned projects had approved them.⁴⁷ This “aldermanic privilege” allowed aldermen to screen CHA sites. They could reject projects in white wards before the list even reached the council. Next, there was clear evidence the CHA had intentionally kept four projects all white. One of these all white projects was located in Bridgeport, home of mayor Richard J. Daley.⁴⁸ In two other bi-racial projects, the CHA kept the quota of African Americans low.

To counter the CHA map of Chicago’s community areas in 1950 and the argument that their projects were built in majority white areas at the time, Polikoff had a new map created based on census tracts. The CHA’s community areas map was based on large, vaguely defined community areas. Census tracts could better determine the racial composition of a neighborhood. The new map showed thirty-three CHA projects built since 1950 were located in census tracts over 84 percent African American. Twenty-six of the projects were in areas over 95 percent African American.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Bowly Jr., *The Poorhouse*, 190.

⁴⁸ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 245.

⁴⁹ Polikoff, *Waiting for Gautreaux*, 52.

On the issue of location of preferences, Polikoff's interviews with Dorothy Gautreaux revealed a different story than the one the CHA was telling. Before applying with the CHA, Gautreaux was living in a one-bedroom apartment with a family of five. She was desperate to leave. When she applied with the CHA, the interviewer told her Dearborn Homes was the best chance for quick placement. Polikoff's research at the CHA archives revealed interviewers were instructed to direct African Americans toward projects that may open up faster since there was a long wait list. Additionally, Gautreaux knew the CHA had racial quotas in their mixed projects and had few white projects. She knew she could not get in a white project promptly. Her options were limited. The only open projects were in all African American areas.⁵⁰ Essentially, the CHA steered desperate African American families into all-black projects.

In 1967, Austin dismissed the CHA's arguments. With the aldermanic privilege, racial steering from all white projects, and the census map, Polikoff had three powerful pieces of evidence to prove the CHA's discrimination. Aldermanic privilege showed the CHA knew full well that it was discriminating against African Americans. The census tract map showed 98 percent of the 21,000 CHA units built since 1950 were in African American areas. Finally, the Kean agreement made it easier for the council to reject controversial sites, limiting debates and bad publicity. The CHA had corroborated with the council in the discrimination.⁵¹

On February 10, 1969, Austin ruled in favor of Gautreaux. In his opinion he wrote that the CHA had practiced racial discrimination in tenant assignment and site selection. Additionally, the CHA had imposed racial quotas on four white projects;

⁵⁰ Ibid., 52-54.

⁵¹ Ibid., 56-58.

Trumbull Park, Lathrop, Lawndale Gardens, and Bridgeport.⁵² Austin also discovered by 1969, 99 percent of CHA tenants were African American and 99.5 percent of CHA projects were located in predominantly African American neighborhoods.⁵³ The statistics alone proved discrimination. The CHA's own documents, like the Kean agreement, showed intentional discrimination, a violation of the Constitution's Equal Protection Clause. Austin came down hard on the CHA declaring, "neither the laudable goal of providing housing nor the possibility that the aldermen were not personally racist but were simply reflecting the sentiments of their constituents could justify a government policy of keeping blacks out of white neighborhoods."⁵⁴ The CHA had no excuses. Not even racist politicians should have kept them from building projects in white neighborhoods. The ruling effectively labeled the entire CHA post war building program racist and unconstitutional. Austin's ruling was the first in the entire nation in which a local housing authority was found guilty of discrimination.⁵⁵

Unfortunately, Dorothy Gautreaux would not live to experience the victory. In August of 1968, she passed away from a kidney failure. When Martin Luther King Jr. visited Chicago, Gautreaux marched with him for open housing. She was by far the most passionate and articulate plaintiff on the impact of African American public housing isolation.⁵⁶

The ruling in *Gautreaux* came just two years after rioting in inner cities across United States in the summer of 1967 shocked the nation and President Lyndon B.

⁵² Bowly Jr., *The Poorhouse*, 190.

⁵³ Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 265.

⁵⁴ Polikoff, *Waiting for Gautreaux*, 66.

⁵⁵ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 247-248.

⁵⁶ Vernon Jarrett, "Her battle ends without her," *Chicago Tribune*, June 21, 1981.

Johnson commissioned an investigation on the causes of the rioting. Published in 1967, the Kerner Commission Report revealed the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. and a lack of economic opportunity as the primary reasons the nation's inner cities erupted in violence. One of the most famous passages of the report stated, "Our nation is moving towards two societies, one black, one white, — separate and unequal."⁵⁷ The findings of the Kerner Report warned about the impact of inner city isolation. The timing seemed perfect for the *Gautreaux* case. Austin even echoed some of the Kerner Reports' sentiments in his opinion saying, "existing patterns of racial segregation must be reversed if there is to be chance of averting the desperately intensifying division of whites and Negroes in Chicago."⁵⁸ A clear warning had been sent. Racial and economic segregation were destroying inner cities and if the nation did not act quickly, the problems would become worse. Polikoff intended to at least try to remedy the problem of racial segregation through *Gautreaux v. CHA*.

Austin's order called for Polikoff and the CHA to formulate a potential plan to alleviate the public housing segregation in Chicago. Polikoff proposed that for every one unit built in African American neighborhoods, four must be built in white neighborhoods.⁵⁹ Austin then created a "Limited Public Housing Area." This area included census tracts with a 30 percent or more non-white population. Public housing could not be built in these areas. He also extended a one-mile buffer zone on the

⁵⁷ National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968); also known as the Kerner Commission Report; The American Presidency Project; "Lyndon B. Johnson Remarks Upon Signing Order Establishing the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders," <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=28369> (accessed February 12, 2013).

⁵⁸ Polikoff, *Waiting for Gautreaux*, 67.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 68-70.

perimeter of this area to account for racial transition. Finally, Austin included a “General Public Housing Area” on the North, Northwest, and Southwest sides. These would be the only areas that could receive public housing.⁶⁰ The order prevented the CHA from building projects in heavily African American neighborhoods.

Austin then ordered the CHA to end its discriminatory tenant practices. The CHA had to open 50 percent of any new project to neighborhood residents. The remaining units had to be available to those on the wait list. The CHA wait list was 90 percent African American.⁶¹ 700 units had to be built in white neighborhoods. Austin prohibited the construction of projects greater than three stories. No more gigantic public housing complexes like the Robert Taylor Homes would ever be built. Austin’s order also limited the concentration of projects in the same neighborhoods.⁶² Finally, in order to comply with the requirements on building in white neighborhoods, the CHA was permitted to build a third of the units in suburban Cook County. Unfortunately, Austin’s 1969 order effectively ended public housing construction in Chicago. The court ordered remedy had the effect of preventing construction of projects in high need African American areas until projects in white areas had been built.⁶³ Austin’s order did ensure an end to the CHA’s discrimination.

Nine months after Austin’s order, the CHA had not even started conversations with suburban housing officials on site locations. The CHA claimed they wanted to hold off on releasing a list of suburban sites until after the 1971 mayoral election. In response, Austin issued another order requiring the CHA to submit a plan within a month. CHA

⁶⁰ Bowly Jr., *The Poorhouse*, 191.

⁶¹ Ibid. and Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 248-249

⁶² Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 248-249.

⁶³ “The legacy of a lawsuit,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 2, 1983.

decided to prolong the issue by appealing Austin's order all the way to the Supreme Court. On March 4, 1971, the Supreme Court refused to hear their arguments. However, the CHA had successfully pushed the revelation of the suburban sites past the February 1971 Democratic Primary but not the general election.⁶⁴ Finally, after two years of delays, the CHA submitted a list of 275 proposed sites for 1,746 units.⁶⁵

By the time CHA finally submitted their scattered site plan, demographic trends had changed America's metropolitan areas. In the late 1960s, whites were fleeing central cities for the suburbs three times as fast as they did in the early 1960s. The poor and minorities were being concentrated in central cities. In response to these changes, President Lyndon B. Johnson urged Congress to view cities as metropolitan areas instead of as fragmented municipalities. Unfortunately, there was no action from Congress.⁶⁶ For the CHA, white flight meant fewer white neighborhoods to build public housing. Further delays would prevent the Authority from having to face the difficult task of finding enough suitable land in white areas to build projects.

Despite these changes, the CHA was finally on the way to scattered site selection. Polikoff shifted to the lawsuit against HUD, now called *Hills v. Gautreaux*. The plaintiffs charged that HUD was complicit in the CHA's discrimination. The lawsuit against HUD forced Polikoff to examine the national trends in public housing and integration. By 1971, Richard Nixon had been president for three years. His secretary of Housing and Urban Development was George Romney, father of 2012 Republican Presidential Candidate Mitt Romney. Appointed in 1968, Romney was a former rival to Nixon in the

⁶⁴ Polikoff, *Waiting for Gautreaux*, 97-98; Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 250.

⁶⁵ Polikoff, *Waiting for Gautreaux*, 99.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 70.

Republican Presidential primaries. Nixon got his revenge by placing Romney in a less prestigious department.⁶⁷

Romney and Nixon's views on integration differed. It was well known in Nixon's administration that housing segregation was a serious problem. Nixon's Report on National Housing Goals in April of 1970 supported the policy of metropolitan housing to end segregation and fight poverty in central cities.⁶⁸ Despite this, Nixon backed away from the issue because he anticipated opposition from middle class suburban whites.

George Romney, on the other hand, strongly supported a policy to integrate the suburbs. Romney was much more liberal on the issue of integration than Nixon and took an interest in building public housing outside the ghettos.⁶⁹ Romney recognized just as much as Nixon did, the problems of a segregated society saying, "the problem is the most important one that America has ever faced, is now facing and will ever face, bar none. It must be solved and we, the citizens must solve it."⁷⁰ As Secretary of HUD, Romney attached fair housing requirements for municipalities applying for urban renewal funding. The enticements to integrate suburban communities did not go over well. Warren Michigan, a suburb of Detroit chose to forego millions of dollars for urban renewal rather than provide public housing for minorities.⁷¹ The controversy surrounding Romney's requirements ultimately scuttled his plan to integrate the suburbs.

⁶⁷ Michael Kranish, "Nixon, Romney relationship came to frosty end," *Boston Globe*, June 27, 2007, http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2007/06/27/nixon_romney_relationship_came_to_frosty_end/?page=full (accessed 14 February 2013).

⁶⁸ Polikoff, *Waiting for Gautreaux*, 85.

⁶⁹ Martin Hochbaum, "Scatter-Site Approach is Faulty: Scatter-Site Approach Must Be Changed," *New York Times*, June 18, 1972.

⁷⁰ Polikoff, *Waiting for Gautreaux*, 89

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Nixon effectively killed Romney's plan to integrate the suburbs. He announced the federal government would not impose public housing on suburban communities. At the same time though, Nixon admitted that the federal government was the only way low-income minorities could move out of the central city and obtain jobs. He acknowledged racial segregation was a major problem but refused to devote federal resources to address the predicament. Back in Chicago, Alexander Polikoff realized that Daley's reelection, Nixon's stance on integration, and available HUD funding meant there was no urgency for scattered site public housing in the suburbs.⁷²

While all of this was occurring on the national stage, Judge Austin denied Polikoff's suit against HUD. He wrote that as a judge he had no authority to influence the policies of the federal government. Even though HUD knew about CHA's discrimination, McGuire's letter showed this, HUD was not complicit in the discrimination. Polikoff immediately appealed the decision. In 1971, the appeals court ruled that HUD was liable for funding the CHA's discriminatory public housing program. HUD's good faith in the CHA to administer a responsible program was irrelevant. The idea that a federal agency would have a lesser duty than a local entity was unthinkable. HUD's funding was discriminatory.⁷³

By February 1972, the City Council had still not approved the CHA's list of sites. Daley and the Council had purposefully stalled the program. Polikoff and the plaintiffs filed another complaint against Daley and all fifty aldermen.⁷⁴ Polikoff asked Austin to suspend the veto power of the council. This power dates back to the 1947 Illinois

⁷² Ibid, 92.; Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 253.

⁷³ Polikoff, *Waiting for Gautreaux*, 94; 101.

⁷⁴ Bowly, *The Poorhouse*, 192.

Redevelopment Act, which allowed the city council the ability to veto site locations for CHA projects. Austin did suspend this veto but the CHA and city council appealed all the way to the Supreme Court again. Finally in January of 1974, the Supreme Court refused to hear the case. The city council had finally lost its veto power over the CHA, five years after Austin's original 1969 ruling.⁷⁵

With the obstacles to public housing in white neighborhoods finally dismantled, Polikoff began to work on a remedial plan to integrate the suburbs. Polikoff wanted Austin to order that metropolitan relief was necessary and legally possible. White flight to the suburbs in the 1960s meant there were not enough white neighborhoods with suitable vacant land to develop projects. During a November 1972 hearing, Polikoff called Philip Hauser, a sociology professor at the University of Chicago to testify. Hauser testified that by the turn of the century, there would be no census tracts with less than 30 percent African American population. Any remedial plan would not work because there would no longer be any suitable census tracts to locate public housing. Austin had to order the CHA to build projects in the suburbs. Polikoff's plan called for the suburbs to have only half of the new public housing in the city and required public housing to be built in the city before it could be built in the suburbs.⁷⁶

A recent school desegregating case in Detroit provided some legal precedent.⁷⁷ In *Milliken v. Bradley*, Detroit public schools had been deliberately segregated, much like the CHA public housing projects. The judge ordered a metropolitan remedy, which would

⁷⁵ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 253; Bowly, *The Poorhouse*, 192; Polikoff, *Waiting for Gautreaux*, 107-108.

⁷⁶ Polikoff, *Waiting for Gautreaux*, 109-110; 116; 117.

⁷⁷ James A. Kidney, "Housing Tragedy Here: Sad Saga of Jim Crow," *Chicago Defender*, April 7, 1975.

involve busing African American students to schools in the suburbs.⁷⁸ Unfortunately for Polikoff, the appeals process for *Milliken v. Bradley* led to the Supreme Court. In 1974, the Supreme Court reversed the lower court's decision by a 5-4 ruling. Essentially, the Court ruled a metropolitan solution to school desegregation was not appropriate because the suburban school districts had not discriminated. Chief Justice Warren Burger wrote in his opinion that unless intentional discrimination had occurred in the suburbs, or suburban districts had drawn discriminatory boundaries, forcing suburban districts to integrate would be wrong. Basically, the scope of the violation should determine the scope of the remedy.⁷⁹

The decision in *Milliken v. Bradley* represented a step back in the effort to integrate America's schools and metropolitan areas. In his dissenting opinion, Justice Thurgood Marshall echoed the findings of the Kerner Commission, writing, "in the short run, it may seem to be the easier course to allow our great metropolitan areas be divided up each into two cities—one white, the other black, but it is a course I predict, our people will ultimately regret."⁸⁰ Marshall correctly envisioned a metropolitan future where suburban areas were made up of affluent whites and the inner city by low income minorities. The appeals court judge also vehemently disagreed with the Supreme Court decision, writing, "I know of no decision by the Supreme Court of the United States since the Dred Scott decision which is so fraught with disaster for this country."⁸¹ The decision in *Milliken v. Bradley* meant efforts to integrate schools that had not discriminated could not be part of a remedy to discrimination in inner city schools. Effectively ending school

⁷⁸ Polikoff, *Waiting for Gautreaux*, 119.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 121; 124-125.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 124-125.

desegregation, *Milliken v. Bradley* was a major setback to all the accomplishments of the civil rights movement during Lyndon B. Johnson's presidency.

The reversal in *Milliken v. Bradley* was a serious blow to Polikoff's dreams of metropolitan integration but there was reason for optimism. The case applied to schools, not housing however. Consequently, Polikoff would try to reframe the issue to avoid legal conflict with *Milliken*. Before the court of appeals Polikoff argued public housing was an issue that had its roots in the federal government not in local government like schools. He also presented evidence of predominantly African American projects in the suburbs. The suburbs had discriminated too. Remedying housing discrimination must include the suburbs.⁸²

On August 26, 1974, the court of appeals ordered HUD to remedy its past discrimination by building new projects in suburban counties north and west of Chicago.⁸³ The judges accepted the fact that housing was different than schools and there was also evidence of discrimination in the suburbs. Unfortunately, HUD decided to appeal the decision and petitioned the Supreme Court to hear their case. Polikoff argued that it would be premature for the Supreme Court to hear *Gautreaux* because Austin had not yet even ordered a metropolitan remedy. There was no conflict with *Milliken* and a metropolitan policy was the right solution.⁸⁴

Despite Polikoff's best efforts, on May 13, 1975, the Supreme Court granted HUD's petition to hear the case. Once again, the Supreme Court was placed between

⁸² Polikoff, *Waiting for Gautreaux*, 135-136.

⁸³ James A. Kidney, "Housing Tragedy Here: Sad Saga of Jim Crow," *Chicago Defender*, April 7, 1975.

⁸⁴ Polikoff, *Waiting for Gautreaux*, 138.

discriminated against African Americans and the federal government.⁸⁵ The justices would hear arguments about whether it was appropriate to allow federally subsidized rental units for low-income minority residents in the suburbs in order to remedy Chicago's discrimination. In January of 1976, Polikoff went to Washington D.C. to argue his case. Ten years after the original filing of the Gautreaux case, the effort desegregate Chicago public housing had led all the way to the Supreme Court.

Polikoff was skeptical of his prospects to win the case. Richard Nixon had appointed four conservative justices in the span of a few years.⁸⁶ It was unlikely that they would agree with Polikoff's arguments. The court's reversal in the Milliken case also set legal precedent for HUD's argument that a metropolitan policy for federally subsidized housing was wrong. Solicitor General Robert Bork argued it would also be incredibly difficult to force 300 cities, villages, and townships in the Chicago metropolitan area to accept low-income African American public housing tenants in order to remedy an act of segregation that occurred entirely in the central city.⁸⁷

Before the Supreme Court, Polikoff argued that a metropolitan remedy to housing discrimination that had occurred in Chicago was necessary. He argued that housing is different than schools. Unlike the Milliken case, *Gautreaux* was an issue of the housing market. School districts were geopolitical units while the housing market included the entire Chicago metropolitan area. Despite this obvious distinction, Chief Justice Warren Burger remained fixated on the innocent suburban townships. While Polikoff was still

⁸⁵ James A. Kidney, "Housing Tragedy Here: Sad Saga of Jim Crow," *Chicago Defender*, April 7, 1975.

⁸⁶ Nixon appointed Warren Burger as Chief Justice in 1969, Harry Blackmun in 1970, Lewis Powell in 1971 and William Rehnquist in 1971.

⁸⁷ Polikoff, *Waiting for Gautreaux*, 145.

skeptical of his chances, he believed he had made a strong argument for integrating the suburbs.⁸⁸

On April 26, 1976, the justices ruled 8-0 in favor of the plaintiffs.⁸⁹ The Supreme Court upheld the court of appeals decision to allow subsidized housing for low-income minorities in the suburbs. The plaintiffs won.

The decision in *Hills v. Gautreaux* would help extend scattered site public housing into the suburbs in the form of federally subsidized housing programs and rental subsidies.⁹⁰ In the Supreme Court opinion, the justices agreed that the relevant geographic area was the Chicago housing market, not the city limits. The justices ordered that creation of low cost public housing for minorities in white suburbs would relieve racial segregation in the city. It was a milestone victory for civil rights groups who believed opening up the suburbs to public housing was the only way to integrate schools.⁹¹ Most satisfyingly, the decision was in sharp contrast to *Milliken v. Bradley*. Perhaps America had not closed the door to integration just yet.

If the plaintiffs could get Richard Austin to approve a plan for metropolitan relief, they could get access to HUD funding for its Section 8 program. Section 8 allows qualified low-income public housing residents to find privately owned apartments in the suburbs. The federal government made up the difference between the rent and twenty five

⁸⁸ Ibid., 146-147.

⁸⁹ Supreme Court of the United States, *Hills, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development v. Gautreaux et al*, April 20, 1976, http://scholar.google.com/scholar_case?case=2960530663838124692&hl=en&as_sdt=2,36&as_vis=1 (accessed 21 February, 2013); Lesley Oelsner, "Justices uphold minority housing in white suburbs: Rule 8-0," *New York Times*, April 21, 1976.

⁹⁰ J.S. Fuerst, "Still no room for blacks," *Chicago Tribune*, May 25, 1979.

⁹¹ Lesley Oelsner, "Justices uphold minority housing in white suburbs: Rule 8-0," *New York Times*, April 21, 1976.; Bowly, *The Poorhouse*, 193.

percent of the resident's income.⁹² Federally subsidized housing in the suburbs was a major victory for Polikoff, who wrote, "the holy grail of a public housing program, in which the middle class affluent white neighborhoods of suburbia would have to accept a fair share of the region's public housing poor was now attainable."⁹³ No longer would low-income minorities have to be confined to central cities without access to good schools and jobs. The suburbs would have to help remedy decades of local and federal policies that segregated poor minorities in inner city public housing high-rises.

While the decision was being celebrated, African American groups viewed *Gautreaux* as a "hollow victory."⁹⁴ Public housing was desperately needed in African American neighborhoods and was not being built until some had been constructed in white neighborhoods. On the more extreme side, some African Americans believed the *Gautreaux* case was part of a conspiracy to move them out of central city neighborhoods.⁹⁵

Over the span of *Gautreaux v. CHA* and *Hills v. Gautreaux*, America had seemed to accept segregation as a way of life. At the end of the 1960s, the civil rights movement had dismantled legal segregation and discrimination but a new, more insidious, and dangerous form had taken its place. Polikoff writes:

"The years of Nixon rule had begun with the nation's recognition in the Kerner reports...that government policy had created a two-societies plague on America. It was imperative that the plague be eradicated. Yet in a few short years the

⁹² Robert Reinhold, "U.S.-Backed Chicago Test Offers Suburban Life to Ghetto Blacks," *New York Times*, May 22, 1978.

⁹³ Polikoff, *Waiting for Gautreaux*, 150.

⁹⁴ Robert Reinhold, "U.S.-Backed Chicago Test Offers Suburban Life to Ghetto Blacks," *New York Times*, May 22, 1978.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

country had been moved to a sanctimonious acceptance of it and an intellectually indefensible closure of the judicial route to change.”⁹⁶

While *Gautreaux v. CHA* and *Hills v. Gautreaux* ultimately succeeded in dismantling state sponsored segregation, by the time the litigation had ended, the nation had grown tired of the issue. Racial and economic segregation had become acceptable. This acceptance made integration even more challenging as Polikoff implemented a program to move low income African Americans via HUD’s Section 8 program into the suburbs.

The Gautreaux program began moving CHA tenants out of the projects and into subsidized private units in the suburbs. Beginning in 1976 and lasting for twenty years, 7,100 low-income African American families received counseling, assistance, and rent certificates to relocate out of public housing projects.⁹⁷ Potential families were carefully screened for good housekeeping habits and whether they would be able to adapt to life in the suburbs. Moving to suburbia meant an end to the crime, drugs, poor schools, and poverty of the city. However it also meant an end to churches, family, friends, and moving to scary and sometimes hostile territory.⁹⁸ The move to the suburbs meant a higher quality of life and most significantly, a better opportunity for the children, but at the cost of losing social networks.

Many of the neighborhoods were 25 miles from the city. The Gautreaux families’ new communities had low crime rates, low poverty rates, and good public schools. These positive improvements in standards of living had a fantastic impact on the Gautreaux families, especially the children. Of the children who moved to the suburbs, they were

⁹⁶ Polikoff, *Waiting for Gautreaux*, 154.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Robert Reinhold, “U.S.-Backed Chicago Test Offers Suburban Life to Ghetto Blacks,” *New York Times*, May 22, 1978.

four times more likely to graduate high school, twice as likely to attend college, and more likely to be employed.⁹⁹ The Gautreaux program was an extraordinary success and was the basis for HUD's 1992 national "Moving to Opportunity" program. Over four years, "Moving to Opportunity" relocated 1,700 randomly selected public housing residents out of high poverty areas in Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York.¹⁰⁰ Many observers considered the Gautreaux program an astounding success.

Over the course of fourteen years, from 1966 to 1980, *Gautreaux v. CHA* and *Hills v. Gautreaux* had become lengthy and successful litigation but had effectively ended public housing construction in Chicago during that time. Between 1969 and 1974, little progress was made except on the number and location of projects. From 1969 to 1980, only 114 apartments had been built. By 1983, 600 units had been built but because of construction costs, most of these existing structures had just been rehabilitated. Austin's original order prohibiting public housing in African American neighborhoods until some units had been built in white areas denied housing in high need neighborhoods.¹⁰¹ In order to accelerate the construction of public housing in Chicago, the plaintiffs once again asked the courts to intervene.

⁹⁹ Hanna Rosin, "American Murder Mystery," *The Atlantic*, http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/07/american-murder-mystery/306872/2/?single_page=true (accessed 11 February 2013); Leonard S. Rubinowitz and James E. Rosenbaum, *Crossing the Class and Color Lines*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum's work describes the positive impact moving to the suburbs made on families who relocated with the Gautreaux program. Rosin's article calls into question some of the findings in the book and even connects the relocation of inner city residents with rising crime rates in cities like Chicago and Memphis.

¹⁰⁰ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 255.

¹⁰¹ "The legacy of a lawsuit," *Chicago Tribune*, May 2, 1983; Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 265-266; Robert Reinhold, "U.S.-Backed Chicago Test Offers Suburban Life to Ghetto Blacks," *New York Times*, May 22, 1978.

On June 17, 1981 Judge John P. Crowley signed a consent decree allowing federal officials to grant rent subsidies to 7,100 poor families to move out of the ghetto and into integrated neighborhoods across the city. The order also divided Chicago into white, black, and revitalizing zones. Most of the new public housing construction would take place in revitalizing zones in up and coming, integrated neighborhoods like Hyde Park and Rogers Park. These neighborhoods were undergoing gentrification. As wealthier residents moved in to central city neighborhoods, they displaced poor African Americans who could not afford the higher rents. The public housing would give low income African Americans a chance to stay in these revitalizing zones. Two thirds of public housing would be built in these revitalizing areas on the fringe of the ghetto. Austin's previous ruling called for six out of every ten units to be constructed in white neighborhoods. Crowley's order finally was an end to years of litigation but recognized the realities of race in Chicago. The courts stopped trying to integrate all white neighborhoods and settled for integrated communities.¹⁰² The Crowley order was a step back from integrating white neighborhoods but was a merciful conclusion to the endless litigation.

¹⁰² Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 265-266; John McCarron, "Agreement may end open housing fight" *Chicago Tribune*, January 18, 1981; John McCarron, "Housing accord goal: Break deadlock," *Chicago Tribune*, June 21, 1981.

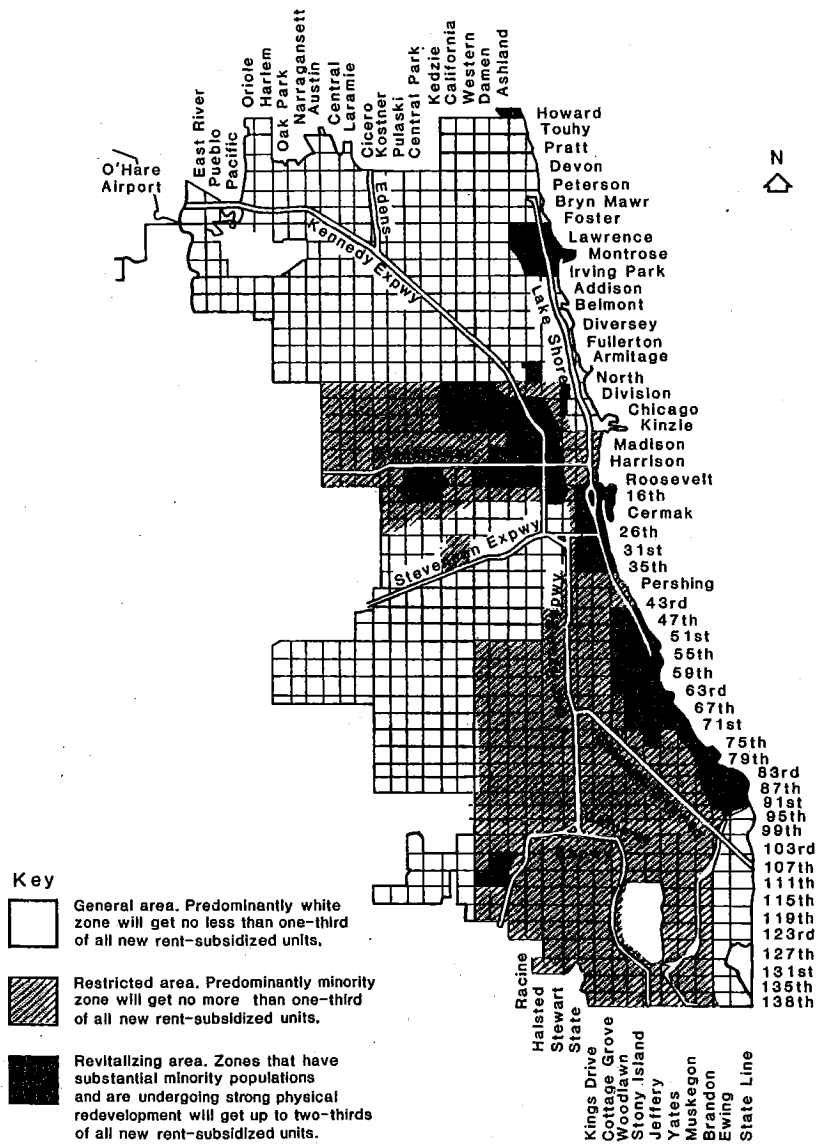


Figure 19. Chicago Housing Authority sites, 1981.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 287.

Gautreaux v. CHA and *Hills v. Gautreaux* were epic court cases that ended legal housing segregation in Chicago and helped shape national anti-poverty housing policy. Unfortunately, the end of public housing construction in Chicago in order to satisfy court ordered integration requirements gave *Gautreaux* the appearance of sacrificing the homeless to serve liberal ideas of integration.¹⁰⁴ The length of the case meant by the time it could have effect, there was no money to back it.¹⁰⁵ *Gautreaux* was a failure ultimately because it took fourteen years. While *Gautreaux* may have been a well-intentioned failure, it certainly drew awareness to the problem of racial and economic segregation.

Another lesson of *Gautreaux* was that the creation of the African American ghetto in Chicago had taken generations and would take more than a court order to dismantle. While *Gautreaux* was a landmark case, it merely removed the restrictions to integration. This did not mean people would integrate voluntarily. The remedy is not actual integration, but the freedom to integrate voluntarily. *Gautreaux* accomplished the removal of restrictions to integrate but Polikoff and the plaintiffs soon realized voluntary integration is much harder to accomplish.¹⁰⁶

The last great irony of *Gautreaux* is that once the CHA finally started on scattered site public housing in the early 1980s, HUD funding was being cut. Ronald Reagan was elected president in 1980 and during his term he slashed HUD's budget. In response to Reagan's budget busting cuts to public housing funding, Chicago Mayor Jane Byrne was forced to redirect funding for scattered site public housing to cover CHA operating

¹⁰⁴ "The legacy of a lawsuit," *Chicago Tribune*, May 2, 1983.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Yale Law Journal Inc. "Public Housing and Urban Policy: *Gautreaux v. Chicago Housing Authority*," 716.

expenses. The CHA's fiscal issues forced the mayor to end the program.¹⁰⁷ Sadly, a viable and successful anti-poverty housing program was scuttled due to budget cuts.

Gautreaux v. CHA had evolved from a simple case of ending public housing discrimination into a plan to relocate low income African Americans from CHA projects into the suburbs. There is no doubt *Gautreaux* was a legal success. The plaintiffs forced the CHA to stop its discriminatory practices and even made metropolitan integration possible. *Gautreaux* also showed the limits of litigation and court ordered integration. The courts removed restrictions to integration but could not force it. *Gautreaux* was the beginning of a long process to break down state sponsored mechanisms for African American residential segregation. Reversing decades of intentional segregation in one lawsuit proved to be impossible. If anything, the *Gautreaux* lawsuit revealed the depths of racial and economic segregation in Chicago and how the process of ending it will take longer than anyone can anticipate.

¹⁰⁷ Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 266.

CONCLUSION

In the summer of 1966, the same year Alexander Polikoff and Dorothy Gautreaux filed their lawsuit to end the Chicago Housing Authority's discriminatory housing patterns, Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) combined with the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations (CCCCO) to create the Chicago Freedom Movement. The Chicago Freedom Movement would be King's first organized movement in the urban North. Determined to end school segregation, achieve fair housing, greater employment, better schools, and removal of the slums, King used marches and rallies to draw national attention to the situation of African Americans in the Windy City. The issues King focused on have not disappeared. The Chicago Freedom Movement was modeled after King's nonviolent direct action approach that worked so effectively in the South, however Mayor Richard J. Daley's entrenched political machine proved to be too powerful.

The Chicago Freedom Movement represented a shift in the civil rights movement from legal segregation to spatial segregation. The civil rights movement began to focus on social, political, and economic inequalities instead of legal segregation and discrimination. Most legal forms of segregation and discrimination in Chicago had been eliminated by the 1950s but de facto segregation, or segregation not mandated by law, still existed in housing and education. African Americans attended inferior schools, had higher rates of poverty and unemployment, and lived in worse housing.¹ The movement focused on a whole range of African American issues. Leaders asked the CHA to

¹ Alan B. Anderson and George Pickering, *Confronting the Color Line: The Broken Promise of the Civil Rights Movement in Chicago*, (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1986), 2.

rehabilitate projects, increase police protection, provide better access to childcare, and implement a scattered site-housing program. Open housing was a central demand of the Chicago Freedom Movement.

After a series of open housing marches across the city, Mayor Richard J. Daley and King announced an agreement in August 1966. The open housing marches through white neighborhoods would stop and city leaders would promote fair housing.² The hope was to make Chicago an open city. City leaders failed to follow through on their end of the bargain and Chicago remained a divided city. African Americans still lived in worse housing, attended poor schools, and had higher unemployment.

Many observers consider the Chicago Freedom Movement a failure. It did not draw national outrage, force landmark legislation, or strengthen the civil rights movement.³ While the movement's demand for fair housing was similar to the southern plea for equal treatment, "whites everywhere dismissed it as an illegitimate demand that threatened their right to basic, private decisions, about the disposal of their property and, even more menacingly, threatened the quality of their neighborhoods."⁴ When African Americans started campaigning for open housing, better schools, and more employment, white resistance intensified. Segregation in the public sphere was not permitted but when it came down to the private issue of the home and neighborhood, whites once again felt threatened by the surge of African Americans and reacted violently.

While the Chicago Freedom Movement may have failed to open a divided city, the *Gautreaux* lawsuit represented a more effective, if not lengthy, attempt to end de

² *The Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago*, s.v. "Martin Luther King Jr."

³ James R. Ralph Jr., *Northern Protest: Martin Luther King, Jr., Chicago, and the Civil Rights Movement*, (Cambridge Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1993), 234.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 220.

facto segregation. Over ten years, the lawsuit ended the Chicago Housing Authority's pattern of discriminatory public housing developments, removed the city council's veto power over CHA sites allowing scattered site projects, and successfully argued before the Supreme Court that public housing in the suburbs was legal in order to remedy discrimination that occurred in the city. Additionally, the Gautreaux program moved thousands of low-income African Americans from deteriorating CHA projects to federally subsidized private apartments in the suburbs. A celebrated study in 1991 revealed that relocated residents were more likely to finish high school, attend college, and be employed than residents who stayed in the city.⁵ Moving public housing residents out of the inner city to a healthier environment in the suburbs had the potential to be an effective anti-poverty program.

A follow up study on the Gautreaux program by the federal government produced disturbing results. Researchers found the sample size of the first Gautreaux study was small. Only around 100 families participated and they were heavily screened. Ideal circumstances provided glowing results. The new study showed that women who moved to the suburbs had lower levels of depression and obesity, but were still unlikely to find jobs. The schools in the suburbs were just as bad and the children were not likely to stay in them. Residents felt isolated from their old community and social networks.⁶ The residents felt better about their living environment but were not more likely to move out of poverty. Relocating residents out of public housing developments did not seem to help

⁵ Hanna Rosin, "American Murder Mystery," *The Atlantic*, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/07/american-murder-mystery/306872/2/> (accessed February 11, 2013).

⁶ Ibid.

lift them out of poverty. Their new communities had the same problems as the inner city public housing developments.

In the 1990s, Chicago began demolishing high-rise developments as part of the CHA's Plan for Transformation. Notorious projects like Cabrini Green and the Robert Taylor Homes had to be demolished. These infamous projects were plagued with infrastructural problems, gangs, poverty, drugs, and social dysfunction. When the infamous towers finally came down, residents were relocated to neighborhoods across the city.⁷ Many of their new neighborhoods were hardly better than the projects they left behind. Residents who used the HUD Section 8 vouchers often chose neighborhoods with low rents and high crime rates. Concentrated poverty, violence, gangs, and inferior schools were still problems. The neighborhoods were already in decline when they moved. Scattering public housing residents across the city did not seem to improve their environment.⁸

The recent spike in gun violence in Chicago has some experts examining if there could be a connection with housing policy. As projects are coming down in the inner city, crime is moving outward and destabilizing the surrounding areas. In Chicago, suburbs to the north and west saw a spike in crime rates after CHA projects were demolished.⁹ Gangs controlled the drug trafficking in individual projects and when the towers came down, their territory was disrupted. With the demand concentrated in the towers, gangs had a steady market for drugs. When the towers were demolished, they were forced to

⁷ "Is there a link between housing policy and violence?" American Public Media Marketplace. <http://www.marketplace.org/topics/wealth-poverty/there-link-between-housing-policy-and-violence#.URrZ-9xhAcY.mailto> (accessed February 21, 2013).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Rosin, "American Murder Mystery."

fight with other gangs for new territory. Instead of concentrating gun crime and drug trafficking in high-rise projects, these problems became dispersed citywide.

Neighborhoods with a higher density of relocated public housing residents saw violent crime increase by 21 percent. Meanwhile, the crime in public housing “transformation” sites decreased between 2000 and 2008. Across the city, violent crime decreased by a net of one percent and gun crime decreased by 4.4 percent. Basically, there has been a major decline in specific public housing neighborhoods, a minor decline citywide, and an increase in specific neighborhoods with a high number of relocated residents.¹⁰

Dispersing the problems concentrated in public housing has produced deadly results. More people were killed in Chicago in 2012 than U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan.¹¹ Over one night in August 2012, nineteen people were shot and thirteen were shot in a thirty-minute period across the West and South sides. One incident occurred at the CHA’s Ida B. Wells/Darrow Homes complex. Over Memorial Day weekend in May 2012, ten people were murdered.¹² Violent news in Chicago is no longer shocking. While it is important to note that poverty and the recent foreclosure crisis has also played a role

¹⁰ Whet Moser, “Did the Destruction of Chicago’s Public Housing Decrease Violent Crime, Or Just Move It Elsewhere?” *Chicagomag*. <http://www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/The-312/April-2012/Did-the-Destruction-of-Chicagos-Public-Housing-Decrease-Violent-Crime-Or-Just-Move-It-Elsewhere/> (accessed February 27, 2013).

¹¹ “Is there a link between housing policy and violence?” American Public Media Marketplace. <http://www.marketplace.org/topics/wealth-poverty/there-link-between-housing-policy-and-violence#.URrZ-9xhAcY.mailto> (accessed February 21, 2013).

¹² Alexander Abad-Santos, “Chicago’s Violent Summer Continues: 19 Shot Overnight.” *The Atlantic Wire*. <http://www.theatlanticwire.com/national/2012/08/chicagos-violent-summer-continues-19-people-shot-overnight/56164/> (accessed February 26, 2013); Peter Nickeas, “19 people shot in overnight shootings across Chicago,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 24, 2012.

in perpetuating violence, housing policy is an often-ignored part of Chicago's gun crime problem.

Racial and economic segregation remains an issue in Chicago today. A recent study by the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research declared Chicago the most segregated big city in the United States.¹³ Despite declines in the past decade, Chicago still has the highest levels of racial and economic segregation in the nation. The high density of people who live there accentuates the poverty, unemployment, inferior schools, and crime. Chicago is paying for its past discriminatory and segregationist housing policies in the manifestation of gun violence and crime. What the story of the CHA reveals is that a well-intentioned effort to clear the slums and house low-income people failed. The result is an extremely segregated city. It took decades to build the current African American ghettos in Chicago and it will take even longer to dismantle them. Until this happens, the nation and Chicago will continue to exist, in the infamous words of the Kerner Report as, "two societies, one black, one white, – separate and unequal."¹⁴

¹³ Edward Glaeser and Jacob Vigdor, "The End of the Segregated Century: Racial Separation in America's Neighborhoods, 1890-2010," *Manhattan Institute for Policy Research*, http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/cr_66.htm (accessed February 28, 2013).

¹⁴ National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968); also known as the Kerner Commission Report.

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Brown, Frank London. *Trumbull Park*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1959.

A disturbing read about the process of public housing integration in Chicago, Frank Brown, a former resident of the Trumbull Park Homes, fictionalizes the story of an African American family moving into the project. The first person narrative of Buggy Martin describes the challenges of moving into the Trumbull Park Homes. Amid constant and unrelenting violence and racism from their white neighbors, they find solace and community with other African American residents. Brown writes a powerful, moving, and emotional account on the African American experience at Trumbull Park and is an excellent depiction of the Trumbull Park disturbances.

Chicago Housing Authority, *Annual Reports 1946/47-1960/61*, 31. Harold Washington Public Library, Chicago, Illinois. Municipal Documents Collection Fifth Floor.

The Harold Washington Public Library in Chicago kept these documents published by the Chicago Housing Authority in one volume. Within these documents are annual reports for each year between 1946 and 1960. The reports provided data on CHA projects, slum clearance, maps budgets, federal housing grants, and a calendar of the 1949-1950 site selection controversy. These annual reports were invaluable to this study.

Chicago Housing Authority, *Chicago Housing Authority Times*. Chicago History Museum Research Center Archives.

The Chicago Housing Authority Times were the monthly newsletters published by the Chicago Housing Authority beginning in 1959. These documents were part of a large collection of CHA files in the Chicago History Museum. The newsletters provided information on the construction of new projects, particularly the Robert Taylor Homes. These files also provided a glimpse of the activities and interest of residents in the projects as well.

Chicago Defender.

Instrumental in the encouraging southern African Americans to migrate to Chicago in the early half of the twentieth century, the *Chicago Defender* would play a crucial role in chronicling the events described in this study. The *Defender's* writers would cover the site selection controversy of 1949-1950 and the Trumbull Park race riots of 1953. The second largest daily African American

newspaper in the nation, the *Chicago Defender* is an essential primary source for this study of African Americans and the Chicago Housing Authority.

Chicago Tribune.

The *Chicago Tribune* provided a different perspective on the Chicago Housing Authority, race, and segregation than the *Chicago Defender*. The *Tribune*'s writers thoughtfully described the ongoing *Gautreaux v. CHA* lawsuit from 1966 to 1981 and argued that the case was a well-intentioned failure. The *Tribune* also played a prominent role in covering the site selection controversy of 1949-1950.

Meyerson, Martin, and Edward C. Banfield. *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest: The Case of Public Housing in Chicago*. London: The Free Press, 1955.

After World War II, the Chicago Housing Authority was at the center of the effort to clear the city's slums. Martin Meyerson and Edward Banfield, two Chicago city planners, describe the Chicago Housing Authority's quest to integrate public housing while relieving the city of a massive housing crisis. *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest* is an intimate and descriptive account of the politicians, reformers, and institutions involved in the public housing site selection process controversy of 1949-1950 that effectively ended scattered site public housing construction in Chicago.

National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968); also known as the Kerner Commission Report.

One of the most acclaimed government reports of the last century, the Kerner Commission Report vividly described the causes of the inner city race riots that exploded across the nation in 1967. Citing lack of economic opportunity as primary reason for the rioting, the Kerner Commission foreshadowed potential consequences for the nation if racial inequality was not addressed. The report advised more housing construction, job creation, and to end de facto segregation in the nation's cities in order to remedy the problem. Warning that the, "nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal," the Kerner Commission's findings reflected issues still relevant in American society today.

Polikoff, Alexander. *Waiting for Gautreaux: A Story of Segregation, Housing, and the Black Ghetto*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2006.

Polikoff, a lawyer with Business and Professional People for the Public Interest, writes an absorbing, depressing, and passionate account of the court case *Gautreaux v. CHA* that would end Chicago's discriminatory pattern of public housing. His work begins with the first effort to end the CHA's discriminatory public housing construction solely in African American neighborhoods before

becoming a national lawsuit against the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Arguing before the Supreme Court that public housing in the suburbs was necessary to remedy the CHA's discrimination, Polikoff's epic legal journey is an inspiration to the power of individual determination to achieve change through the democratic system.

Secondary Sources

Anderson, Alan B. and George W. Pickering. *Confronting the Color Line: The Broken Promise of the Civil Rights Movement in Chicago*. Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1986.

Anderson and Pickering explore the hopes and goals of the civil rights movement's first venture into the urban North. In the summer of 1966, Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference formed the Chicago Freedom Movement. The movement would address a range of African American issues. Open housing, education, poverty, crime, jobs, and the overall situation of African Americans in Chicago were brought to national attention. Mayor Richard J. Daley's political machine proved to be too powerful for King's movement. Ultimately, the Chicago Freedom Movement was a failure but the issues it highlighted are still relevant today.

Austen, Ben. "The Last Tower." *Harpers Magazine*, May 2012, <http://harpers.org/archive/2012/05/the-last-tower/1/> (accessed February 14, 2013).

A fascinating description of the demolition of the infamous Cabrini Green public housing development, Austen's article provides a convenient bookend to the history of the Chicago Housing Authority. The destruction of Cabrini Green forced many residents to relocate to better environments but not without their own problems. Austen, a freelance reporter and writer, describes the difficulty Chicago is still facing with housing low-income people. By using individual stories of relocation from public housing, the article is a reflective piece on the history of the CHA and the struggle to remedy past housing mistakes.

Biles, Roger. "Race and Housing in Chicago." *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* (1998-) 94, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 31-38. <http://jstor.org/> (accessed January 1, 2013).

Biles, a professor of urban and United States history at Illinois State University, tells the story of the African American Great Migration and the emergence of a distinct and enduring ghetto in the South and West Sides of Chicago. Biles emphasizes that the start of the twentieth century, Chicago was already one of the nation's most segregated cities, but the influx of African Americans would harden racial and class lines. Ultimately, a combination of public policy and private combined to effectively conceal the African American community.

Bowly, Devereux Jr. *The Poorhouse: Subsidized Housing in Chicago, 1895-1976*. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978.

The work is one of the first examinations of the public housing system in Chicago. Devereux Bowly Jr., a lawyer and public housing historian, describes the history of Chicago public housing and why the system has largely failed. By detailing the decision making and planning behind individual projects, Bowly Jr. provides a complete history of the Chicago Housing Authority. The writing is descriptive, scholarly, and chronological. The book confirms the analysis of Chicago public housing as a well-intentioned program that ultimately failed.

Cronon, William. *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991.

This book provides an environmental and ecological perspective on the historical development of Chicago. Cronon, a History Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, describes how Chicago's growth and the spread of capitalism changed the relationship between city and countryside. The intricate connections between farm and city changed the region's economy and transformed the American landscape. The style is flowing and evocative. The work is a groundbreaking depiction of the complex interactions between city and countryside allowing Chicago to become a metropolis.

Drake, St. Clair, and Horace R. Cayton. *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1945.

This groundbreaking and superlative description of African American life in Chicago vividly describes, analyzes, and documents nearly every aspect of the black experience in the city. Based on research conducted in the 1930s, *Black Metropolis* examines the social, cultural, and economic facets of African American life in Chicago. The book is an exhaustive and intensive study, providing examples of how conditions have changed in Chicago and how they have not. The style is heavy and analytical. It stands as a landmark work on African American life.

Fuerst, J.S. *When Public Housing Was Paradise: Building Community in Chicago*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2003.

The work is the product of ten years of research and writing by J.S. Fuerst, the former Director of Research and Statistics for the Chicago Housing Authority. Fuerst offers another perspective on public housing that differs from the gang infested, deteriorating, and ugly developments that have received widespread notoriety. When the Chicago Housing Authority was created, public housing was viewed as a means for social mobility. Affordable and attractive units that were places of community characterized public housing. The book is a compilation of

interviews with former CHA workers and tenants. Most are African American that used public housing as an escape from poverty. Fuerst's work is emotional, compelling, and transformative and tries to change the negative stereotype associated with public housing.

Gregory, James N. *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005.

Gregory, a professor of history at the University of Washington, illustrates the significant cultural, political, and economic changes in American society as a result of the Great Migration. From 1900 to the 1970s, twenty million southerners migrated to the North and West, reshaping their new communities. These newcomers created the modern civil rights movement and modern conservatism. Protestant evangelism emerged and popular music was transformed. This book examines the impact of the Great Migration on American society and is an outstanding work chronicling the great exodus from the American South.

Grossman, James R. *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989.

Grossman, an assistant professor of History at the University of Chicago, brilliantly tells the story of Chicago and the Great Migration. The work is a product of ten years of research and describes in rich detail the process of migration from the South to Chicago after World War I. In part one of the book, Grossman gives a foundation for understanding why black southerners left and the second part examines their experience in Chicago and concludes that the migrants' hope for opportunity and freedom died in the North.

Hirsch, Arnold R. *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

A professor of History at the University of New Orleans School of Urban and Regional Studies, Hirsch authors one of the most powerful and detailed accounts of the creation Chicago's African American ghetto. He describes the processes, institutions, and actors that worked together to segregate African Americans who were arriving in large numbers after World War II. Hirsch argues that the Chicago Housing Authority was hijacked by the city council to clear Chicago's slums and rebuild them in the form of high-rise public housing projects called the "second ghetto." An informative and fascinating work on Chicago, *Making the Second Ghetto* is consumed by the details of neighborhood change and is an essential work on the segregation and isolation of Chicago's black community.

Hirsch, Arnold R. "Massive Resistance in the Urban North: Trumbull Park Chicago 1953-1966." *Journal of American History* 82, no. 2 (1995): 522-550, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2082185> (accessed 4 October 2012).

Hirsch's article provides an account of an African American family moving into an all white neighborhood and the ensuing chaos. The Chicago Housing Authority was slowly integrating the South Deering neighborhood. Their arrival was met with extreme hostility and violence by whites. African American efforts to attend church, commute to their jobs, and shop at local grocery stores were impeded. The situation in the Trumbull Park Homes projects showed the extent of white violence towards the integration of their neighborhoods. A turning point in the history of the Chicago Housing Authority, the disturbances at Trumbull Park revealed massive white resistance to integration.

Holland, Robert A. *Chicago in Maps 1612-2002*. New York: Rizzoli, 2005.

Holland, a professor of philosophy at Hofstra University, compiles a vibrant history of Chicago through maps. This cartographic book provides over seventy maps showing how the city changed throughout its history. Historical descriptions accompany every map. The diverse illustrations provide a different perspective on Chicago's history. The short anecdotes are addressed to any informed reader.

Holt, Glen E., and Dominic A. Pacyga. *Chicago: A Historical Guide To The Neighborhoods The Loop and South Side*. Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1979.

Pacyga, a professor of History at Columbia College Chicago, and Holt combine to produce a book describing the historical development of Chicago's South Side neighborhoods. They reveal transportation, the stockyards, the park system, and urban renewal as major factors influencing the evolution of individual neighborhoods. The book examines each distinct neighborhood on the South Side as a case study, from Douglas to Back of the Yards. The authors address themselves to the historian, but any informed reader can gain important information about Chicago's South Side communities.

Horton, Carol A. *Race and the Making of American Liberalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Horton, an independent scholar and Research Associate at Erikson Institute in Chicago, examines the historical connections between race and progressive liberalism. This historical account describes the evolution of liberalism in American history and the movement's record on racial equality. Surprisingly, the progressive record on racial equality is mixed. Horton portrays liberalism as a force that both liberated and supported racial hierarchy. She concludes by arguing for a new conception of race and class identity in order to understand socioeconomic inequality.

Hunt, D. Bradford. *Blueprint for Disaster: The Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Hunt, a professor of social science and history at Roosevelt University in Chicago, tells the long tale of the destruction of Chicago public housing. The book examines the history of Chicago public housing from the New Deal to Richard M. Daley's 21st century "Plan for Transformation." An integral part of this story is the transformation of the Chicago Housing Authority from a progressive agency to the keeper of the city's slums and builder of high-rise social disasters. Hunt concludes that public housing's inability to compete with the private market, fiscal mismanagement, and structural flaws combined to create a system where poverty, crime, and social disorder were rampant.

Hunt, D. Bradford. "What Went Wrong With Public Housing in Chicago?" *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 94, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 96-123. <http://jstor.org> (accessed January 1, 2013).

Hunt continues to examine the failure of public housing in Chicago in this article. A combination of anti-public housing forces such as racist politicians that interfered with site selection, real estate agents that blocked construction, income limits, and poorly designed structures all led to the decline of the CHA. Hunt, however, uncovers new research showing that the progressive leaders of the CHA, motivated by a well-intentioned desire to clear the slums, intended to build the same high-rise disasters that would eventually be the CHA's downfall.

Kadar, Marlene. Jeanne Perreault, and Linda Warley, ed. *Photographs, Histories, and Meanings*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

The editors of the book compile a number of accounts about the meaning, interpretations, and impacts of photography in society. One of these collections is about the promise of public housing in Chicago. The work shows photographs of African American slums in Chicago and how these images shaped the political discourse for public housing. The Chicago Housing Authority used photographs to present a stark contrast between deteriorating slums and modern public housing units. The authors of this account argue that public housing held great promise as a vehicle for social mobility. Unfortunately, through mismanagement and social disorder, Chicago public housing failed its residents. The section of the book on Chicago public housing is a fascinating cross section of the power of photography to portray the housing conditions of the poor.

Lemann, Nicholas. *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How it Changed America*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991.

Lemann's book on the African American Great Migration is one of the most important accounts of this great demographic shift. A journalist and graduate of Harvard University, Lemann describes the migration of rural southern African Americans from the South to the urban North on a personal level. Lemann moves between Clarksdale, Mississippi, Chicago, and Washington D.C., to tell a story of

the forces that confined African Americans to poverty and ghettos in the North. A New York Times bestseller, *The Promised Land* is a clear call to end the undo the forces that created the African American ghetto and remedy the nation's past racism.

Meyerson, Martin, and Edward C. Banfield. *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest: The Case of Public Housing in Chicago*. London: The Free Press, 1955.

After World War II, Chicago faced a housing crisis and the Chicago Housing Authority was at the center of the effort to rebuild the city's slums. Martin Meyerson and Edward Banfield, two Chicago city planners, describe the Chicago Housing Authority's quest to integrate public housing while relieving the city of a massive housing crisis. *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest* is an intimate and descriptive account of the politicians, reformers, and institutions involved in the public housing site selection process controversy of 1949-1950 that effectively ended scattered site public housing construction in Chicago.

Pacyga, Dominic A. *Chicago: A Biography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Historian Dominic Pacyga traces the history of Chicago in this fascinating and compelling biography of the city. From the city's foundation in the 19th century, to industrial expansion, to massive ethnic immigration, to the world wars and the Great Depression, Pacyga covers hundreds of years of Chicago history in great detail. Influential actors such as Jane Addams and Richard J. Daley make brief appearances. This work is an ambitious and powerful account of the city's great rise and the people and events that defined the city.

Philpott, Thomas L. *The Slum and the Ghetto Neighborhood Deterioration and Middle-Class Reform, Chicago 1880-1930*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Philpott, an associate professor of History at the University of Texas at Austin, produces a work recounting the differences between poor white ethnic social mobility and African Americans in Chicago. Many impoverished white immigrants were able to move out of poverty and into the middle class, but African Americans did not. Philpott argues that the riots of 1919 forced reformers to address the Black Belt slums. Instead of fostering social mobility out of the ghetto, reformers contained African Americans to the slums. The progressive movement for racial equality is examined and Philpott's findings are similar to Carol Horton's *Race and the Making of American Liberalism*. The work is an outstanding analysis of the slum and ghetto and the means by which occupants escaped or were restricted.

Ralph Jr., James R. *Northern Protest: Martin Luther King, Jr., Chicago, and the Civil Rights Movement*. Cambridge Massachusetts and London England: Harvard University Press: 1993.

Ralph Jr., an Associate Professor of History at Middlebury College, describes the civil right's movement's turn from legal segregation in the South to spatial segregation in the urban North. He describes how an unprecedented assault on economic and racial inequality in Chicago led to the downfall of the civil rights movement. By pushing for equality in housing, education, and employment, the Chicago Freedom Movement actually undermined the public consensus fueling the civil rights movement.

Reed, Christopher Robert. *The Chicago NAACP and the Rise of Black Professional Leadership 1910-1966*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997.

The work is a product of several years of research and individual experience in Chicago, by Robert Christopher Reed, a professor of history at Roosevelt University. The book describes the evolution of the Chicago branch of the NAACP through two world wars, the Great Depression and the beginning of the civil rights movement. Significant time is spent examining the black professional leadership and African American civic life. Reed also reveals divisions within the NAACP over the pursuit of integration. The style is deep and scholarly and is addressed primarily to the historian.

Rosin, Hanna. "American Murder Mystery." *The Atlantic*, July/August 2008, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/07/american-murder-mystery/306872/2/> (accessed, 11 February 2013).

Rosin's article describes deeply concerning phenomena seen across American cities. As public housing developments are being demolished, crime is being pushed outward into suburban areas. She describes the personal stories of several individuals in Memphis, Tennessee and their experience moving from public housing to private apartments subsidized by HUD's Section 8 voucher program. The unfortunate assessment of this housing policy is that while residents may live in better environments, they are not more likely to move out of poverty.

Satter, Beryl. *Family Properties: Race, Real Estate, and the Exploitation of Black Urban America*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009.

Satter, chair of the Department of History at Rutgers University, argues that the true causes of the black ghetto were not black pathology, white flight, or the culture of poverty, but institutionalized legal and financial exploitation. Satter describes the work of her father, Mark J. Satter, a lawyer who fought back against the discriminatory practices. The style is expressive and the story of legal real estate discrimination is depressing. Satter's book is a disturbing and simultaneously powerful story of the real estate practices that shaped African American segregation.

Spear, Allan H. *Black Chicago: The Making of A Ghetto 1890-1920*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967.

Spear, a historian and former Minnesota State Senator, explains how the fluctuating race relations in Chicago in 1890-1920 developed into a stiff and unyielding ghetto that separated African Americans. The profound changes in Chicago were a result of white hostility, prejudice, and even some of the decisions made by African American leaders. The style is addressed to the scholar but still describes the creation of the ghetto in ways anyone can understand. Spear's book provides an effective and descriptive account of the early years of Chicago's African American ghetto.

Tuttle Jr., William M. *Race Riot Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919*. New York: Atheneum, 1972.

The work is a product of several years of study by William Tuttle Jr., a Senior Fellow in Negro History at Johns Hopkins University. This vivid work describes the events of the Chicago race riot in 1919 that ensued after a young black teenager was drowned in Lake Michigan. Tuttle reveals that the origins of the riot were deep animosity between whites and blacks. Taking an approach that emphasizes the individual's role in the uprising, the author attempts to provide the reasons and causes behind the riots. He concludes by emphasizing that white racism and prejudice, the primary causes of the riot, were beginning to manifest in cities throughout the nation after World War I.

Wyly, Elvin K. and Daniel J. Hammel. "Capital's Metropolis: Chicago and the Transformation of American Housing Policy." *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 82, No. 4 (2000): 181-206. <http://jstor.org/> (accessed January 1, 2013).

In this wide ranging and scholarly article, Wyly and Hammel explore the evolution of American housing policy through the Chicago. By examining reinvestment, housing finance, and public housing, the article provides an economic and historical context to Chicago's inner city housing problems. The authors delve into Chicago's history of African American migration through the twentieth century and how a combination of white racism, sustained immigration, and urban renewal worked to restrict housing options for African Americans. They point to the CHA's policy of building isolated high-rise structures as a primary reasons for its housing policy failures.

Yale Law Journal Inc. "Public Housing and Urban Policy: *Gautreaux v. Chicago Housing Authority*." 79, no. 4 (March 1970): 712-729. http://jstor.org (accessed March 4, 2013).

This article by the Yale Law Journal describes the legal arguments involved in *Gautreaux v. Chicago Housing Authority* and argues the judiciary overstepped its authority. By ordering scattered site public housing in white neighborhoods, Judge Richard B. Austin did not recognize the limitations of the court to influence

housing policy. The article makes clear that Austin's order was short sighted and did not recognize the realities of race and housing in Chicago. Public housing was needed in African American neighborhoods and his order effectively ended construction in these areas until projects were built in white neighborhoods.