

2015

Poetic Justice & Crumbling Structures: Deteriorating Segregated Spaces in NYC Public Housing & the Policies that Created Them

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Recommended Citation

Moran, Cesar, "Poetic Justice & Crumbling Structures: Deteriorating Segregated Spaces in NYC Public Housing & the Policies that Created Them" (2015). *Architectural Studies Integrative Projects*. Paper 70.
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SENIOR INTEGRATIVE PROJECT:
INDEPENDENT STUDY

ARCHITECTURAL STUDIES
CONNECTICUT COLLEGE
2015



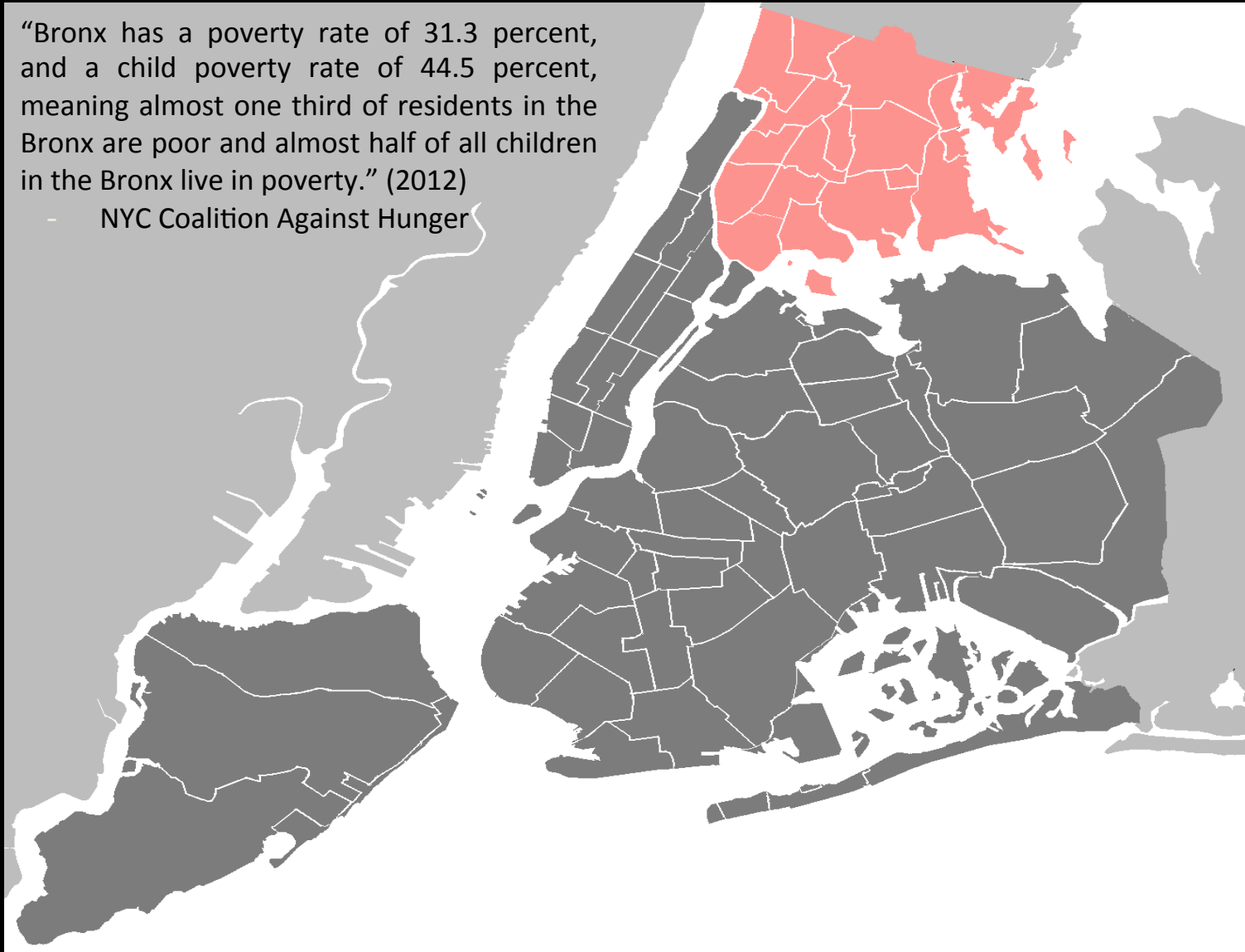
CONNECTICUT
COLLEGE

Poetic Justice & Crumbling Structures
Deteriorating Segregated Spaces in NYC
Public Housing & the Policies that
Created Them

Cesar Moran
Architectural Studies

“Bronx has a poverty rate of 31.3 percent, and a child poverty rate of 44.5 percent, meaning almost one third of residents in the Bronx are poor and almost half of all children in the Bronx live in poverty.” (2012)

- NYC Coalition Against Hunger



Bronx in New York City - How does housing affect this?



New York City Housing Authority - Public Housing

Public Housing

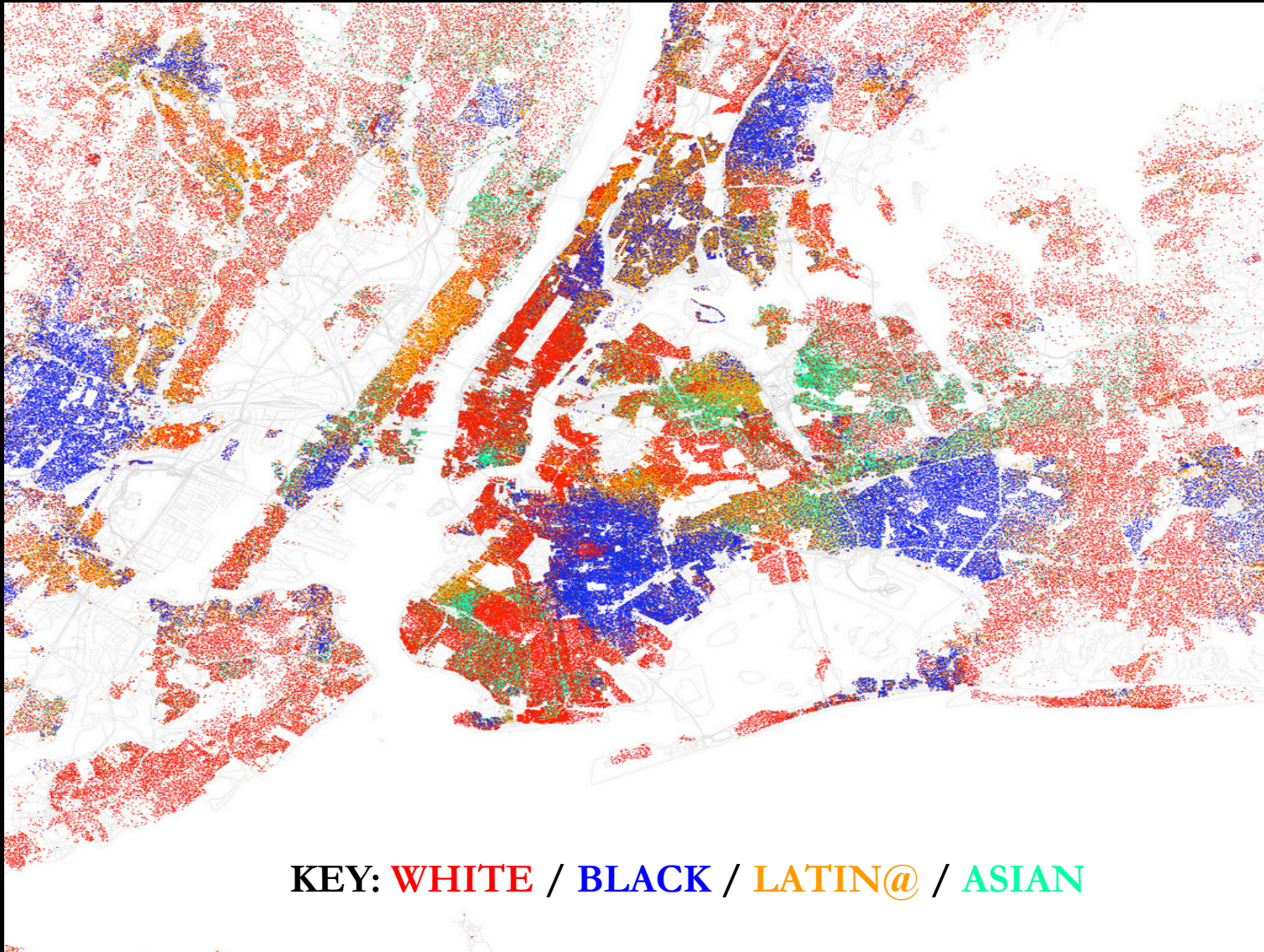
- ❖ U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development gives federal aid to local housing agencies that manage public housing
- ❖ Agencies built cost efficient high rises to maximize the number of people to benefit
- ❖ Started in the 1950s and ends in 1974
- ❖ Intended to create safe and decent rental housing for low income families, senior citizens, and persons with disabilities
- ❖ Eligibility depends on US citizenship, immigration status, & criminal record



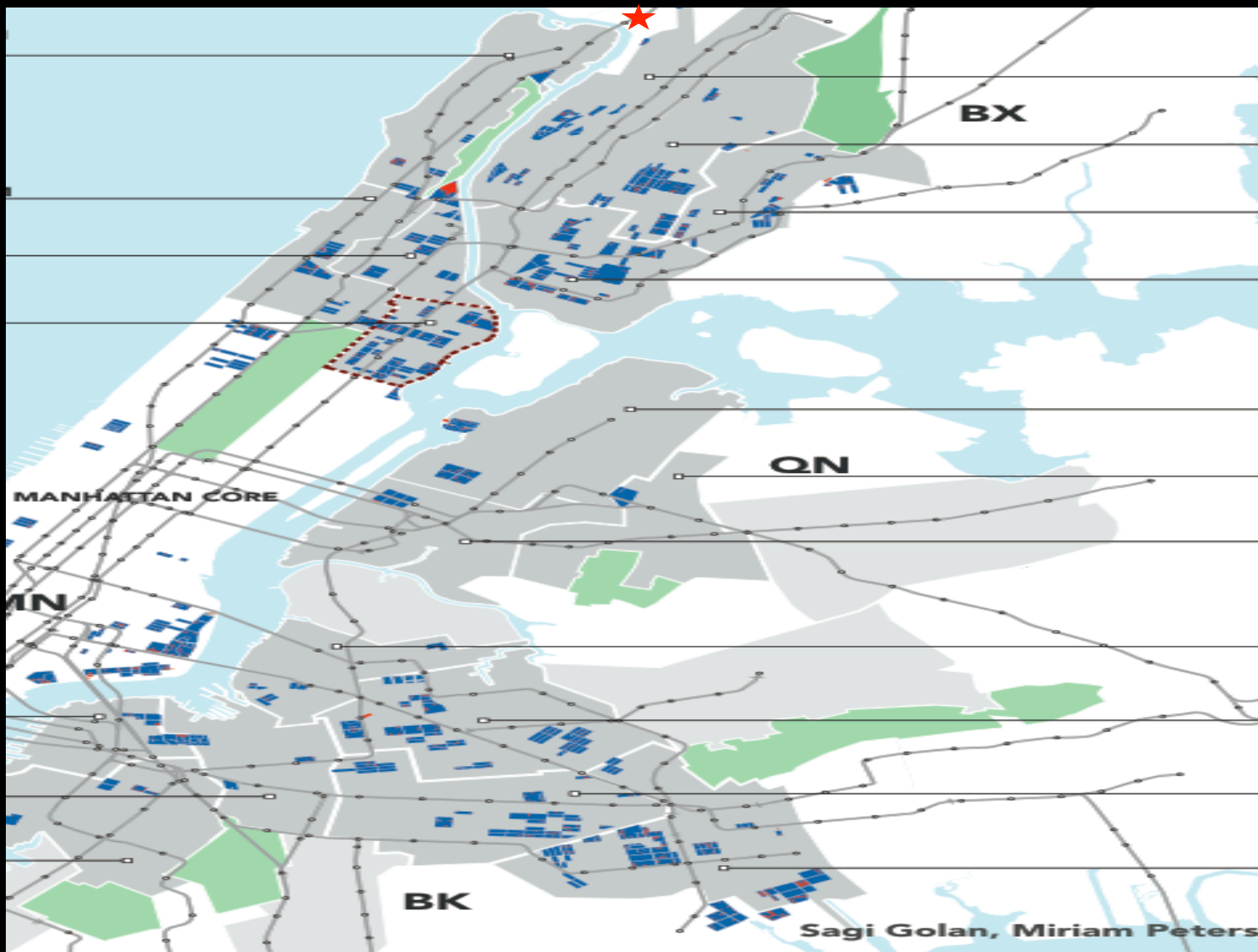
“The Other Park Avenue”

Research Question: How has planning and policy served to segregate and disenfranchise lower income communities in New York City?

Method: Dissection of Policy Through Poetry



Racial Segregation in New York City (Map by Eric Fischer)



Locations of NYCHA Housing Developments

Crumbling Conditions

- ❖ 70 year old buildings
- ❖ At least 300,000 unmet repair requests
- ❖ \$6 Billion are needed to accomplish all repairs
- ❖ 80% of apartments have at least one deficiency
- ❖ Tenants face: mold, asbestos, inadequate or no heat/electricity
- ❖ Waiting line of 160,000 people



“Fixing a Leak with a Bucket” (2015 - Melrose Houses in the South Bronx)



1955 - Marble Hill Housing Development, Bronx (NYC)

Why use Poetry as a Method?

As I studied various housing policies, I came to find that the language and intent was very disconnected from the harsh realities that people living in these poor conditions were facing.

Power of metaphors

Easier to understand

Emotional impact

Dealing with trauma

Emotional connection



“Incubation of Poverty” (2014 - Marble Hill Housing)



“Highway (De)Construction” (2014 - Cross Bronx Expressway)



“Repeatedly Falling, We’ll Go” (1972 - Demolition of Pruitt-Igoe)

Reflection: Policy Findings (Enterprise Community Partners)

“They look on, from above,
down at us from their
condo views...

They looked on, from
above to say hey
one less delinquent there...”

❖ Affordable Housing

“You on your last breath,
you dying civilization,
you are playing too fast
too loose with no
principles, you made too
many problems thinkin
money would catch em
and eradicate em all for
you...”

❖ Budget Cuts

Redissection: Policy Recommendations (Community Grassroots Organizing)

“Just open space without a
united community,
Without a collaborative
existence...”

❖ Community Voices Heard
(CVH)

“I owe my life to my
brother’s intuition
Intuition to stop for a bit
and be a kid...”

❖ Center for Urban Pedagogy
(CUP)



2014 – CVH at the People's Climate March



“Space Jam: What are the issues with NYCHA” (CUP)

SIP: Dissection of Policy Through Poetry

Poem 1: Souls Made of Bricks

Immediate Urban Environment
Observations

*Poem 2: Intuition of this Existence

Personal Narrative
*Public Housing

Poem 4: Cross Bronx Expressway

*Urban Renewal: Slum Clearance
*Urban Planning: Highway
Construction
*Exclusionary Zoning

Poem 3: Home-Owners of the American Dream

*Red Lining
*Exclusionary Zoning
*GI - Bill

Poem 5: Cabrini Two

Failures: Pruitt Igoe & Cabrini Green
*Section 8
*Hope 6

Poem 6: A Story of Policy vs. Poetry (Censored)

Our America: Life & Death on the
South Side of Chicago (LeAlan
Jones & Lloyd Newman)