

R E S I D E N T S '

Journal

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RJ Celebrates its Fifth Annive

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Haymarket House AD

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Our Mission

This publication is committed to the journalistic principles of fair representation and free speech. Above all else, this publication will strive to fairly and accurately represent all sides of the issues that the editorial staff chooses to investigate. In maintaining an unwavering guarantee of editorial independence, this publication will contribute to the American media's mission of faithfully providing balanced, truthful accounts and information.

Residents' Journal strives to be accessible to all communities, regardless of income, ethnicity or disability.

We The People Media is committed to the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution which protects the Freedom of the Press.

The views expressed in this publication do not reflect the views of We The People Media or its staff.

Publisher's Box

by Ethan Michaeli



I hope that we'll make Tom Merriweather proud.

This issue marks *Residents' Journal's* fifth anniversary. It's a happy occasion for all of us on the staff and the board of We The People Media, all the more so because one of us, Stop the Violence columnist Cenabeth Cross, won an award from the Chicago Association of Black Journalists. Congratulations, Cenabeth and thank you to CABJ for your recognition, CABJ's third award to *Residents' Journal*.

journalists and our audience. Unlike some of the bigger publications in town, we can't hide in a tower. When our readers find something they like in our publication, they let us know. When they find something they don't like, they let us

5th Anniversary

This moment also is an opportunity for me to thank our readers for five years of support. *Residents' Journal* is not just written, produced and distributed by Chicago public housing residents. It is also circulated free of charge to 35,000 households in public housing developments, senior buildings, community centers, churches and businesses around the metropolitan area. Because our writers are also drawn from our readership, we have an intimate relationship between our

know that, too. That interaction makes us unique among publications and gives us a powerful confidence as we conduct our investigations and interviews. And so, I thank our readers for five years of support.

But in addition to celebrating, this anniversary also is an opportunity for us to remember what has brought us to this point and thereby plan for our future.

(Continued on Page 9)

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Transforming CHA

Homelessness: A Constant American Tragedy

by Mary C. Johns
Editor-in-Chief

When it comes to homelessness, the City of Chicago is going the way of Dr. Frankenstein.

In the books and movies, Dr. Frankenstein did not foresee the havoc, chaos and destruction wrought by his monster. By making the monster, Frankenstein thought somehow the world would benefit by his creation. He sought to control his creation. But in the end, his monster was uncontrollable.

In the current scenario playing out in this city, the Chicago Housing Authority and the City of Chicago appear to be playing the part of Dr. Frankenstein. The monster is the CHA's Plan for Transformation.

The Monster in the Making

As early as April, housing advocates were reporting an increase in homelessness. And in October, the Chicago Department of Human Services reported that shelters in Chicago were filled up to the maximum. Many of the homeless had to be sheltered in hotels and at times at DHS offices. Homeless service providers also reported that single mothers with children were appearing more often in homeless shelters.

The increase in the number of homeless families is evidence of a housing crisis. Housing advocates have said that Chicago's public housing is failing to meet this housing crisis.

Catholic Charities' 1999 report, "The Housing Crisis in Our Neighborhoods," states that in Chicago, "the destruction of public housing compounds the affordable housing crisis."

The CHA expects to utilize \$1.5 billion in its transformation of its family and senior properties over the next 10 years. But only some of the total 25,000 units projected to be rehabilitated or newly built will be for the poor.

There is no more one-for-one replacement of public housing units. Instead, CHA says it will build "mixed income communities."

The CHA's redevelopment plan for the Clarence Darrow Homes on the South

Side is an example of these mixed-income communities. Darrow Homes was situated at the east end of the Ida B. Wells development spreading out from the corner of Cottage Grove Avenue and Pershing Road. Only 100 units are projected to replace the 480 public housing units in four 14-story high-rises that were demolished between 1996-1999.

Under the Plan for Transformation, CHA is experimenting with designing new neighborhoods. The agency wants to improve the living conditions and lifestyles of public housing residents by building these mixed-income communities on the sites of old public housing developments.

No one really knows whether these experimental mixed-income communities will work. Like Dr. Frankenstein, they may find they have created a monster.

Warning Signs

Public housing resident leaders and housing advocates say the CHA Plan for Transformation is contributing - in one form or another - to the recent surge in homelessness.

Brady Harden, president of Inner

missioner (Ray Vasquez) did indicate in a recent news article that it is a situation we need to watch very carefully because as the transformation progresses, we need to make sure folks aren't falling through the cracks and having to be placed in homeless shelters," Elkuss said.

John Donohue, executive director of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, said he was investigating reports of homeless people at the Cabrini-Green public housing development.

"I was invited by the Cabrini-Green residents next week to their social service center to meet with all the people that work there because they are seeing more and more homeless people," he said.

People who found themselves with nowhere to go used to be able to find shelter within CHA - either legally or illegally. Many residents and others don't like the idea of people squatting in the buildings. But at least the CHA units were shelter. As bad as conditions are in CHA, the vacant units were better than being on the cold streets with your children. Squatting in CHA or an abandoned building was better than being in many of the shelters which offer no privacy or protection against theft.

At least one homeless service



This landspace remains dormant at 41st and Lake Park Ave. where 4 CHA highrise buildings were demolished in 1998.

Photo by Mary C. Johns

Relocation Rights

Displacement through undue evictions or condominium conversions of former CHA residents who move out with vouchers could add to the surge in homelessness.

For those who choose the Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8), there currently are no automatic safeguards in the Relocation Rights Contract against evictions due to landlord negligence or landlords opting out of the voucher program.

Robert Whitfield, an attorney that consults with the CHA Central Advisory Council (CAC), the organization that consists of elected resident leaders, said he had heard of some former residents who became displaced because their landlords converted their units to condominiums.

"This condo craze in Chicago has just been ridiculous. And I suspect it's going to happen quite a bit," said Whitfield after a Nov. 20 CHA Board of Commissioners meeting.

Whitfield said the CAC will have to negotiate with CHA to get some temporary housing for residents who have Housing Choice Vouchers and are displaced.

Whitfield said he wanted statistics on the numbers of landlords opting to change their units into condos. The resident leaders would then try to get CHA to provide temporary housing for residents who are displaced in this way.

"I hope somebody can get some statistics because what we may want to do is try to bargain with CHA as a person takes a Section 8 certificate and through no fault of their own, the place turns condo," he said.

"CHA initially was against that. They said, 'Hey, that's the chance you take if you take Section 8.'"

According to legal aid attorneys, sometimes residents are evicted because CHAC, the company that runs the CHA Housing Choice Voucher program, refused to pay the landlord their portion of rent for failed Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspections. When the landlord takes the tenant to court, the judge normally rules in favor of the landlord for payment of the full rent.

(Continued on Page 10)



Birds and squirrels occupy this site, where 3 CHA buildings were demolished in Sept. 2000 at the Robert Taylor Homes development.

Photo by Mary C. Johns

Transforming CHA A Smooth Transition for Section 8?

by Michael Ibrahim

When a number of Chicago buildings began opting out of the project-based Section 8 program earlier this year, many people worried it would cause another homelessness crisis like that of the '80s, when low-income families witnessed friends, neighbors and even relatives wandering the streets without shelter. But tenants, their advocates and government agencies are reporting that everything is going well so far with respect to the change from project-based Section 8 subsidies to enhanced vouchers.

Holidays are fast approaching and, as a veteran activist since the 1960s, I have been stressed out about this new threat and not just because I am personally affected. I am currently living in the Del Prado in Hyde Park, one of the buildings that chose to opt out of the project-based Section 8 program. These buildings

ings in Hyde Park whose owners are opting out of the project-based Section 8 program. No one had anything to complain about. No one seemed to be as anxious as I was during the whole process. Most of those I spoke with had actually completed the multiple inspections necessary to have their vouchers approved. They were no longer worried about losing their residences.

Personally, I am not there yet. I am waiting to pass a final inspection since the Del Prado has struggled to make as many repairs as CHAC, the private agency which oversees Housing Choice Vouchers in Chicago, has deemed necessary.

Winter is fast approaching and so are the holidays. No one wants to be left out in the cold either due to uncertainty, malfeasance, or both.

Denice Irwin, the executive director of Tenants United for Housing, a non-profit organization that organizes and educates tenants living in federal-assisted housing, said the law should alleviate the fears of residents living in project-based Section 8 housing.

"The whole enhanced voucher concept is designed to help tenants stay in their current building and limit the number of tenants who are displaced," said Irwin.

"The value of the enhanced voucher is higher than a regular voucher. The enhanced voucher is valued at the market rent of the opt-out building, so it can only be used at the opt-out building. This allows the tenant to remain in the building and still pay 30 percent of their household income."

Irwin said tenants living in project-based Section 8 housing where owners are opting out of their contracts should call Tenants United For Housing.

"We can help educate them regarding their options in terms of HUD (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development)-assisted housing," Irwin said.

"If they get the voice mail, tenants should leave a message and we'll get back to them."

I also wanted to know where the responsible agencies stand in terms of the progress being made to make the transition as easy as possible for everyone involved in the process.

I asked Jennifer O'Neil, Deputy Director of CHAC, about her agency's role when a project-based building opts out of its Section 8 contract.

"We strive to provide options for all of the individuals and families we serve," said O'Neil.

"It's no different for tenants who are

vouchering out of project-based housing. CHAC's goal is to help tenants who wish to remain in the building stay there. This entails determining eligibility of the tenants, inspecting all of the units to determine compliance with HQS and finally, making sure that the rents are reasonable when compared to similar housing in the neighborhood."

I next asked how many families living in buildings that are opting out has CHAC served.

O'Neil answered, "I think we are doing an excellent job. Since 1998, we have completed the leasing process for 264 households in 10 project-based Section 8 properties that opted out when contracts expired.

"61 percent of the households leased remained in their current building."

I asked her about the program's current status.

"Currently, CHAC has allocations for 332 units in 12 properties. Of these, 103 have leased. 102 have stayed in the same building," said O'Neil.

"Some of the remaining 229 units were vacant when we started the process and some households are either looking for units or have not yet made up their minds to stay in the building or to move."

I asked her how much time it takes for a family to move from a project-based subsidy to the voucher program.

"The time involved in the entire process of issuing vouchers to eligible tenants in project-based properties that are opting out of the program when their contract expires depends on a number of factors," O'Neil said.

"Factors affecting the length of the process include: how much notice CHAC receives from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), when the allocation of vouchers is received, cooperation of the property's management, availability of tenant information, size of the property, and whether the property meets HUD's Housing Quality Standards (HQS).

"In any case, when a tenant is issued a voucher, he has 180 days to find a unit."

O'Neil said CHAC attempts to make the transition from the project-based Section 8 program to a tenant-based subsidy "smooth."

"Once CHAC is notified that a building is going to opt out of the program, CHAC conducts information sessions for tenants in that building to inform them of their housing options," said O'Neil.

"CHAC interviews each tenant, often on-site, determines his or her program eligibility,



Enhance Voucher Program team-leader, Tira Coben-Turnstill.

Photo by Michael Ibrahim

and issues vouchers at a briefing. In general, we make a concerted effort to be responsive to the tenants' inquiries and concerns."

Kenneth Coles, manager of CHAC's intake/project-based assistance department, said his staff takes several steps to make transition easier for residents of former project-based Section 8 buildings.

"Once we receive the appropriate notice, we really go out of our way to accommodate the needs of the residents and help to make their transition from project-based subsidized housing to the voucher subsidy as smooth as possible," said Coles.

"We provide everything from the pre-inspection walk-through of the property to ensure a successful inspection, to on-site processing to determine program eligibility."

Coles said CHAC has been largely successful thus far.

"Presently, our overall success rate for the program is at 97.1%. This means that 97.1% of households issued a voucher are able to successfully lease a unit. This includes residents relocating from CHA public housing, applicants who have reached the top of the waiting list, and program participants who choose to transfer to another unit," said Coles.

CHAC receives few complaints from tenants in buildings opting out of the project-based Section 8 program, Coles added.

"Since CHAC has been the contract administrator of the program, our clients in properties that are converting to voucher assistance receive excellent customer service," he said.

If anyone has experienced problems making the transition from a project-based Section 8 subsidy to a tenant-based voucher, please call me at (773) 285-0200 x3373.

R E S I D E N T S '

Journal

Residents' Journal is distributed free to all Chicago public housing residents and participants in the Section 8 subsidized housing program. But if you are not a public housing resident, would like to support Residents' Journal or would like to subscribe, please fill out the attached subscription form and mail a check or money order to:

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The CAC/LAC Election, which was scheduled for December 11, 2001, has been rescheduled. In order to ensure that all CHA residents have ample opportunity to participate in the election with the most complete information required to run an effective campaign, Citizens Information Service (CIS), the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), and the Central Advisory Council (CAC) have collectively decided to set forth the following new timeline:

November 26, 2001

Absentee Ballot Notification: CIS will mail out Notices of Eligibility for Absentee Ballots to all homebound residents that appear on the official homebound list, which will be provided by the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA). All homebound residents who receive a letter of eligibility must then call CIS to request an absentee ballot.



November 28 – December 2, 2001

Public Viewing of Petitions: CIS will be open from 9AM to 5PM during these days for the public viewing of petitions.

December 3, 2001

Deadline for Filing Challenges: Last day to file a challenge based on substantial evidence of violation of the eligibility requirements. Challenge forms will be available at the CIS office.

December 7, 2001

Notification to Candidates of Challenges: All candidates will be notified by phone of any challenge filed against them. Candidates can call CIS on this date to inquire about the status of their candidacy.

December 10, 11 & 12, 2001

Challenge Hearings: A panel of independent arbitrators selected by CIS will conduct all hearings and adjudications.

December 14, 2001

Certified Candidates List: CIS will provide a final list of candidates for each office on this date. Lists will be available at the CAC office, at the LAC and Management offices of each development, and may also be viewed at the CIS office.

Absentee Ballot Mailing & Deadline for Requests: CIS will begin to mail out absentee ballots to all eligible homebound residents who responded to the notice of eligibility. Last day for eligible residents to request an absentee ballot.

January 11, 2002

Absentee Ballot Deadline: All absentee ballots must be postmarked by this date—no exceptions!



January 22, 2002

New ELECTION DAY: Polling places will be open from 6 A.M. until 7 P.M. Acceptable forms of identification for voting on Election Day include: Drivers License, State ID; or another form of a picture ID with: Voter Registration Card, Social Security Card, Dwelling Lease, or Rent Statement.

THE NEW CAC/LAC ELECTION DAY IS TUESDAY, JANUARY 22, 2002

Community Meetings: Each development will have at least two community meetings facilitated by its assigned development coordinator. The first set of meetings are already taking place and are being advertised in common places areas in each development. The second meeting will take place a couple of weeks before Election Day. **You can call CIS during normal business hours to find out the date of your development's first and second meeting.**



For further information, questions, or concerns, please contact
Citizens Information Service's Election Hotline at (312) 939-4636 Ext. 22.,
or visit us at 332 S. Michigan Ave., Suite 428, Chicago, IL 60604



Transforming CHA

RMCs Aim to Please?

by Beauty Turner

Resident Management Corporations - Do they aim to please? That is the question I asked residents leaders, residents and others who view their actions on a daily basic.

Resident Management Corporations are known to the residents in public housing as RMCs. They are corporations which are fully staffed and run by residents who manage the developments they reside in. I asked everyone the question, "Does resident management work?"

Carol Steele, president of a Resident Management Corporation in the Cabrini-Green row-houses, said, "Before residents took over from CHA, (the managers) were doing a poor job. In the Cabrini row-houses, 55



This Cabrini-Green resident takes a break from her work as clerk for the Cabrini-Green Homes RMC.

Photo by Beauty Turner

crawl spaces were filled with dirty water, waste and grease. Since our RMC has been in operation, we have sanitized them. Roofs are being repaired. Before, it took CHA 1 to 3 years to fill a work order. We have a turnaround time of 48 hours for a regular work order and 24 hours for an emergency."

As an advocate for resident management, Steele added, "We have brought property values up. Everywhere you go, you will find some people for and some against. But our accomplishment speaks for itself."

Northeast Scattered Site Resident Management Corporation President Willie Burrell said, "We were the first RMC in the nation for scattered sites. We were established in 1992. We were also the first (RMC) to establish an LAC - a Local Advisory Council. We opened up the doors of opportunity for others. No other scattered sites were represented by duly elected officers.

"We have a class action and an individual lawsuit on CHA concerning fair housing and discrimination against the residents."

Burrell, whose RMC does not yet run his development, went on, "We feel that the residents are being denied the opportunity to participate fully in federally funded programs. We are asking that CHA pay each Northeast Scattered Site lease-holding resident \$10,000 each and \$25 million to the Northeast Scattered site RMC."

CHA spokesperson Derek Hill said, "When it comes to RMCs and any given situation, we have some that are good, adequate and excellent. We have such a situation in CHA. Some are good. Some are adequate and some are

We have a class action and an individual lawsuit on CHA concerning fair housing and discrimination against the residents.

-Willie Burrell, president, Northeast Scattered Sites RMC

excellent, just like in anything else."

Hill concluded, "We have not seen that lawsuit concerning Willie Burrell so we can not comment on it at this time."

A Northeast Scattered Site resident who wishes not to be named said "I think that management is keeping the units in decent condition. I have had a problem with paperwork in the past but they always end up getting taken care of."

A Savory Survey

by Beauty Turner

Susan Popkin and Mary K. Cunningham from the Urban Institute released a study this summer on 190 residents of public housing who were supposed to be relocated. The study's results should be important for understanding the CHA Transformation Plan.

Public housing in Chicago, like in many other cities, is currently undergoing a lot of redevelopment.

In 1998, nearly 19,000 CHA units failed inspection and were set up for demolition. As a result, the city put forth their "Plan for Transformation."

The Plan for Transformation calls for demolition of 51 gallery high-rises as well as several thousand mid-rise and low-rise units. As CHA demolishes its units and builds new, mixed-income neighborhoods, there will be a net loss of 14,000 units.

The Urban Institute study was conducted in February 2000 until July 2001. This study was conducted so that it

All of the respondents were African American. Most are females, 42 percent are under 35 years old, and 14 percent are over 60. Over half, 59 percent, reported having more than 3 children in their household. Most are long-term residents and have lived in the development for more than 10 years. About 84 percent reported a household income below \$10,000 and about two-thirds - 63 percent - do not have a high school diploma.

The study that was conducted had a three-wave panel survey. Each of the residents had to be leaseholders who selected Section 8 as their first option. They were given in-depth interviews focusing on their experience with counseling programs with a 6-month follow up.

At the end of the six-month follow up, very few of the residents in their sample had moved from public housing. The survey team were able to contact 156 - 80 percent - of the original respondents and just 36 - 23 percent - had moved out of public housing.

The authors of the study wrote that their survey was limited because they were "studying a moving target."

Nearly all of the residents who moved went to high poverty, segregated neighborhoods. The moves didn't seem to improve the lives of the residents. In their new places, there were reports of big problems such as peeling paint, mice, rats, roaches, broken locks, and gang activity - just like in the developments.

The study tried to find out why it was so hard for the

residents in the study to move. It showed that residents faced personal and institutional problems such as social issues and social illnesses such as substance abuse, domestic violence, depression, fear of leaving public housing, and gang affiliation.



CABJ Award Recipient Residents' Journal columnist Cenabeth Cross (center) poses with Editor-in-Chief Mary C. Johns and Publisher Ethan Michaeli shortly after receiving an award from the Chicago Association of Black Journalists in November. Cross won the award for her "Stop the Violence" article that appeared in the June 2000 edition of Residents' Journal.

Photo by Beauty Turner

The moves didn't seem to improve the lives of the residents. In their new places, there were reports of big problems such as peeling paint, mice, rats, roaches, broken locks, and gang activity - just like in the developments.

may advise and inform the "actors" in the Plan, including residents, CHA officials, social service providers and anyone else concerned about the relocation programs.

The study used the most challenging relocatees as respondents, such as the ones that had a lack of education and skills, were very poor and had many challenges to overcome.

Transforming CHA

Residents Look to the Hills

by Jacqueline Thompson

The residents of the Harold L. Ickes Homes are seeking stability with nowhere to find it. The list of imbalances is lengthening daily. It seems like it would be a simple matter to dry up the ever-present body of water that floats like a moat in front of all the 'double-T' buildings and never goes away. At 23rd Street along the fire lane, the moat is deep enough and permanent enough to actually grow a microscopic form of seaweed. Seagulls wake you every morning and wade in search of bugs.

This past July and August, the moat made a great bed for hatching mosquito eggs, perhaps even the dreaded West Nile virus-carrying mosquito. How can we tell? The risk of the children getting hit by the insect is high. But apparently, nobody cares.

On Friday, Sept. 9, 21st Police District Commander Adrienne Stanley and Public Housing Section Commander Ernest Brown, 30 police officers, CHA official Matthew Smith and heads of other city departments converged on Ickes Homes to clean up areas, clear out abandoned and illegally parked cars and to get rid of the ever-present rats.

When I saw the huge yellow city vactor (a water-sucking machine), hope rose quickly to my conscience and I sought out the head of the sewer department, Maria Rios, who was on hand to supervise her personnel. I invited her to come from the city vehicles and mass of work-

I requested that she make sure her crew would 'take care' of or remove the dangerous waters that day.
Did it happen? No! The water was still there...

ers to see for herself the river of continuous, stagnant water that borders the once-lovely terrace area gracing our front "yards." I requested that she make sure her crew would "take care" of or remove the dangerous waters that day. She told me she could see the problem and she explained the reason for it and the possible solution.

Did it happen? No! The water was still there, a virtual wetland complete with birds, insects, plant life and more. The water makes the sidewalk impassable to get directly to State Street. If you can leap over it, you do it. If not, you walk a full block only to walk on gravel left by city workers doing underground repairs to ensure that the new school's plumbing system gets the right hookup.

And oh yes, the children use the gravel like sand. They throw it, kick it, roll in it and put it in containers and haul it all over the area to play with. Help.

Mailboxes

While everyone "suffers the waters," individuals wade in perpetual confusion about a common entity known as a mailbox. In spring 2000, this reporter wrote about the unbelievably bad situation with the mailboxes at 2250 S. State St. An inadequately locked panel that should have covered every apartment dweller's mailbox didn't. After much wrangling between residents, Ickes' new management and the US Postal Service, the old panel was replaced with a new one.

However, the repair was incomplete. One resident had no mailbox for her apartment.

There is no number 404 in the whole panel. The managers half-did the job when they replaced the left side with a new covering and left the right side with the old, old panel.

This reporter talked to Pauline Gates, who lives in apartment number 404. I asked her what the new management told her about having no mailbox?

PG: "The first time I went to the office and reported the fact that I had nowhere for my mail to go, they said a man was coming to put one in. When someone comes from the Post Office to open the panel, he would put on a door to a mail box with 404 on it."

RJ: "Did they come out to do the job?"

PG: "No. The second time I went down to the office, it took them so long. The head janitor workman said, 'Ms. Gates, I'm going to put 404 on 206 so you can get your mail there.' I told the mail lady what he said. She told me she could not put mail addressed to 404 in 206. It's against the law. When I first got here, I asked the mail lady could she put my mail into 405. That did work for a while."

RJ: "What happened next?"

PG: "To make sure I get my mail, I purchased a mailbox at the local post office for \$22.75 every six months. I asked the people at the management office to change the apartment on my rent statement to the PO mail box so I could get it on time."

RJ: "What did management say?"

PG: "Management told me they couldn't change the address on my rent statement."

RJ: "What do you do now?"

PG: "What can I do? I have nowhere to

turn to get this situation resolved."

A New Promise

Despite the insecurities of safe and rightful living, another new office has opened in Ickes that promises to support a better way of living. It is The Woodlawn Organization's Service Connector Program. The elusive announcement flyers describe the function of the program thusly: "Linking Quality Supportive Services in the Areas of Employment - Family Stability and Housing Permanence."

Like the great poet Maya Angelou's "Again I Rise," I arose with the hope that this new office will be a true link between residents and the three most desirable states of existence one could have. The office has two experienced persons, Pam Wright and Gloria Bass.

I visited the new office and inquired of the new program's credibility.

RJ: "Just what do you do?"

PW: "We service the residents by helping them find employment by way of recruitment. We do an individual assessment of persons looking for a job, i.e. qualifications, job history, educational history, etc."

RJ: "How many people so far (since Sept. 24) have you serviced?"

PW: "So far, we've serviced 90-100 people."

RJ: "What kinds of jobs are being offered?"

PW: "We don't know. We are a referral center, referring persons to a job developer."

RJ: "Where is the job developer?"

PW: "At the main TWO headquarters,



This CHA Harold Ickes Homes mother takes care in pulling the carriage that holds her baby through this constant bed of water at 23rd and State streets.

Photo by Jacqueline Thompson

1510 E. 63rd St."

RJ: "Are the residents appreciative of the new Service Connector program?"

PW: "Yes. We've had a real good turnout. We did some initial outreach by talking to some people. They became excited and formed an informal grapevine and people came out to be 'connected.'

RJ: "What was your busiest day to date?"

PW: "Oct. 11, 2001. We saw some 80-plus people when we hosted a job fair."

RJ: "Have you had any or heard of any good results?"

PW: "No. Not yet. But we are hopeful."

RJ: "What about the other two components of the new office? How closely will you work with the residents to help them attain their goals?"

GB: "It would be best to

talk with my supervisor, Tanya Decker."

I did make a call to Decker, who graciously answered my inquiries.

TD: "What the Service Connectors will be doing is making referrals to those outside agencies that provide the necessary services needed to be instrumental in helping the residents reach their desired goals, i.e. GED classes, etc."

RJ: "How will this come about?"

TD: "We (TWO) were contracted by the Chicago Housing Authority and the Department of Human Services to provide the Service Connector Program and therefore, we will be using their guidelines."

And so dear reader, once again, time will be the teller of just how stabilizing this new service will be for the residents.

Elections

The election for the new officers of the Local Advisory Council and its members looms ahead as candidates and potential candidates make their decision to run. Still seeking a stable situation, I called Gloria Williams, our longtime LAC president, to inquire about her intentions for the upcoming elections.



CHA Relocation Townhall Forum
CHA resident and Director of the Lakefront Community Organization Izora Davis, (center) responds to suburbanites during the CHA relocation townhall forum in Country Club Hills. Joining her at the forum was CHA chief Terry Peterson (left), and Renee Maxwell, a CHA resident, and a spokesperson for the Coalition to Protect Public Housing, an organization founded by residents of public housing. The event was co-sponsored by WVON 1450-AM radio.

Photo by Beauty Turner

Transforming CHA A Section 8 Recipients' Painful Reality

by Angela Hilton

When I was a kid growing up in the Robert Taylor Housing Projects, my dream was that one day my family would get a Section 8 and we would be able to move into a nice apartment in a much better neighborhood. It was my mom's dream too, that someday she would be able to move her family out of the projects.

Long after I grew up and moved out on my own, my mother was finally given the chance to realize at least part of this dream.

The demolition of Robert Taylor meant

tory meetings that went along with getting a voucher, she was never told that she could one day find herself in this situation.

After months of delays from CHAC in terms of getting answers as to why her rent increase was declined, my mom told me about her housing problem.

By his time, she only had a few weeks left before she had to vacate her apartment.

Her landlord had given her extra time while CHAC reevaluated her case, but this extended deadline was almost up.

I began calling CHAC to inquire about my mom's situation. My experience with various

Given the fact that the initial analysis of the rent increase took almost three months, I did not have any faith that CHAC would reevaluate my mom's case in time unless they felt pressured to do so.

I decided to put my own work on hold and dedicate myself to helping my mom with her housing crisis. I thought it ridiculous that she could be made to move out of her apartment when it was not clear if she really HAD to move. I had no special knowledge of the Section 8 program or housing laws in Chicago. I simply began investigating and calling as many people as I could.

I contacted several people in various offices in CHAC (Client Services, Rent/Market Analysis, the Office of the Executive Director). I also contacted people in CHA, the Chicago HUD office, the HUD

office in Washington D.C., along with legal assistance and renter's rights groups in Chicago.

After two weeks, over 50 phone calls to CHAC and other agencies, hours of research on the Section 8 program in Chicago and contacting people through the internet, the rent increase on my mother's apartment was finally reevaluated and approved. My mom and I could both breathe a sigh of relief that she would not be thrown back into the housing race in Chicago.

However, I still wonder about the other Section 8 tenants who lived in my mom's building and who were not so lucky. Numerous families in my mom's building were notified that CHAC had declined the rent increase on their apartment.

During the beginning of my mom's ordeal,

she witnessed how one woman put her furniture in storage and moved in with family. This woman thought that there was nothing she could do about CHAC's decision on her rent increase. The sad part is that this woman probably did not HAVE to move.

After further evaluation, my mother's rent increase was eventually approved. Why couldn't this happen for other tenants as well?

This whole situation raises a number of disturbing questions about how CHAC does business. Was it only my persistence in getting answers from CHAC, in getting several additional people involved in this situation, in insisting that CHAC follow procedures and review the rent increase in a timely fashion, in basically becoming a pest to several people throughout the CHAC organization, that eventually led to a positive outcome for my mother? Why did I have to be my mom's advocate in this matter? Why wasn't there anyone at CHAC to advocate on her behalf?

What about the families who already moved out of my mom's building? Will their cases be reevaluated? Will they be able to move back in?

I think we know the answers to these questions. Unless other tenants in similar situations have the time and resources to put towards a fight, or unless they find someone to fight on their behalf, they don't have a chance against the massive slowness of the bureaucracy at CHAC.

Unfortunately, CHAC has the advantage over Section 8 tenants who may not be able to wage a major battle against a system that appears to be indifferent to their plight and that only responds when the pressure is on.

that after 25 years of living in the projects and raising five kids, she would be given a Section 8 voucher to find a better place to live.

However, the happiness my mom felt when she used her voucher to move into her new apartment, was soon replaced by the painful reality that her Section 8 dream was on the verge of becoming a nightmare.

My mom was content in her new home for almost a year until one day in March, 2001.

It was on that fateful day that she received a letter from her landlord stating that CHAC had declined the rent increase on her apartment because they found the new rent to be "unreasonable."

The letter stated that she would have to move in a matter of weeks. My mother felt as if she had been betrayed by the Section 8 program. Though she attended all of the mandatory

CHAC employees took me to levels of frustration that I had not felt since living in Robert Taylor and feeling that there was nothing that I could do about the drugs and violence springing up around me.

From my inquiries, I learned that my mom's case was still under review and that she was basically in a race against the clock. A Housing Specialist at CHAC told me that it is suppose to take 30-60 days to evaluate a rent increase, but that it usually takes longer than that.

So, the question was: Would CHAC reevaluate the rent increase within the time frame they had set for themselves.

If so, my mom would have an answer before the move-out date by her landlord and she would be able to avoid the hassle of eviction procedures.

him to get up in the pre-dawn hours of the day before and wait on the phone for an hour or two before he could reserve a ride from the special car service he was "lucky" enough to qualify for. Reserving the ride never guaranteed a ride. Sometimes the car service would come on time, sometimes they would come hours late. Sometimes, they wouldn't come at all.

In the words he wrote in each edition of "Access Report," Tom insisted that people with disabilities deserved the same rights to mobility as everyone else. Tom never wanted a "special" service. He just wanted to be able to use his wheelchair on the city sidewalks and the CTA employees to help him put his wheelchair on the city's buses and trains.

"I would write scripts and perform basic melodic compositions and orchestrations on the bus.

And even on those occasions when I did not have a seat and had to stand on a crowded bus or train, I still was able to use the travel time efficiently in doing memory exercises or engaging in conversation with other riders who were coworkers, fellow students friends," Tom wrote in his last article.

"If the streets, sidewalks, and trains were properly accessible, I would be very pleased to use these fixed route travel sources."

Anyone could find themselves in Tom's predicament. But more importantly, Tom offered something special to those of us who never find ourselves with a disability. The ability to move around, to be a part of our society regardless of our income, our skin color, our gender, our lifestyle, our religion or beliefs is certainly an essential freedom. But Tom taught us that everyone loses when we separate some people from others.

I think often about all the people who never got to enjoy Tom's conversation on the bus, who never got the chance to learn from one of the wisest, kindest people I have ever met. And I think of all the people who are shut off from each other by poverty, racism and ignorance and what we all lose through that segregation.

The current CHA Plan for Transformation claims to want to knit public housing residents back into the broader communities. But so far, it seems the Plan is offering residents only vouchers for apartments far away from the city center and city

services. The Plan offers only those residents CHA defines as lease-compliant a limited number of replacement units in limited mixed-income communities in the distant future. The tens of thousands of low-income families who are sleeping on someone's couch or in someone's basement or in a homeless shelter cot or in a cold viaduct will get no relief under the Plan.

Tom Merriweather taught us to share the same space and value each other's contributions. His personal example taught me that we should continue to write, interview and investigate to convince our readers that they have something important to tell the world, that it is their responsibility to educate everyone else with what they know. On behalf of the *Residents' Journal* staff, I pledge that we will strive to live up to Tom's legacy.



Local Advisory Councils and Chicago Police Celebrate 2001
Chicago Housing Authority Local Advisory Council presidents gives an ear to Chicago Police Commander Ernest T. Brown (right) of the public housing unit, during an end-of-the-year celebration at the Charles A. Hayes FIC on Dec. 10.

Photo by Mary C. Johns

Publisher's Box

(Continued from Page 3)

On this occasion, I remember the contributions of everyone on the staff to the paper but none more than Thomas Merriweather, who passed just about one year ago.

We are pretty much on a first-name basis at *Residents' Journal*. But we all had a tough time saying "Tom," opting instead for "Mr. Merriweather."

We had trouble calling Tom Merriweather by his first name because he towered over us with his gentle manner, dignity and intelligence.

Every sentence he spoke, every note he sang and every word he wrote revealed the knowledge he had gained during a lifetime of experience. His PhD in music, his military service and his years as a civil servant all brought to bear on his wise conversation and the articles he wrote for our readership.

"Access Report by Thomas Merriweather" was a regular feature for the first four years of *Residents' Journal*'s existence. As the name suggests, Access Report focused on the issues faced by persons with disabilities. You see, Tom Merrweather took an apartment in the CHA's Eckhart Park senior apartments after he had a leg amputated due to complications from diabetes.

Losing a leg did not mean that Tom lost his dignity or his patience. Indeed, he never seemed to lose his stride. He turned in his articles on time, attended every meeting and was always on hand to lend his advice. He adapted to his new condition and his new home by joining organizations that focused on disabilities rights and senior citizens issues. Eventually, he was elected president of the Eckhart Park Local Advisory Council.

Maintaining his dignity was not always easy, particularly when it came time to getting around. A lifelong rider of public buses and trains, Tom suddenly found that getting a ride to our office or to the grocery store or to the doctor's office required

CPS Route School Bus Service

by Arminta Clark Muhammad

Imani (not her real name) is an 8-year-old girl who attends a South Side elementary school four miles away from her home. Because her mother works, Imani attends an after-school program at a community center even further from home. Imani's mother depended on the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) bus service to transport her daughter from one safe place to the other.

But just days before the beginning of the school year, Imani's mother received a phone call from bus service officials who said her daughter had been denied bus service. Now, Imani's mother has to find ways to transport her daughter to school and to her after-school program.

Imani is not alone. There are 435,000 children that attend Chicago public schools. Ten percent of those students - about 40,000 to 45,000 - are bussed to their schools, said CPS spokesperson Keith Bromery.

Under new CEO Arnie Duncan, CPS is enforcing some of their old policies. Children returned to school the day after Labor Day this year as opposed to the third week in August last year.

Bromery said CPS is now enforcing an old policy when it comes to bus service. This school year, children will no longer be picked up on the street corners near their homes. Instead, they will be picked up from the nearest school in their community and taken to the school the child attends.

Bromery said a letter was sent out listing the sites for

Bromery added that CPS is looking to eliminate the bus service because it costs a lot of money. Some of CPS' contracted buses transport 2 to 3 children across a relatively long distance at considerable expense.

each child that is bussed to school. He claimed the change in bus service this year was to try and put children in a safer position. Once the children reach their school pick-up site, there are adults assigned to watch over them to make sure they get on the right bus and on their way.

"So we have moved it from the street corners where there is no supervision," Bromery said.

"The problem with the old busing system is that it was scattered all around town in various intersections and street corners and we were looking to consolidate it, while at the same time providing the adult supervision and the safety factor of being near a school."

The school aid attendants arrive at their school sites at 6 a.m. before any child arrives at the school pick-up site. The attendants are supposed to stay until each child has been picked up or walk to their home at the end of the day. Being in a school enables children to have a place for shelter in bad weather conditions, Bromery claimed.

This access allows for the attendant to check on a bus if it is late picking up a student. But Bromery added the new system also makes it easier for bus drivers. Now, bus drivers just drive from school to school as opposed of going to an

intersection from another neighborhood site.

In the past, the children were picked up on one-way streets with cars parked on both sides. When a driver had to wait for a child, this blocked traffic. The drivers also had difficulties in making turns.

If a parent finds there is a problem regarding their child's pick-up schedule or route or location, a parent can put in a request for a change of site, Bromery said. He added that CPS is interested in working out "troublesome situations and we are not trying to be arbitrary."

The parent can call the school where their child is enrolled and asked for a 'Change In Site Pick-Up Form.' On the form is a section that requests a reason for the site change. The CPS transportation department will review the application and someone from that office will try to figure out an alternate arrangement for that child with the parent.

Bromery said some children are dropped off at alternative sites, which might be a day care type situation, the Boys & Girls Club or some after-school programs. The complaints are dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Bromery added that CPS is looking to eliminate the bus service because it costs a lot of money. Some of CPS' contracted buses transport 2 to 3 children across a relatively long distance at considerable expense.

"That's money that could be put into education in terms of paying the salaries of more teachers and buying more books and that's where our priority is right now," Bromery said.

"We are going to continue to bus children but they are

looking to cut down on the amount of bussing we do."

Bromery felt that many of the children attend school in their own neighborhood and do not consider the route to those schools as unsafe. As for high school students, they can get a CTA reduced fare card, which allows them to pay half fare for transportation.

Bromery indicated future changes won't occur overnight. But CPS is looking to wean people off school buses. One of the ways that CPS is doing this is by putting magnet programs in neighborhood schools to encourage children to go to school in their own neighborhoods.

Bromery said many parents have been putting their children on school buses because parents are not happy with the programs in their local neighborhood schools. CPS is trying to make it so that those premium type programs are available to everybody.

"When that happens, then you're going to see the amount of bussing be reduced," Bromery said. "Other than gradually decreasing the amount of bussing that we do, we're going to continue to bus special education children who obviously need to be transported. Children other than special education, we are going to be looking to decrease the



This senior shows these Chicago public school students around the CHA senior Lincoln Perry Homes' computer learning center that opened in March.

Photo by Arminta Clark Muhammad

amount of bussing that we do in order to save money there and put that money there into the education department." Bromery pointed out that this policy was initiated by the old CPS administration and was carried forward by the new administration.

"For the most part, the plan is working according to the way it was designed," said Bromery.

"The complaints have dropped drastically. Pretty much now, by the end of October, everyone is into the routine and people have gotten used to it," Bromery said.

"The transportation people tell us it's a 'get used to' thing. Any time you make changes, some people have trouble getting used to a new system."

Bromery contended that this plan was well thought out. He said CPS officials took all summer to figure out where children would be picked up and dropped off.

Bromery said this new-old system will not stop drivers from leaving children on the buses.

"It is the driver's responsibility to check the bus at the end of the day. CPS only contracts out bus service. They do not own any buses in the school. Some school systems have it where the driver can't turn off the engine until they walk to the back of the bus at the end of their day, push a button at the end of bus, and walk back up and shut the engine off. That way, you would have walked the bus and checked each seat on the floor to see that there are no children there. "There are strong doubts that any of the buses have that type of system. Whether the buses have this system or not, the driver is still obligated to walk to the back of the bus, giving it a thorough check before they leave for the evening, making sure that no child is left behind or sleeping on the floor."

Bromery added there are still some bus attendants but not in every situation.

Homelessness

(Continued from Page 4)

The lawyers said the outcome of such court cases is usually the tenant's eviction.

The tenant with subsidized income then ends up in a homeless shelter until they can find another unit within the time allotted on the voucher.

Whitfield said the CAC had no knowledge about relocated residents with housing vouchers ending up in shelters because of evictions due to the landlord's failure of an HQS inspection.

"Nobody has come to us on that issue," Whitfield said. "Now if that's happening, we need to negotiate with CHA to make available temporary public housing units while

the person looks for another Section 8 unit."

Whitfield said homeless advocates defending CHA residents should read and understand the Relocation Rights Contract to better service them.

"Even if they (relocated residents) are out there on the street and they had a Section 8 certificate and couldn't find a place, we can, even now, reach back and get them into a unit if we find out about it," Whitfield said.

"Now if (housing advocates) know about those people, they are doing them a disservice. One, because they didn't read the contract in the first place, and two, because they didn't refer them to somebody who knows about the contract and could have done something."

Whitfield said all relocated residents with housing vouchers that find themselves in the above predicament or in the process of eviction under the One Strike Policy should

contact their LAC office to report their dilemma. Call the CAC office at (312) 791-8731 for the location and phone number for all LAC offices.

Frankenstein Nears Completion

Will CHA officials stop the monster from rearing its ugly head? Will they stop the monster from rampaging through the city and destroying housing for the poor?

Despite the warnings from the 'townspeople,' CHA is going forth with the Plan for Transformation, and even cutting their own projections for the number of units that will be available for residents.

A July 26 CHA news release stated that 516 units will be built during Phase I of the redevelopment of the Madden Park/Darrow Homes/Ida B. Wells. But an Oct. 10 CHA press release states that only 446 units will be built during Phase I. Before any units

were even built, CHA cut 70 replacement units from their own plans.

What my Dr. Frankenstein scenario boils down to is this: CHA and city officials should increase the number of public housing units for the poor in their mixed-income communities. They should begin building the replacement units now to avoid the havoc and chaos the Plan for Transformation will cause.

Dr. Frankenstein didn't see the warning signs. And when the monster started his rampage, it was too late to stop it. The end result was the destruction of Dr. Frankenstein, many townspeople's homes and the monster himself.

To change the adage: A word to the wise is sufficient. To err is human, but to change the path that leads to destruction is most assuredly divine.

Stop the Violence

by Cenabeth Cross

War

On Sept. 11, all hell broke loose. I saw the hijacked planes crash into the World Trade Center and saw the buildings crumble on television as it happened along with millions of other viewers. I stared at my set for a long, long time before I understood that this was for real. Thousands had lost their lives in the two World Trade Centers alone.

I watched the same pictures over and over feeling the horror of what this could mean to us all. These attacks will force people to make many adjustments in the way we live and the way we think.

My daughter-in-law, Varlarya Richmond, worked for TWA. She had already been notified that she would be laid off before the catastrophe. The Sept. 11 attacks made the company move up their lay off by two weeks.

The next day, I had to go to the store and get myself something to eat. This was the day my Link card came on and I was hungry. I had to stop on the way back at a

are praying. The children are allowed to say the pledge of allegiance in its native form, with the "in God we trust" part. It will be God we have to put our trust in because no one knows what lies in our future.

It must have taken years of planning for the terrorists to pull this off. These people believe they are acting like God wants them to. Death is a reward for their good deeds. Our focus is on Osama bin Laden and retaliation but I think we should have had more security in our airports and control towers to begin with.

The President told the media to keep from leaking information so the enemy doesn't find out what's going on. I think it's way too late for that. The men who hijacked these planes lived here in America and took pilot lessons here in America. They boarded the planes here in America.

Then somebody, maybe the same terrorists, started sending a white powder which contains anthrax virus spores through the mail. There also have been many pranksters, including a few in the Chicago area. There is talk that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein is involved in the anthrax mailings. We fought Hussein in the last



Mt. Sinai Hospital, 1500 S. California where a 3-year-old victim layed comatose after being struck by a hit-and-run driver in late August.

Photo by Cenabeth Cross

The young men in the lobby will either be incarcerated or dead. Osama Bin Laden is a world away. My immediate fears are the police, the KKK and the gang bangers.

In the Lakefront News for Aug. 29, Caitlin Devitt reported at least five shootings within a span of two blocks at the Harold Ickes Homes. These homes start at 2200 S. State St., a mix of blonde mid-rise buildings. The 21st District Commander, Adrienne Stanley, said all the CHA developments had an increased number of shootings.

"We can't verify any one reason but it is definitely gang related," Stanley said. "It all revolves around narcotics dealing."

Police think the violence is between three different factions of a local street gang.

The violence at the Dearborn apartments has the tenants "under siege," according to the Oct. 3 Lakefront Outlook. Anjanette McGee, who has been the Resident Management Corporation president for the past year, said, "Enough is enough."

McGee, 29, who has lived in the Dearborn Homes all her life, was shot during the violence at Dearborn Homes. Her fiancée, Donald Clark, 39, was also shot by stray bullets as they sat outside in the 2700 block of South State Street.

McGee said, "Once I felt safe here: this place was my home. But now, nobody is safe here."

Jamie Kalven, advisor to the Local Advisory Council, had the right idea of what's going on. He said the growing fear expressed by the residents is "an unseen by-product" of the CHA's redevelopment.

Kalven said, "It's a bureaucratically driven process that has turned these developments into ghost towns." He pointed out that only one apartment is occupied on the 14th floor of a building in Stateway Gardens. That leaves the only tenant there vulnerable to anything and everything. I interviewed Kalven before, when I wrote about the Chicago police raid on a Stateway Gardens basketball game in the same building.

Violence can bring out miracles, too. People have to come together, learn to love one another. We must be aware of how we treat each other. We all see how close death is for all of us, any one of us.

The way I endure my son's death is to be a better person. I live each day as if it could be my last. I am more loving to the

ones I still have around me. I am more patient with everyone. I believe, somehow, my son knows and he co-signs.

Miracle Baby

On Aug. 30, a 3-year-old child was run over by a van at 1012 N. Karlov Ave. The baby and his mother were crossing to the other side of the street when the van came speeding around the corner, hit the child and knocked him down before running over the baby's head. The WGN news report said the baby was taken to Mt. Sinai Hospital.

I went to Mt. Sinai. The mother was a bit upset and I couldn't understand much of what was being said. The regular news people kept getting in front of me so I decided to come back later. I returned about 3 p.m. and talked to her aunt, Arena Curtis, who told me that the mother had gone home. She informed me that the baby was in a coma and the doctors couldn't tell them anything as yet. I told her I would return.

The next day, I was able to speak to the mother, Tavitha Owens. She explained that the baby's head had only been fractured and he was still in a coma.

The mother said that when she first saw the van, it was driving down the street like crazy. After the van hit her child, the van's driver slowed down, then sped up again and ran over his head.

She also told me that the media was making incorrect reports that the van was completely white. She said the van was maroon and gray and had a white stripe on the side. No one had seen the driver. The neighbors and her sister's boyfriend chased the van until it was out of sight.

Owens expressed her distaste for the way the media and the hospital staff treated her.

"They act as if I don't care," she said. "I felt really bad seeing my baby lying there on the ground. I have flashbacks and all I can do now is pray that my baby comes out of this OK."

I assured her that I was praying for him too. I went back each day. On Sept. 4, the baby came out of his coma. The mother told me that she talked to him and touched him but "he acts as if he doesn't know who I am but I believe it's because of the injury."

On Sept. 6, the nurses at the visitors desk told me he had been released that morning.

Violence can bring out miracles, too. People have to come together, learn to love one another. We must be aware of how we treat each other. We all see how close death is for all of us, any one of us.

local store on the corner of Roosevelt Road and Whipple Avenue. The Brothers Five is owned by an Arab American family. One of the men delivering cupcakes asked the owner, "Do you think it was one of us?" They both broke out laughing.

President George W. Bush started air attacks in Afghanistan on Oct. 5 trying to flush out the terrorists. The U.S. Congress gave Bush the power to do what he thought best. Afghanistan is already a war-torn country. Thirteen days later, on Oct. 18, President Bush sent in the ground troops. Many countries promised their support but none have come forward yet.

The President and almost the entire U.S. have started to go to church. People



Tavita Owens, mother of a 3-year-old hit and run victim, takes a breather while visiting her comatose son at Mt. Sinai Hospital in August.

Photo by Cenabeth Cross

At 8:17 p.m., police cars came from all directions. There were 9 cars in front and about 6 in the back. No ambulance came.

On Saturday, Oct. 10, the people in the apartment in front of me broke out into a fight. They were having a party at first. Then they came out on the gallery bumping into my door and against the walls. There were women screaming and children crying. They took the fight to the streets. The man was holding the woman by the neck and telling her how he would kill her. Then they came back upstairs; the drug dealers don't like the residents bringing the police around.

The dealers control the lobby. They will not be fighting the war that was started by America.

Senior Issues

Choosing Between Food and Medicine

by Bobby Watkins

This is something that has been on my mind for some time. I am one of the millions of Americans that has to deal with the problem of not being able to afford some of my medicines.

I've spoken with several other people who are struggling with this also. But what really made me want to write this article was a young woman I spoke with. She is a single parent receiving Supplemental Security Income with a kidney problem. She just started to take dialysis and needs this particular medicine before she starts her dialysis treatment. The medicine is needed to make her numb before treatment. She has Medicaid but it does not cover this medicine, or so she was told.

After Medicaid told her they would not cover the medicine, she called the pharmacy back and was told Medicaid would pay for the medicine but it would take 72 hours because it had to be approved by the State.

She is young and this crisis occurred in the middle of the month, after she had spent all of her monthly check. She needed this medicine by Monday and I spoke to her on Friday evening. As we all know, all

state agencies are closed on the weekend.

So she had to borrow the \$85 for the medicine with the promise that she would be able to pay it back in 72 hours. As it turned out, after waiting the first 72 hours, she still hadn't received approval from the state. So we contacted her doctor and after another six days of waiting, only then

disabilities who lives in a Chicago Housing Authority senior building. He has a medical problem that has to be treated daily. He is living from a fixed monthly income of \$777 and has been told that his income is too high for the Medicaid eligibility until he meets a deductible each month. One of the medicines he needs

have even greater difficulties. Seniors suffer greatly when they have to sit alone for the long hours that everyone has to wait in Cook County Hospital – not just in the emergency room but in the pharmacy, where everyone has to wait many hours for medicine.

One parent I know just took on a foster child. When she first got the child, she didn't have all of his medical records and didn't even have his medical card. So she had this child and he had a breathing disorder. They went to Cook County Hospital not because they had to but because that was the only place they could get the medicine without paying right away. Any private hospital would have treated the child but she would have had to pay for the prescription.

She said she would like to see a place in the community where if there is an error or some one loses their medical card, she could have called a direct 24-hour emergency hotline to help people with their medication.

Some people need state approval on the weekend. It just doesn't seem fair that our government can't help everyone. I would like to know where help will come from and when.

I know a person with disabilities who lives in a Chicago Housing Authority senior building. He has a medical problem that has to be treated daily. He is living from a fixed monthly income of \$777 and has been told that his income is too high for the Medicaid eligibility...

came a positive reply. But even with that positive reply, she was told that when the prescription needs to be renewed, she would have to go through the same channels.

We spoke to an attorney at the Legal Assistance Foundation. The attorney got this woman some help so she would not have to wait for state approval. Now she has a year before having to get the run-around again.

But why should people have this extra worry added along to worrying about their illness?

Here is another example of how many people have to choose between eating or buying medicine. I know a person with

won't be covered until he is 65 years old and its cost is over \$200.

These are not the only people that are facing this problem. I myself was just issued a letter stating that any of my medicines which cost more than \$55 will no longer be covered by Medicaid until they go through some of their own procedures.

I need all my medicines daily and there is no way I can afford to pay for all the medication that I have to take. I can go to Cook County Hospital but I have had a hard time with them because the generic medicine they issue there doesn't have the same effect as the brand-name medicine.

That's a reason that I don't want to deal with Cook County Hospital but others

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Senior Issues

Operation ABLE

by Lorenzia Shelby

I'd like to inform the readers of an organization that states that it helps seniors, people with disabilities and others find part-time work and training in many Chicago locations, with some offices a few blocks away from CHA developments.

Operation ABLE is a non-profit organization that was founded in 1977, according to their 1998/1999 annual report.

"Operation ABLE was created by the Chicago Community Trust Organization with a staff of three, a budget of \$47,500 and a vision of helping workers 55 years of age and older find employment opportunities."

The group serves seniors, people with disabilities and others by providing them with employment and training.

"Operation ABLE (Ability Based on Long Experience) became known as an advocate for the older workers. In 1990, Operation ABLE revised its mission statement to include services to individuals of all ages, while maintaining its original emphasis on serving the unique needs of the older worker."

There are several programs Operation ABLE has for you to choose from. Their main concerns are helping individuals find employment and provide technical training that can help you get the skills needed in today's job market. The programs include all age groups and persons with disabilities.

One Stop Center staff will place people in training programs... according to a brochure given out at the center. The One Stop Center staff also is supposed to assist people get jobs.

A flyer from Operation ABLE mentions that on Nov. 1, 2001, the group held their 11th annual Operation Access job fair with Cook County Board President John H. Stroger Jr.

"For persons with disabilities, Cook County government is striving for a barrier-free environment," the flyer states.

I asked Julia Green, program coordinator with Operation ABLE, to elaborate on her group's Senior Community Service Employment program. Green said the program is open to people 55 years or older who have a low income and live in Chicago. The program is funded by the Illinois Department on Aging.

"The way that program works is that we provide part-time work of 20 hours a week. (Seniors) are placed to work either here or at other government agencies or at several of Operation ABLE networking agencies.

"They (the seniors) basically do clerical work. As a matter of fact, all of our people do clerical work. They do filing, reception and general office work. A lot of those agencies seek people with computer skills. We place them with that particular agency. We have an agency who is looking for someone who can do basic word processing. The pay is \$5.15 an hour, which is minimum wage, because this is a program that's designed to give individuals experience so that it will be easier for them to find them a job that's not funded by the federal government."

Green continued, "Some people in this program have not worked for a long time. For example, I just had a lady who had not worked in 11 years. She was enrolled in the program and was placed in a situation where she is now doing clerical work. She is also getting computer training and hopefully, in a couple of months, I will be able to move her into a better paying job."

"While they (the seniors) are in this program, I am the person responsible for giving them placement assistance and I do that on an individual basis as well as a group basis. Once a week, I have a job club meeting in the Pilsen Illinois Employment and Training Center. The club

is just for older workers. They come once a week and they talk about the interview strategies, resume writing, how to follow up an interview, how to answer questions that are asked by employers, but above all, to arrange job interviews and find job openings.

"I show them how to find job openings themselves once they have been on an interview and come back to the club. We also discuss the results of the interview and a few basics. How did you handle the interview? Do you feel you did right or wrong? So, we identify things that they may have done wrong and correct them so they won't make the same mistake over and over again. It's actually a learning experience."

Seniors who find work through the program do not get health insurance or other benefits. They get paid a half-time rate for vacation and sick days.

I asked Green if the seniors work because they are bored or just need something to do with their time.

She said, "They work because they have to work to supplement their small income."

Operation ABLE also has a One Stop Employment and Training Center located at 1657 S. Blue Island, in the vicinity of the Racine Apartments senior building, the ABLA Homes family development and other sites. The staff at the One Stop center has a huge list of technical training and job opportunities anyone can take advantage of. One Stop Center staff will place people in training pro-



Julia Green program coordinator of Operation ABLE.

Photo by Lorenzia Shelby

Local Advisory Council, the City of Chicago, Operation ABLE Inc. and the CHA, developed a plan to establish this site at ABLA where residents could receive job readiness skills, social services, vocational training and job placement.

"The TJC was opened on July 26, 1999, with a staff of seven case managers, job developers and trainers providing a multitude of service and service referrals. Since then, more than 1,000 residents have come through the facility...."

The brochure states that the Transitional Job Center specializes in working with men who are ex-offenders, chronically unemployed or otherwise hard to place in jobs.

"So far, we have been able to place twenty-three (23) of fifty-eight (58) of them and forty-five (45) of fifty-five (55) have been enrolled in vocational training.

This population is extremely critical in fulfilling the vision of Hope VI to create self-sufficiency and full employment to the residents of the 'NEW' ABLA Homes - a mixed-income community of working families."

I made an exhaustive effort to get more information about the ABLA Transitional Job Center but to no avail. I made a telephone call to Charles Wood, the director of center. At the time, he said he was too busy to comment on the program and then didn't return my telephone call, as he promised.

The Chicago Metropolitan Housing Development Corporation (CMHDC) is a non-profit housing development corporation providing housing in mixed-income buildings to families of limited financial resources.



We have units available throughout the City of Chicago that have been allocated for CHA families who choose Section 8 assistance. CMHDC also manages the HOME OWNERSHIP program for CHA. If you are a public housing resident, you may qualify to own a unit at the Wentworth Gardens Annex development. All dwelling units are available on an equal opportunity basis. Please contact us at (312) 422-1680 for a list of available units.

"The ABLA residents, represented by the



The War Zone



War Zone by Iesha Griffin

Since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, our country has been at war. But living in the projects is like being trapped in a war zone every day.

Especially in the Robert Taylor Homes development of the Chicago Housing Authority, there is constant drug dealing and gunfire. Gangs are shooting innocent people. People are scared to come out of their homes.

Here's what Officer Sykes of the Chicago Police Department had to say on the subject:

"I am a police officer assigned to the Second District, located at 5101 S. Wentworth," said Sykes.

"For 11 years, I have worked with the CAPS (Community Alternative Policing Strategy) program. It is held once a month and is open to the public."

The CAPS program was developed to take more police out of cars and get them involved in the community, Sykes said.

He said that some of the possible reasons for the shooting are gang disputes over territory and drug-selling turf.

"It's crazy to me because no one (of the gang members) really owns the buildings," he

said. "The government does. Now guns are more accessible also."

He said that gang members aren't well educated about guns.

"This senseless killing is done out of peer pressure, seeking admiration or just for attention," he said. "I have been shot at before. It is a dangerous job but I do it because, like every officer, I want to make a difference, by either catching a person or reaching out to people to prevent situations."

Shooting destroys the neighborhood. There's nothing good that can come from it. Innocent people are hurt and people are afraid, especially parents not knowing when the shooting will occur.

Though I am scared living in Robert Taylor, the attacks don't scare me. One reason is because they're not in Chicago yet. I don't believe in living in fear. I fear being denied the basic rights. My biggest fear is racism!

There is constant gunfire around my house because of the different gangs. 43rd Street is one gang and 45th is another. That makes it bad for the residents there because it stops minors from going to school and others from going to work. Coming outside is a risk because you never know if they are getting ready to shoot or shooting already. So it's like being trapped.

It's even more ridiculous now after all of

this terrorism in New York and Washington, and the number of cases of anthrax that are still happening.

"I do not like living in the midst of violence," said 32-year-old Brenda Griffin.

"I want the best for my kids and the opportunities here are very limited. I have lived here for 10 years and things are getting worse. You can't go out of the building without someone approaching you about drugs.

"I don't do drugs and hate that my friends and family have to be subjected to such things. They shoot almost every day around here. I worry about my family every day. They are very busy and a lot of the time away from the building. I am scared that they will walk in the building and get shot by a stray bullet.

"Innocent people get shot around here a lot. I just don't want my kids to be a statistic of the violence that is plaguing the area. This area is constantly at war.

"People do not react until it hits home," she added about the international war.

"The war in this area is ongoing. Until someone attacked the Pentagon and World Trade Center, everyone was walking around with blinders on."

Antonio Yancey, 34, said that he also doesn't like living in the projects.

"Living here is not proper for newborns or

the innocent people trying to have a perfect place for their families to live," he said.

"I don't feel safe walking in the buildings because I never know if me and my family will walk out and get shot. The shooting is very dumb to me because they don't own the land anyway."

On the international war, he said: "Americans need to come together to get this situation resolved before it's too late."

13-year-old Serriah Howard said she also doesn't like living in the area.

"There is too much violence and innocent people getting hurt and maybe killed," she said.

"I don't feel safe walking in and out of the building because anything can happen. There is so much stuff going on in the world that I am not safe at all. I personally feel that people shouldn't be shooting because its hurting parents to see their children have grown up to participate in gang violence and drug selling. I feel that the world is coming to an end because all of these people got killed in the terrorist attacks."

How can America eliminate terrorist activities if they can't even maintain people right here in our own country? Why does it take a tragedy for us to come together? We have to take care of one another but it has to start at home.

Thinking About War by Chris Watson

I hear on the news and read in the papers how a lot of people are worried about the 2001 war. I decided to go around and interview people myself to see how they really feel about Sept. 11, 2001. The following are interviews with people in my school, my neighborhood, my family and my peers.

"I don't care about the war as long as they don't come to Chicago, making buildings fall," said Dominique Walker, 12, who goes to Jackie Robinson School.

"As long as they don't bother me, my family, my friends and the rapper Little Bow Wow, we won't have any problems."

Mike Larey, 20, who works at One Stop Foods, said, "I say George Bush wanted it to be a war because he looks sneaky like a little kid who's about to do something they know they should not be doing."

An 18-year-old man named James, who asked that his last name not be used, said while waiting at the bus stop, "It's not a real war because none of our people are getting killed every day like the people in Afghanistan are."

A 37-year-old woman walking outside in my neighborhood said, "This is not right. George Bush is bombing Afghanistan because he thinks that Bin Laden had something to do with the problem that happened on Sept. 11," she said. "But if he did have something to do with it, what good is it going to do by killing people that didn't do anything? That doesn't

sound right because two wrongs don't make a right."

Patrice Henderson-Key, a program administrator for Bronzeville Alternative High School, said that she was in shock after the planes hit the World Trade Center.

"I never would have thought something like that could have ever happened," she said. "Yet, I knew that the United States government would retaliate. I always feel that war is a sad and devastating thing for all parties involved."

There is never really a winner, in my opinion. There are always residual effects. I believe we will see those effects. Perhaps we will see changes in our relations with Israel and Palestine. That is just one effect.

"Currently, we are experiencing the Anthrax attacks on the nation. I was very afraid initially but I don't like to live my life in fear. I am just praying for those already touched more intimately by this occurrence and praying for peace."

Dr. Oyo Nsefik, the principal of Bronzeville Alternative High School, said, "Any kind of destruction of human lives is wrong. America is trying to defend and protect our people against terrorism and I support that completely. Through dialogue, international exchange and fair foreign policy, we can resolve political conflict instead of fighting and killing each other."

"If we believe in an eye for an eye policy," he said, "Then this will result in everyone becoming blind."

Jacqueline Wurtzelbacher, a teacher at Bronzeville, said, "I don't like the 'war.' It's not a war because no one is fighting back."

street and are too old to go to school. They spend all of their time in there because that is all they have. Most of us have kids and bills to pay. But the jobs we have are not enough to live off of.

When you don't have a father figure, your mom is running the streets and you barely go to school, you find love and attention in the streets. So the street is what you put your heart into.

You can't be in the streets just to be in the streets. Too much happens in the streets. Most people that work the streets are searching and focusing on one goal and that's to make it. Everybody has different reasons why they are in the streets, so everyone has a different

"We're just bombing Afghanistan and it reminds me of Waco, Texas," she said.

"Bombs can never kill ideas. They just make more people angry who want to drop bombs back on us. I wish our country was even half as good at making peace with the world as it is in making money off the world."

My math and science teacher at Bronzeville, Bimri Yaseen, said, "I don't like it very much because it's counterproductive and I don't like to see innocent people get killed."

"I think the outburst of patriotism surrounding the Sept. 11 incident is kind of bizarre," he said. "I don't understand the connection between thousands of people getting killed and people waving the flag saying, 'the U.S. is great.'

"It's not that something is wrong with patriotism. It's just that I don't see why it's suddenly being expressed."

Latroya Clady, a student at Bronzeville, said, "I was and am very disappointed."

"I thought that this terrorist attack was a wake-up call for the U.S.," she said. "The U.S. is trying to come together and say God Bless America. They should have thought about that when people were starving and struggling before."

Finally, this is what I think about the war. I think that it is sad that so many people are dying because someone thinks that someone else did something. To me, this sounds like something that happens on the streets. I also think that instead of George Bush dropping food to the homeless people in Afghanistan, he should drop food to the homeless in the U.S. and in Africa.

goal.

Every day there is something new to talk about on the block. Some spend their whole life working the block and looking for a come-up. Many have failed trying to succeed in the streets. Only a few make it in the streets.

There is a consequence for everyone who stays and works the streets, death or jail. Those are the only results you get from the streets.

But who says we can't make it away from the streets?

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My Block by Abu Muhammad

What's up word? My name is Kadaffi and I live on the East Side of Chicago, better known as Chi-Town. This is not the West Side, the North Side, the low end or the Wild 100's. This is the side most people do not focus on but this side is where hustlers and murderers hang out. There is so much happening between Stony Island Avenue and Jeffrey Boulevard.

Young guys that live or hang out on the block say that it's hard there. But they have no family but the

The Problem With Drugs by Twanda White

Many people use drugs today.

They use drugs even though drugs are bad for the body. Sometimes people don't think about the fact that drugs could really kill them. All they think about at the moment is doing what they want. People should know what's best for them and not use drugs.

Most of the time, people are introduced to drugs by someone they know. People get drugs from drug dealers and sometimes find them on the ground. Some drug dealers don't know they can get put in jail for dealing drugs.

Drugs include heroin, cocaine, marijuana and other drugs. Alcohol and cigarettes can also be like drugs.

People choose drugs over their children and even over their life. Some people think drugs are very valuable but I'm here to tell you drugs are not worth anything.

Drugs fool around with your brain and people can catch different diseases from drugs. People can catch HIV from sharing needles to inject drugs and they can get hepatitis from using drugs. Drugs such as cocaine can also cause heart problems. They can also damage your brain.

When someone gets addicted to drugs, a lot of times their family members can't do anything about it. People get addicted to drugs by using them constantly. I feel sad when I see people on drugs putting their bodies in bad condition. Sometimes I walk down the streets and

see people sniffing drugs. I just pretend I don't see it.

Sometimes people don't want to do drugs but that's the only way they can feel better, the only way they will make them more satisfied. People just make stupid decisions about their lives when they get on drugs.

How do drugs affect the family?

For most families, drugs do a lot of destruction and can cause physical abuse. Also, they cause children to get caught up in high-risk situations. It also causes family to steal from each other. It will leave people in jail, corrupt, fighting and even lead to death. Some people take their last five or 10 dollars and buy drugs instead of using them to buy food for their family, even when their children are starving. That's ridiculous.

Sometimes people admit they have a problem with drugs but are too ashamed to get help. That's when they need rehab and counseling. That can help them get at least halfway through their problems. Otherwise, they could end up dead or in the hospital for weeks or even months and that's not a good feeling.

I interviewed Claryce Bevis, who works for Volunteers of America as a substance abuse counselor.

RJ: Who do you think is using drugs?

CB: Anyone from CEOs to junkies on the street is using drugs. But not everyone is using drugs.

RJ: What happens when people use drugs?

CB: When people use drugs, they are self-destructing. It increases the heart rate. Drugs can put toxins in the lungs. Drugs make people feel good but their body feels bad. It is a spiritual disease. When people get involved with other people that don't have their best interests at heart, sometimes it can cause them to do drugs. It's really a self-destructive thing.

RJ: When do people use drugs?

CB: The people I work with use drugs morning, noon and night. Some even do it on weekends. Some just drink (alcohol). Others stop using for six weeks and then start again.

RJ: Where do people get drugs from?

CB: Well, a lot of people sell drugs, so they purchase the drugs from drug dealers. Or they get them at parties. Sometimes people even get drugs from their family. I had a guy who worked for a hospital and stole drugs from the hospital. Sometimes, a friend doing a friend a favor will give them drugs. I don't know how much this happens but people also go on school property and sell drugs.

RJ: Why do people use drugs?

CB: People use drugs for self-medication for physical pain and to feel good. Also to keep from facing reality, to hide feelings that they don't want to feel. They use drugs because of peer pressure. It's one way to socialize and have fun. Once people start from recreational use for fun, they just keep using and using and using, and become addicted.

I also interviewed Mary C. Johns, Editor in Chief of the *Residents' Journal*.

RJ: Why did you start using drugs?

MJ: Just to try it out and see what other people were experiencing, to see how it felt.

RJ: What kind of drugs were you taking? Why?

MJ: I smoked marijuana. I snorted cocaine once and heroin and crack, to see how other people felt.

RJ: Who got you using drugs?

MJ: A boyfriend and people I hung around with influenced me.

RJ: Do you have children?

MJ: Yes. At the time I started taking drugs, I

had no children. Now I have six kids and I was taking drugs with five of them. When I stopped, I had another baby. I wasn't spending a lot of time with them when I was taking drugs. I would leave them alone.

RJ: What was it like quitting drugs?

MJ: It was pure agony. My nerves were constantly on edge. I used to have muscle spasms and severe headaches and my skin used to crawl. My limbs began to move on their own. I also stopped smoking cigarettes in 1996, when I had been smoking three packs a day.

RJ: How long did you stay on drugs?

MJ: I stayed on drugs for 17 years.

RJ: Did you try to go to a counselor?

MJ: No, because I didn't think talking to someone about it could help, so I turned to God.

RJ: How did your drug abuse affect your children and the people around you?

MJ: It affected them in a bad way. I was always yelling at my kids. I was careless about people who had to work because I used to get high at night and stay up until 2 or 3 in the morning and disturb the neighbors. I used to gamble, which had a bad effect on taking care of my business. Then I'd have to borrow money to buy alcohol and cigarettes, and to gamble!

RJ: What made you stop doing drugs?

MJ: The fear of dying at an early age, without having accomplished anything. And not being right with God.

Drug free is the way to be. People might think drugs are the right thing to do but they are the wrong thing. People shouldn't use drugs just because they're stressed out. Instead they should take a nap or a walk in the park.

Sex in the City by Latroya Clady

I am a student at Bronzeville Academy, where, like at most high schools, being sexually active is nothing new to most people. Most teens are sexually active or probably will be before age 17. I talked to many students about their experiences with sex and they had a lot to say about the matter. The issue is not so much being sexually active itself but the consequences that can follow, such as sexually transmitted diseases, becoming pregnant or having people think of you as a "slut."

One Bronzeville student, who asked that her name not be used, referred to sex as something "very special that two people share, something sacred."

She said her first time was at the age of 13. She really didn't know what she was doing but it felt right. Also, no matter what, you should always use some type of protection because you never know what type of diseases you could get, she said. She thinks people should wait until they are married to have sex.

"If you are in love, you should keep your mate satisfied and happy," she said.

"But if you are not ready and your mate loves you, they should understand you're not ready."

Another student, who asked his name not be used, said that if you are 13, you are too young to be thinking about sex. But at 16, it is alright. He said

he had been with numerous partners. But if a young woman walked up to him and asked if he wanted to have sex, he would say "No. Because I wouldn't know how many other people she had been with."

He said he doesn't consider kissing sexual because it has nothing to do with intercourse.

Another student, who also asked her name not be used, said that if you are ready to take the step of becoming sexually active, "it is very important that you always use protection."

She said she has been sexually active since the age of 16 and that she has had four partners. She said she does not consider kissing sex.

She feels you should wait until you are married to have sex. She said if she had another chance, she would wait. She said if a young man came up to her and asked her to have sex, she would say, "No, no, no."

"I'm not for sale and this is very, very sacred. My body is my temple," she said.

I said, "No I didn't."

He grabbed my shoulder as tight as he could and pulled upward, saying, "Shut up. You are going downtown. Shut up. Don't make me slam you and stomp you."

In this situation, I did nothing wrong. The only thing that stopped me from getting arrested was that when he was taking me out of the building, his partner intervened. He asked me what was the problem. I told him the situation and that his partner did not listen to me.

He explained to me that there was a fight and I told him that I knew because it happened right in front of me. After asking me what school I attended, he let me return to the gym but also used physical force in the process.

Now's who's in the wrong?

"Police are cruel and they handle most situations wrong," said Orlando Wells, a student at Bronzeville Alternative High School.

"They also have no respect for anyone. Most police think that the average male on the street with braids or a hooded sweatshirt is up to no good. Most teens on the street are just trying to have fun and stay out of trouble. Others are not. They need to try to decipher which is which instead of always harassing the good guy."

Another young man said, "If you're ready, take the step but just do it with respect and don't have intercourse with a lot of partners."

He is 19 and still a virgin. He also thinks you should wait until you're married.

Another young man said it is "all good as long as you use protection."

He has been sexually active since the age of 12. If a female walked up to him and asked him to have sex, he said he'd say, "No. Because I don't know you."

He said he doesn't think you should wait until marriage to have sex and he said his number of partners is "uncountable."

I think most teens think basically the same way. If you look at every teen that has had sex before they were ready, they either got pregnant or got some disease or were afraid they were going to. My word of advice is to wait until you are married or be smart and use some type of protection. I feel people often have babies not because they want to but because they don't use condoms or other birth control.

Teens, be careful, not careless.

Police Brutality by Dimitry Johnson

Police brutality is a problem for most people of color and just the average person who questions the authority of police. To me, the police think that they are in a category of higher rank and that they can abuse their power.

Most police officers believe that the average citizen is ignorant when it comes to the law. They use that as an advantage to manipulate the public.

For example, me and my guy, whose name is not needed, went to Dunbar High School's homecoming pep rally. At first, there was no problem. They were letting outsiders in. So after the parade, we followed them inside where we went into the gym. They started the pep rally as was intended. Later on, two guys broke out in a fight about three feet away from me.

Soon after that, the police arrived as normally expected. They took a look around and then one of the officers approached me. He asked me a question but since there was a lot of noise, I couldn't hear him.

I asked him what he said. He said, "You heard what the f*** I said."

We Americans need to find a way to try and stop police brutality. The authorities usually treat the youth of the community like they are criminals. They don't see us being equal. They often see us as guilty until proven innocent.

Because of the recent tragedies of Sept. 11, most police have given most communities a break and started focusing on the real criminals. There are fewer patrols. Yet, their presence is still shown and still is felt.

Police brutality is an issue that is discussed often but not openly. More people, including police officers themselves, need to talk about as well as try to prevent brutality. Not to say that this will stop these harsh actions.

But it will be known more that we as a people take this very seriously and we will not tolerate it. People shouldn't have to feel paranoid when the police arrive or are just passing through the neighborhood or residential area. Instead, they should feel safe when they see an officer or a squad car coming their way. Although some police officers are corrupt, most officers are just there to help us.

A Special Section produced by the Urban Youth International Journalism Program

House of Blues by Chris Davis

I liked the House of Blues. Their mission is to understand culture, plus create expression through music and art, according to Francine Pope, director of the House of Blues Foundation. The House of Blues took over their current building after it had been vacant for about 10 years. They took the same House of Blues style that they

used in other parts of the world and used it in Chicago, Pope said.

"The House of Blues has the same pattern in all of the buildings but physically, they are very different," said Pope.

They want people to feel the vibe and learn about art and know that there's more to music than just music. It's also soul. A lot of famous people have come to the House of Blues, including Stevie Wonder, Ray Charles and Natalie Cole.

I went to the House of Blues on the

Oct. 22, 2001. It was alright. Wanda, our tour person, took us on a tour. Inside, it looked like a castle and I thought it had something to do with Rome or something from way back when. She showed us pictures made by famous painters.

There was one picture of a naked lady. She had a snake on her. There was another picture made of bottle tops and marbles. I thought it was unique.

Another picture on the wall had 1,000 marbles in it. It looked like crystals. There

was a wall made out of mud and sand but it did not even look like mud and sand. It looked like wool and cotton. I really did not care much for that one.

Another lady gave us (the students and me) some pop. She was singing the blues, I mean like really singing! The lady told us we could rap on the stage. It was raw. They had lights moving everywhere, three men playing the drums and my friend Orlando rapped.

Youth Poetry

Life by Dimitry Johnson

The key to life
Well, there is no key to life
There is only a will to succeed
As well as a need to survive
The thought of life
Brings the questions of why
-why are we here
As well as why do we exist
Although the answer is a theory
We often ask our self—
Why do we let others
Who are equal to us decide our fate?
If we as people are equal—
Life is a game with no winner

With people playing every day
Life
A game of power, money, wealth,
Death, poverty, and survival...

Mind

I used to save my thoughts for the mind
of the inquisition
But only if my thoughts were good
enough to be saved
Or is one talented enough to even put
them into a perspective
For thought to even be achieved Is one
that great or is the greatest unknown
Although wise the greatest is unknown
even to itselfSo is one told to be great
or is greatness
The thought to be achieved
That is the question
A thought to be thought of
Is a thought to be questioned?

But if the question is a thought
How is a thought to be answered?
Your mind is nothing but a dream of
non-existence
Yet your thought is reality
So for a dream to become reality
Mind has to be entered into itself
The thought
Great minds are thought to think alike
But was it a great one who taught that
mind to think
The thought of that makes me wonder
who taught I
And if I am the one with the mind of
greatness
But since my mind and me are one then
who are we
The greatness to be achieved???

Or is there someone who is trying to
achieve us
Mind—

Life by Lakendra Anderson

they are crying.
Lil' boys catching
cases at the age of 16
Got they mama crying
out (judge, my baby
didn't mean it)
Lil' girls huffing and
puffing just to get rid
of the stuffing
Life, it's a query,
thoughts and doubts
revealing
All this negative energy.
Y'all don't feel me
I'm telling the truth
With no lies, I'm envisioning my demise.
Life's favorite question
Starts and ends with
(why?)

Remembering Leroy Watkins

by Bobby Watkins

On Sept. 1, former residents of Robert Taylor Homes came out to remember the late Leroy Watkins, who also happened to be my uncle.

One young man, Eric Guy, described Leroy as a valuable member of the community. He was always thinking of others, especially the young people. Leroy moved his family into the Robert Taylor Homes building at 4555 S. Federal St. in April 1962.

Residents remember Leroy as someone who was always willing to lend a help-

ing hand and opening his door to others. He organized a little league team called the Twins for the young men of the development. Later, he formed softball teams called the Invaders and Invaderettes to keep the teenage boys and girls of the development out of trouble.

young people that Leroy helped. Guy participated on the league ball team and was encouraged by Leroy in his early career. His hard work paid off and Guy is currently the manager of a local restaurant.

This year, Guy, along with some other former residents as well as some

CHA agreed to the residents' request and the field was supposed to be named Leroy Watkins Park..But nothing was ever officially done.



Eric Guy, a resident of the CHA Robert Taylor development, is working along with other residents of that community towards getting a local park named after deceased public housing resident Leroy Watkins.

Photo by Bobby Watkins

During his years at Taylor, Leroy would be there to talk with or just sit and listen to anyone who needed a soft-spoken man with a very big heart. He had an award-winning garden there and also would take young people to White Sox games. He often tried to persuade them to attend church.

When Leroy died suddenly in 1981, residents came out in full support. They got petitions signed to name the local baseball field and diamond after Leroy. CHA agreed to the residents' request and the field was supposed to be named Leroy Watkins Park. A reporter from the *Chicago Defender* covered the ceremony for the naming of the park in April 1982. But nothing was ever officially done. No plaque was installed and no sign was erected. At the time, many residents felt the park should have been finished and fenced in.

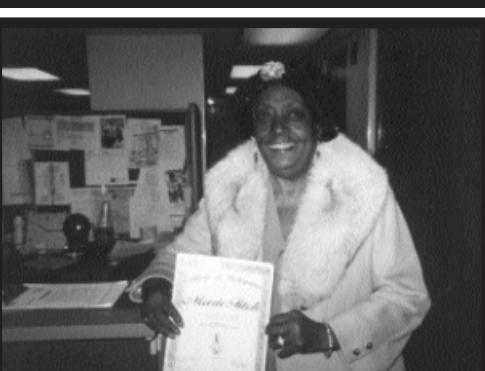
Eric Guy helped collect signatures on the residents' original petition and attended the 1982 ceremony. Guy was one of the

current residents, came out to remember "the nicest damn person we ever knew," as he was described in his obituary, written by Ron Tate and published both in the *Defender* and the *Chicago Sun-Times*.

Family members attended the celebration this year and felt it was a well-deserved honor. They thanked Guy and the rest of the residents who helped to make the event possible. The attendees said they would follow up with Ald. Dorothy Tilman (3) and CHA to see why there was never any follow-through after the 1982 dedication ceremony.

Guy and the residents who are still there have declared the Sunday before Labor Day as Leroy Watkins Day and will continue to remember and celebrate each year at that time.

On behalf of the family of Leroy Watkins, I would like to thank all those folks for their kindness. We will join you in remembering the nicest man we ever knew.



Lathrop News

Residents of Lathrop Homes who have recently had their units rehabilitated by the CHJUS construction company would just like to like to say thanks. Local Advisory Council Juanita Stephenson also wanted to thank the City of Chicago for their quick response after an accident on Leavitt Street. The city installed a temporary fence after a car crashed into the wall, producing a safety hazard for the children.

Stephenson and the LAC wish all Chicago Housing Authority residents a very special holiday season.

Congratulations also go out to one of our seniors, Marie Finch, on receiving an award from the Peoples Energy company in a special program it had for seniors this summer and early fall.

Photo and Caption by Bobby Watkins

Every Breath You Take

by Wateka Kleinpeter
Managing Editor

Not rain, sleet, or snow will stop the fantastic four. Current or former Robert Taylor Homes residents Connie Jones, Janice Patton, Tamara Williams and the Rev. Odis Prince inform residents of public housing and surrounding neighborhoods about the potential hazards for asthmatics.

The fantastic four work for the Grand Boulevard Asthma Coalition as health educators. And their job becomes more important with the onset of cold weather, which often brings on complications for people with asthma.

In addition to cold weather, CHA residents with asthma face problems related to the demolition of public housing buildings and the abundance of rats, mice, roaches and other pests in the buildings.

The fantastic four go door-to-door with information and surveys. So far, they have completed over 500 such surveys in CHA and the Grand Boulevard area. The target areas are Robert Taylor, Stateway Gardens, Madden Park Homes and Ida B. Wells Homes. They tell residents where they can go for help and how to take precautions if they are already an asthmatic or the parent of one.

They also conduct awareness seminars where vast amounts of information are given out. They educate asthmatics, parents and caregivers of asthmatics.

For asthmatics who live in Chicago Housing Authority units, there are many environmental hazards that affect them.

The Grand Boulevard Asthma Coalition is part of the Grand

The Coalition also works with the Charles A. Hayes Center, where the group meets monthly. Other members at the table are the local office of the Environmental Protection Agency and the CHA.

One of the physicians from the University of Chicago who regularly attends the meetings is Dr. Julian Solway. Solway co-authored an article about asthma that appeared in the prestigious **New England Journal of Medicine**.

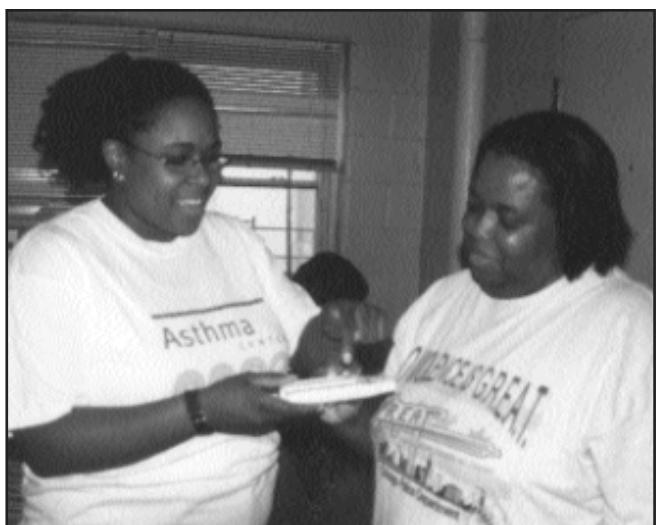
Many people die yearly from asthma. Solway said that an estimated 550 deaths from asthma occur yearly nationwide. 120 of those deaths are in Chicago. Solway said in a recent interview that the number of asthmatics is greatly underestimated.

"Statistics say nationwide, asthma incidences are 5 percent of the population," Solway said. "But people that work in the field think that it's much higher, more like 10 percent."

Doctors don't know exactly what causes asthma. However, there are certain things that can trigger an asthma attack. According to Grand Boulevard Federation Asthma Health Program coordinator Geraldine "Penny" Walton, large numbers of asthmatics are concentrated in the big cities of the United States. Chicago especially has a large number of reported asthma cases.

Walton said the exact reason for the high incidence of asthma is not known but one contributing factor could be the amount of demolition and construction going on that may contribute to the pollutants in the air.

Researchers have done studies of low-income families in several major inner cities, including St. Louis, Washington D.C., Cleveland, Detroit, New York City (including the Bronx and East Harlem) and, of course, Chicago. The research targeted cockroach allergens in dust and high levels of dust mite aller-



In her home, CHA Stateway Garden Home resident Debra Simmons (right) receives instruction on how to properly use an asthma inhaler from University of Chicago Asthma health educator Heidi Gidley.

Photo by Mary C. Johns

lead and dust allergens that affect asthmatic residents. The Safer Pest Control Project will last for four years and will also study the effects of certain chemicals used to remove pests from those units. One of the partners in the safer Pest Control Project is the Grand Boulevard Federation.

In addition to pests, CHA residents are exposed to pollutants that can trigger asthma attacks. With the current downsizing of CHA, the demolition is adding to the problems for asthmatics. According to a CHA official who spoke at the last Grand Boulevard Federation meeting, the current contractor for the demolition that is in progress has a method that should lessen the pollutants in the air. This contractor salvages and removes anything that can be recycled or abated, materials such as lead and asbestos, before knocking the structure down.

Another factor that triggers asthma is cold weather. Windy days during pollen season are another trigger. There is no estimate on how far the wind can carry pollutants in the air. On windy days, mold spores and pollen are airborne and an asthmatic can breathe these pollutants in.

Thunderstorms also seem to cause breathing difficulties for a large number of asthmatics. Air quality during ozone alert days is another asthma trigger. Asthmatics are told not to come out on those days or if they do, to take precautions. The local weather service also suggests that people should check on senior citizens or anyone they know that has a respiratory problem.

In addition to pests, CHA residents are exposed to pollutants that can trigger asthma attacks. With the current downsizing of CHA, the demolition is adding to the problems for asthmatics.

Boulevard Federation, which is striving to educate CHA residents and others who live in Grand Boulevard.

The Grand Boulevard Federation has been in existence since the fall of 1994 under the leadership of Gregory Washington. It was founded as part of the Governor's Task Force on Human Services Reform. In 1997, it became a not-for-profit organization. Washington has never let the fact that he is blind stand in his way. During his tenure, Washington has formed partnerships with numerous organizations, secured grants and other funding, and repeatedly obtained national recognition for the Federation as an outstanding organization in the field.

The Grand Boulevard Asthma Coalition consists of partnerships with hospitals such as the universities of Chicago and Illinois, Provident Hospital, Michael Reese Hospital, the Chicago Board of Health and the Chicago Asthma Consortium.

gens.

Next were allergens from pet dander from cats. The children in this study experienced more hospital visits a year, unscheduled medical visits, missed days of school, loss of sleep and more days of wheezing, as compared to asthmatic children who lived in other areas.

CHA residents certainly are exposed to cockroach allergens and cat dander. Many people in CHA have a cat as the lesser of two evils. The cat is more tolerable than the rats that plague the whole city of Chicago but CHA apartments in particular. The Department of Streets and Sanitation has admitted that the city has a problem.

All is not lost. CHA has secured an \$800,000 grant to address asthma-related issues in Henry Horner, Robert Taylor, and Ogden Courts. The study will evaluate cockroach, rodent,

Acceptance by Dr. Bill Miller

One of the most beloved prayers of 12-step groups is the one known as the Serenity Prayer. It has been in use by these groups for 60 years. In light of changes in our world these recent months, it just might be the kind of request we all need to make:

God grant me the SERENITY to accept the things I cannot change; COURAGE to change the things I can; and WISDOM to know the difference.

Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time, accepting hardships as the pathway to peace, taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it.

Trusting that He will make

all things right if I surrender to His will; that I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with Him forever in the next. Amen.

Your Health

From the perspective of the Serenity Prayer, acceptance means a great deal more as I put it into practice. To accept means to not resent or fight. It is to willingly see things as they are rather than as I wish they were. It is to genuinely change my focus to constructive tasks that can be done rather than dwell on how I've been thwarted from getting what I am convinced I need and deserve. It is not resignation but a positive recognition of the truth.

Acceptance is based on serenity. The opposite of seren-

ity is anxiety, uneasiness, alarm and discontentment. Serenity produces a calmness, tranquility, peacefulness, composure, confidence and dignity within us. Therefore, if we have serenity, we have a sense of confidence about life. The situations and circumstances that we find ourselves in do not threaten us.

The confidence that we must have is not based upon our knowledge, experience or ability. We don't have the needed stability within ourselves. Therefore, our confidence must be based in God - the one who has granted us the serenity in the first place. The serenity is the result of our willingness to trust God to be in control of whatever may come.

So, the Serenity Prayer is a statement of our confidence in God. If God is in control, what can really threaten us?

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Comida o Medicinas?

por Bobby Watkins

He estado reflexionando sobre este tema durante cierto tiempo. Soy uno de los millones de estadounidenses que tienen que enfrentarse con el problema de no tener dinero para pagar algunas de sus medicinas.

He hablado con numerosas personas que también están luchando con este mismo problema. Pero lo que realmente me llevó a escribir este artículo fue la conversación que tuve con una joven. Ella es una madre sin pareja que tiene un problema renal y recibe Ingresos Suplementarios de Seguridad. Ella iba a recibir diálisis y necesitaba esta medicina particular antes de comenzar su tratamiento de diálisis. Esta medicina es necesaria para anestesiarla antes del tratamiento. Ella tiene Medicaid pero su cobertura no incluye esta medicina o al menos eso fue lo que le dijeron en Medicaid.

Después de recibir esta información en Medicaid, ella llamó a la farmacia donde le dijeron que Medicaid sí pagaría la medicina, pero sólo después de 72 horas, debido a que ese gasto tenía que ser aprobado primero por el estado.

Ella es una mujer joven y esta crisis ocurrió a mitad de mes, después que ella había gastado todo el dinero del cheque mensual que recibe por su trabajo. Ella necesitaba obtener esta medicina antes del

lunes y yo hablé con ella el viernes por la noche. Como todos sabemos, todas las agencias del estado cierran los fines de semana.

Por esa razón ella tuvo que pedir prestado \$85 para comprar la medicina y prometer que reembolsaría este préstamo en 72 horas. Ocurrió que, después de esperar las primeras 72 horas, ella todavía no había recibido la aprobación por parte del estado. Por tanto, se comunicó con su médico y sólo después de otros seis días de espera pudo recibir una respuesta positiva. Pero incluso con esa respuesta positiva, le informaron que cuando fuese necesario volver a adquirir ese medicamento, ella tendría que pasar por los mismos canales y procedimientos.

Nosotros hablamos con un abogado en la Fundación de Asistencia Legal. Este abogado le consiguió alguna ayuda a esta mujer para que ella no tuviese que esperar por la aprobación del estado. Ahora ella tiene un año antes de tener que pasar por todos estos trámites otra vez.

Pero me pregunto: ¿por qué la gente tiene que sufrir estas preocupaciones adicionales además de luchar con su propia enfermedad?

Éste es otro ejemplo de las innumerables personas que tienen que escoger entre comer y comprar medicinas. Yo conozco una persona con discapacidades que vive en una residencia para personas de la tercera edad de la Chicago Housing Authority. Él tiene un problema médico para el cual necesita recibir tratamiento a

diario. Esta persona vive con un ingreso mensual fijo de \$777 y le han informado que este ingreso es demasiado alto para recibir ayuda de Medicaid, a menos que cumpla con el pago de un deducible cada mes.

Para una de las medicinas que necesita, él no tendrá cobertura hasta que tenga 65 años de edad y el costo de esa medicina es superior a los \$200.

Éstas no son las únicas personas que se enfrentan a este problema. Yo mismo acabo de recibir una carta en la que me informan que las medicinas que cuesten más de \$55 no tendrán ya cobertura por parte de Medicaid hasta que mi solicitud sea tramitada según algunos de los procedimientos internos de Medicaid.

Yo necesito tomar todas mis medicinas diariamente y no tengo en absoluto los medios para pagar todas las medicinas que debo tomar. Puedo ir al Cook County Hospital pero he pasado malos ratos en ese centro debido a que el fármaco genérico que ellos dan allí no tiene el mismo efecto que la medicina de marca.

Ésa es una de las razones por las cuales no quiero acudir al Cook County Hospital, pero otras personas se encuentran con dificultades aún mayores. Las personas de la tercera edad sufren mucho cuando tienen que sentarse solas durante largas horas esperando que las atiendan en el Cook County Hospital, y no sólo en la sala de emergencias, sino también en la

farmacia de este hospital donde todos tienen que esperar muchas horas para recibir sus medicinas.

Una madre que yo conozco acaba de asumir responsabilidades de crianza por un niño. Cuando le entregaron al niño, ella no recibió todos los documentos médicos del niño y ni siquiera le dieron la tarjeta médica del niño. Así ocurrió que un día este niño tuvo problemas respiratorios. Acudieron al Cook County Hospital no sólo porque tenían que hacerlo, sino porque era el único lugar donde podían recibir el medicamento sin tener que pagar por él inmediatamente. Cualquier hospital privado hubiese dado tratamiento al niño, pero ella hubiera tenido que pagar el medicamento.

Ella me dijo que le gustaría contar con un lugar en la comunidad donde si ocurre algún error o si alguien pierde su tarjeta médica, uno pudiese llamar a un servicio telefónico directo de emergencia que funcione las 24 horas del día para ayudar a la gente que tenga problemas para obtener sus medicinas.

Algunas personas necesitan obtener aprobaciones del estado durante los fines de semana. Simplemente no me parece justo que nuestro gobierno no pueda ayudar a todos. Me gustaría saber de dónde y cuándo vendrá esta ayuda.

CHINESE TRANSLATION

RUSSIAN TRANSLATION

KOREAN TRANSLATION

AFRICAN FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS

by Arminta Clark Muhammad

Washington Park hosted one of the biggest concerts of the year to bring in the fall with the soulful, funky sound of the Godfather of Soul - James Brown.

Brown electrified the audiences with some of his top chart musical hits like "Try Me," "Make It Funky," "It's A Man's World," "Papa Got A Brand New Bag" and my all-time favorite, "Say It Loud: I'm Black And I'm Proud," along with his latest single, "School Is End."

Brown's performance was the grand finale for the 12th Annual Chicago Tribune African Festival of the Arts presented by the Africa International House on Labor Day, Sept. 3, at 8 p.m. The festival was held Aug. 31 through Sept. 3 in Washington Park at 55th Street and Cottage Grove Avenue.

Brown was honored that night for his lifetime achievement and contributions to Black music. He was given an African statue and an African garment that is only given to high dignitaries.

I got saved but I am not saved like I want to because I want to help save a whole lot of other people. Be your brother's and sister's keeper.

-James Brown, Godfather of Soul Music

Brown had not performed on the South Side of Chicago for at least 20 years. Brown's last performance on the South Side was at the Regal Theatre, which was located on 47th Street and South Parkway, which was later changed to Dr. Martin Luther King Drive.

When the Regal was hot, Brown performed there with great entertainers like Marvin Gaye, the Temptations, Gladys Knight and the Pips, and Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, to name a few.

At the African Festival of the Arts, Brown demonstrated to the audience that he could still do his great foot work, which so many entertainers have copied over the years. Michael Jackson, Prince, Terrance "Trent" D'Arby all have imitated Brown's style. Brown has been labeled the "hardest working man in show business" and is also known to be a task master because he puts so much excitement into his live stage performances which generate a lot of body heat.

At a press conference held before the concert, Brown said that in his early days, the music industry copied a lot of his music and his style without providing him with any compensation. He emphasized that he "didn't know a brother that has ever gotten paid."

After going back over the last 30 years of his life, Brown thanked God and the country. Brown said he's been through a lot of trials and tribulations, including the incident in Atlanta years ago that left him convicted of a crime. Friends like Pervis Spann and many others supported him throughout.

"I got saved but I am not saved like I want to because I want to help save a whole lot of other people. Be your brother's and sister's keeper," Brown said.

Brown explained why he made his latest recording titled "School Is End." In that single, Brown suggests that today's youths put down their guns and turn to education as their key to life. Brown's recordings have always been implements for his powerful messages.

Brown said he was in the hospital at the time he wrote "School Is End." He realized that God had released him from his illness and he started to "wonder what all you can do before you leave or depart this world. When a child can kill another child, then we are never going to get it straight. Eliminating them to grow up to be leaders. There will be no more Dr. Martin Luther Kings, Pervis Spanns, Sam Cookes or Muhammad Alis because you stop it before you start it."

Brown emphasized our society should stop the "killing in the schools."

"We cannot endorse it. And anybody that has any beef with anything first should consider looking out for our children because that's all that we have."

Many of the African artists at the festival view Brown as their favorite artist in the entire world. Brown said loudly and proudly that his music has a fusion with African music.

"Everything I do has to come from the bloodline," Brown said.

Brown said during the press conference that he has become more enlightened as he has become older. Brown said even when he was growing up in poverty, he always carried

thought, to have Brown come to one of the centers of Black music of the world and Chicago is one of the centers of Black music.

"Brown has been a foundation in terms of great Black music. In his music, you can hear spirits of gospel, of jazz and blues, rhythm and blues, and every other popular form integrated into the success of his music. What James Brown means to us in terms of listening to his music? We think of celebrating. We think of partying. We think of things that bring us all together.

"The rhythm of his music is very infectious. It's very powerful and it's held to those traditions that are our culture."

El'Zabar said, "It was exciting in selecting artists for this event and at the same time, the entertainment is educational as well. Our culture is rich and very diverse."

El'Zabar's desire for diversity brought artists from the continent of Africa like Badenya les Frer'es Coulibaly along with Baaba Maal from Senegal, giving the audiences a spectacular show with sounds and instruments of Senegal. They performed songs like "Jamma Jenngii," a love song comparing the beauty of nature to the intimacy of a special romantic relationship sung in the Fulani language, which sounds like singing. They also performed "Miyaabele," an old African call for African unity usually sung by fishermen.

Other performers included Caribbean artists like the 12-member punta rock International Garifuna Band, which is not nationally known but should be. The Garifuna people are a fusion of West Africans from Mali and the Carib and Arawak Indians.

Rhythmn and Blues artists like the group War performed during the Friday night concert. Lonnie Jordan, the founder and sole original member of War, still plays his psychedelic electric piano. Jordan announced to the crowd that they recorded a live "album - not a CD" - at the concert. They performed their hits tunes like "The World Is A Ghetto," "Slippin' into Darkness," "The Cisco Kid," and "Spill the Wine."

The festival featured jazz artist Eddie Palmieri, a five-time Grammy Award winner. Pulitzer Prize-winning poet and playwright Ntozake Shange performed with jazz musicians D.D. Jackson, the Bluiett and El'Zabar with special guest Pharoah Sanders.

El'Zabar said, "We do ourselves a great service when we acknowledge that in the whole world, there's African sound and you can sight it in the music of these artists."

The African Festival of the Arts started as a street fair and is now the largest celebration of African art and culture in the Midwest. Every year, African and African American artists, artisans and small business owners come to Chicago from all over the globe, according to the event's press release. Individuals from Ghana, Mali, Ivory Coast, Puerto Rico, South Africa, Nigeria, Haiti, and locations throughout the United States come to celebrate Africa and its influence on art and culture worldwide. This year's theme was "Afrocentury."

"Now is the time for all people throughout the African Diaspora to connect and move



James Brown, the Godfather of Soul performs at the 12th Annual Chicago Tribune African Festival of the Arts

Photo by Arminta Clark Muhammad

forward as one, understanding that our artistry and creativity can be used as a means to our own economic empowerment, just as it has been for others," stated Patrick Woodtor, the festival founder and Africa International House executive director.

The festival recreates an African marketplace and features more than 200 artisans offering arts and crafts, artifacts, collectibles, masks, fashions, jewelry, fabrics and textiles."

The festival also featured a drumming village as well as a fashion show and - of course - the African, Caribbean and Southern soul food. Community residents know the festival as a family event which allows family members to unite and experience an African atmosphere.

For many years, I have watched this festival grow from a small event to where it is today. What has kept me coming and bringing my family was the fact that is held next to the DuSable Museum of African American History. This year, I was busy trying to interview as many artists as possible. But I made every effort to pass the drumming village. It brings me the sounds of Africa and makes me want to come home. I, too, hold Africa in my heart.

Tie dye cultural designer Jahmiila Kago Norware said the Chicago African Arts festival is successful because for many who have not been to Africa, it allows Africa to come to Chicago. Africans and African Americans come together collectively to make the festival successful, Kago Norware said.

"Now, due to changes in locations, the development over the years has brought the festival back up to the level it should have been, would have been and always will be," she said.

CONDOLENCES

RJ sends our condolences to the family, friends and fans of Etta Jones, who passed Oct. 16, 2001, from a long term illness. Jones was profiled in an article, "Etta Jones: Jazz Goddess," written by Arminta Clark Muhammad and published in the October 2000 edition. Jones was a great jazz vocalist who had performed with her partner, Houston Person, for over 33 years. Jones was known for her trademark tune, "Don't Go to Strangers," which sold more than one million records in the early '60s. The funeral for Jones, 72, was held in Harlem, New York City, her home town.

Child of the Pack Saddle: Part VII

by John "Popcorn" Sampson

During the 1930s and 1940s, Lee Street was the main drag in the Black (or so-called Colored) neighborhood. It was the place where one went to see and to be seen. Lee Street on Friday night and Saturday night was that time of the week when all God's children went out to do some sinning and have some sinning done unto them.

Jazz is a Louisiana creation as well as Rock 'n Roll. I know it to be a fact that Rock 'n Roll was born, baptized and nurtured on the dance floor in the little rural town of Bunkie, Louisiana. Rock 'n Roll was a form of dancing in which the couple stood still and rocked from one side to the other, causing the woman's bottom to wiggle backwards and forward.

And for that reason, the dance was named Rock 'n Roll. Rock 'n Roll preceded the Funky Butt and the Slow Drag. And the reason why I know all about the above is because I had an uncle who was said to be the best dancer in the entire area of southeast Louisiana. His name was Icesome Sampson.

Uncle Icesome used to say, "Dancing is a creation of rhythm. The more rhythm you got in your bones, the better you can dance."

After having gone into three taverns along Lee Street, John Henry and I walked into what could be called the Bucket of Blood. And that was the place where we found the woman every one called Indian Vi.

She was standing on the end of the bar nearest the front door when we walked into the tavern. She heard the door close, turned and looked straight into my eyes. Apparently, she recognized me right away.

My eyes gathered in every inch of the godly-favored, little five-foot five-inch, reddish-brown skinned mademoiselle with the shoulder-length, raven-colored, curlicue hair and the twinkling black eyes. Right away, I felt a deep feeling of kinship with the woman looking at me.

The very instant that she laid eyes on me, she ran over and flung her arms around me. In a tone of voice that was nothing short of hysteria, she called out, "Oh Lord, that's my son! Look everybody. I told y'all I had a son. This is my son. This is my son Ernest. Ain't he good looking? A Creole if there ever was one. He looks just like his daddy, John Sampson! The low-down dirty Creole bastard!"

Then, to Hammer, she said, "Hammer, where did you find my child? You been to Mansura?"

"Mansura?" Hammer bellowed. "What cotton patch is Mansura in, Vi?"

My mama said, "Mansura is my home town, Hammer. Didn't I tell you that once?"

"Naw, you ain't never told me no stuff like that, girl. What bottle you coming out of, Vi? You told me your hometown was in Bunkie or Skokie, something like that. Anyway, let's leave that alone. So this is your son? He's a smart little fellow. He sure know how to handle white folks."

"I don't doubt that," mama said. "He do if he's anything like my poppa."

Hammer said, "Why, he had three or four white people putting in a good word for him in Judge Schuller's court this morning and there was one old white woman who seemed to be crazy about him, too, the way she was hugging him and carrying on. There ain't a handful of Black males in the state of Louisiana that can say that they was hugged by a white woman in broad daylight!"

My mama said, "Yea, he gets that from his ole' slick ass daddy, John Sampson! A Black bastard!"

Hammer said to mama, "You sound like you hate Black men, Vi or Virginia, whatever your name is." "That's a lie, Hammer!" said mama. "I love Black men. I'm a Black man's woman. What do I look like to you, a lover of white men? White men are too sissy-acting for me."

Hammer said, "All you women sing that same tune, Black women anyway. But you're a squaw, ain't you, Vi?"

"Hell no," I'm a Negro woman," mother said to Hammer with obvious disdain spread across her pretty face.

"I look the way that I do because my daddy is a half-



How sweet it is, how very sweet it is, indeed, to meet for the first time in your stay on Earth the one and the only person in all the world that is responsible for your term of existence.

Seminole Indian and I took after my grandfather who was a Seminole Indian. As for me not liking Black men, don't you get misled, buster. My quarrel is with that damn Sampson and none other. He's the Black bastard that gets tangled in my craw!"

Hammer laughed out loud and said, between giggles, "What did this Sampson do to you, sugar foot, steal your panties and run off? Ha ha ha!" Mama said, "Aw, piss on you, Hammer! You make me sick to my stomach. Get lost, you and your giggling ass! I hate a giggling Uncle Tom and that's all you are, you bastard you! But I do want to thank you for bringing my son Ernest to me. Now take your old gray, giggling ass home to your wife, who might enjoy your possum ass. But me, I can't stand a giggling man. Such a man brings me down!"

My mama lived in a five-room yellow house in Lee Street Alley. Like a goodly number of houses in the state of Louisiana, the house in which my mother lived in was of the Creole vintage. That is to say, the house was set well off the ground, a design intended to keep snakes from crawling into the house. Instead of shingles on the roof, the roof was overlaid with a sheet of tin.

No one makes mention of Creole architecture in this country now or then. But in the 16th and 17th centuries, Creole architecture in France was the favorite structure among people of means. One of the most celebrated houses was the domicile that Napoleon Bonaparte built for his beloved Josephine. The house was such a fashionable phenomenon that Frenchmen came from far and near to admire the beautiful work of art.

But then along came April 30, 1803, the day that the madames, mademoiselles, monsieurs and garcons of France were bamboozled, hoodwinked and swindled out of the most prize-winning piece of territory in all of North America. Following the blunder to end all blunders, Louisiana was forever changed and never has been the same, nor shall it ever be the same.

The homeland of the Creole and the Cajun was once a land of festivities, rapture and brotherhood. But that was long before the paranoiac barbarians - the Red Necks - crawled out of their caves and spread an epidemic of inhumanity all across my beloved home state, bringing with them false claims of superiority, along with fear and bigotry. And this loathsome virus destroyed not only the hopes and happiness of a multitude of Black men and Black women. The Red Necks have, indeed, felled thousands of my brothers and sisters in every nook and cranny of this, the Homeland of the Hawk and the Eagle.

And it goes without saying that this obnoxious, detestable and disgusting practice is as prevalent today as it was 100 years ago with no cure in sight!

I was lifted to the apex of bliss when I walked into my mother's home. It seemed as though all my dreams and all

my prayers had been answered. I would know no more sorrows. There would be no more nightmares of death without ever having seen or heard the voice of mother dear, nor never having felt her warm embrace.

Suddenly, a new chapter of joy had replaced the brutal savagery of the past. The dense clouds that once hung over my hopes and dreams of a happier life were suddenly swept away by a gale of glee, rapture and a feeling of blessedness.

At last, my life had a meaning. I was a mother's child for the very first time in my life. How sweet it is, how very sweet it is, indeed, to meet for the first time in your stay on Earth the one and the only person in all the world that is responsible for your term of existence. Never again would I awaken with a grief-stricken heart or a melancholy yearning to be in the presence of my mother. No one would ever call me a Child of the Packsaddle again! I thanked my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for this most blessed of blessings!

The next three or four hours, which seemed more like minutes to me than hours, hurried by at an arrogant disregard for the gathering of dreams. However, I was destined to be awakened to the facts of human frailty and the uncertainty of hopes when I learned to my dismay that dreams like bubbles are wingless phantoms that have but a short time to soar. In this informal shell, they burst into bits and pieces of discouragement, disillusionment and woe. Then, void of all aim and/or direction, they tumble down to a lowly irreverence where one by one, each and every last fantasy, yes, each and every desire is trampled into the abyss of a million yesterdays when they sleep the endless sleep of death forever and evermore.

What I'm trying to say is this, brothers and sisters: From let's say one o'clock to about two o'clock or thereabouts, I was without a doubt the happiest mortal on the Planet Earth, excluding no living being. But then, along came a spider.

My mother and I had been in the house for the better part of three to three and one-half hours talking about Mansura's farm life and how much both of us disliked Miss Martoon, grandpa's wife. Mama explained to me the reason, and the cause, for her leaving home the way she did. And I understood.

All during our little talk, mama was preparing some gumbo for the night's meal. The sun had completed its journey across the bright blue heaven and the evening shadows were slowly creeping out of the eastern horizon to blanket the ebony night when the front door opened and in walked the blackest man that I had ever laid eyes on in all the days of my life.

Upon hearing the front door swing open, mama stepped away from the stove and the big pot in which she was making the gumbo, placed her dish towel on the kitchen table, walked over to the door that separated the living room from the kitchen and said, "O' Hello, Daddy. Are you early or am I late getting supper ready?"

Then, without receiving an answer, she turned to face me seated at the kitchen table and said, "Come in the front room, Ernest, and meet your step daddy."

In all haste and dispatch, I sprang to my feet as eager as a beaver willing and ready to see the man that my mother had referred to as my step daddy. *Step daddy* – That was a phrase that was as foreign to my ears as the words "Chop Suey." I wanted desperately to see this man.

And as I emerged out of the kitchen and walked into the living room, there stood this big, tall, Black man dressed in a pair of dust-covered blue overalls, a blue shirt with an old dust-covered cap on his head, and holding a cartoon of Camel Cigarettes in his huge right hand. I disliked the man the very instant that I laid eyes on his sweaty Black face. And I felt a deep resentment down in the pit of my stomach because my mother had labeled this, this ugly gorilla-looking man my step daddy.

I hated the very thought of him being with my mother, the ugly bastard. He didn't deserve a pretty woman such as my mama. What he should do is go out in the jungle and get himself a she-gorilla for a wife! What in the world did my mother want with that ugly man?

To Be Continued...

Letters to the Editor

Flannery Residents Demand Help

Dear Editor,

In the past you have been very supportive and helpful to the residents of Flannery Senior Apartments. We again need your help. Our elevator service here is extremely bad. We often walk down and sometimes walk up. This is a constant problem here at Flannery and we have been given promises that have not come true. CHA has come out and we now feel that we have gotten the runaround. I have

enclosed a letter and a petition signed by the residents that was sent to the CHA. As you know, the residents here have endured the Flannery Fire and have been patient but this is asking entirely too much.

Thank you for all your help in the past and any help you will give in the future.

- Ms. Ethel Henderson
LAC President

To: Chicago Housing Authority

Mr. Paul Howell Asset Manager

Re: Poor elevator service and human safety

Dear Mr. Howell,

I would like to first thank you for meeting with us on 10-22-01 at Flannery Apts. 1531 N. Clybourn Ave. Your concern for our safety was greatly appreciated. But your asking us to be patient is no longer possible. The residents of Flannery have been

patient and we now must demand that our rights be heard. I have enclosed a petition that was signed by a major portion of the building. How can you expect a 10-year-old lady to walk from the 5th floor? Would you be surprised to know that a 96-year-old lady walked down from the 14th floor? In this day of stress and hardship, we do not need to endure this. Why would CHA keep putting good money into elevators that need to be

replaced? It just doesn't make good business sense. CHA publicly wants everyone to see them as working to improve the lives of the residents but here we are without elevator service or get poor service.

Mr. Howell, thank you again but we do not wish to be patient any longer.

Signed,
1. Lillie Dillard
2. Ethel Henderson
3. Thelma Rainy

4. Shirley Johnson
5. Leslie McCaulley
6. Robert Brown
7. Helen Randolph
8. Willie Mac Kimbrough
9. James Kimbrough

10. Alma Handy
11. Charles McNeil
12. James Dorsey
13. Anna Horton
14. Allen Reaves
15. Queenie Boyd
16. Harry Jones
17. Barbara Hampton
18. Frank Trabue
19. Ruth Richardson
20. Dorothy Herndon
21. Leola McCray
22. Clarence Huff
23. Arthur Chambers
24. Edwin Ortiz
25. Addie Knox
26. Jimmy Jones

27. Josephine Shields
28. Adrienne Morris
29. Birdie Whitfield
30. Ceola Chinn
31. Larue Spight
32. John W. Brown
33. L.C. Robinson
34. Mildred Laffely
35. Lynn Baggett
36. Basil Poulor
37. Anna Smith
38. John B. Brown
39. Jimmy Jackson
40. Lewis Maklin
41. Inell Maxwell
42. Mr. & Mrs. Nazell Brown
43. Thomasina Anderson
44. Gwendolyn Cosby
45. Isaac Brinkley
46. Mary Dingile
47. Bessie Jackson
48. Zenobia Baker
49. Ella Pryor

Playing 'Hardball' With Youths' Images

Dear Editor,

Out of curiosity, I recently had the opportunity to view the feature movie "Hardball," which has been advertised in the media as the story of an inner-city little league. This movie was supposed to be based on real-life events of children playing little league baseball in public housing developments in Chicago. This fact particularly caught my interest since I am the president of the Inner City Little League, an organization that specializes in developing and nurturing children through baseball in the Chicago housing developments. Our organization services more than 500 children who are the products of more than 24 public housing developments citywide.

Our children originate from the far south development of Altgeld Gardens, as far north as Cabrini-Green and as far west as LeClaire Courts Homes. In my capacity, I have had the pleasure of working with our coaches, children and residents of public housing overall several years. Therefore, I consider myself somewhat of an authority on the little league functions in public housing.

The image the movie "Hardball" painted of the children, the coaches and the public housing area was very distorted and bordered on insult. First of all, it portrayed the children as

foul-speaking heathens with no understanding of discipline, unless they were in their very structured private school environment, where they took on their angelic personality.

The movie portrayed these children living in an area that resembled the news clips of war-torn Beirut, where everyone live most of their life on the floor for safety purposes. The movie also portrayed the coach as a person who had to be blackmailed into coaching these children to earn \$500 a week a week to pay a gambling debt. All the games were played in the shadow of the development and the team had to be outfitted with uniforms by a local bar.

The real Inner City Little League is a program sponsored by the Chicago Police Department, the Chicago Park District, Chicago Housing Authority, Chicago White Sox and the Chicago Cubs - a very strong and stable coalition of agencies. As mentioned earlier, we represent over 500 children from 24 different Chicago public housing developments. Our children are ordinary children from public housing. Most are students from the Chicago Public Schools.

Each season, all of our children are issued the best equipment and uniforms equal to any league in the city. Each team has a coach. In some cases, teams have a staff of coaches who

are volunteers, generally from the respective community. These volunteer coaches are just ordinary men and women with just one thing in common, the development and mentoring of our children.

Discipline is one of the things we highly stress in our league. One element of the coach receiving the Coach of the Year Award is the level of discipline their team displays on and off the field.

Therefore, the kids' vocabulary portrayed in "Hardball" would not be tolerated, partially as it would be a negative reflection on the team coach. None of these coaches are paid, nor do they expect any compensation, except seeing our children developing through the sport of baseball. Each team in the league is assigned a home park - to give them a sense of having a home field, as do the professional teams.

Twice a week, each team is picked up by a team bus at their home park and is transported to a central playing field provided by the Chicago Park District. They play a pre-scheduled game. To my knowledge, we are the only league in the city which provides bus transportation for their teams. Following each game, a box lunch is issued to each of our ballplayers prior to leaving the site.

Most little leagues charge a fee of any-

where from \$25 to higher per child each season. They provide a lot less than we do. I have even been told of a league that charges as high as \$65 per child. Thanks to the very strong sponsorship and the sound management of the Inner City Little League, we take pride that our program is completely free to our children. The only thing we require is that our children bring with them the desire to play the game of baseball. We provide the rest. I challenge any league in the city to make that claim.

We here at the Inner City Little League are very proud of our children, our coaches and the Chicago public housing developments we serve. We do not want the positive energies and accomplishments of our program to be confused or tarnished by being compared to the fictional but entertaining world of the movie "Hardball."

The filmmakers totally missed the boat when it comes to reality. I hope when people see the movie "Hardball," they will read between the semantic lines and know the difference between their Inner City Little League and the real Inner City Little League.

- Noel Hartfield
President
Inner City Little League

Crystal Clear Views

Dear Crystal,

I always get depressed around the holidays. I guess you can say I get the Holiday Blues. I don't get along with some of my family members and I wish that we were closer.

Whenever I go around my family, there's always some kind of drama. When I'm visiting them, even if I'm having a good time with the people I do like, I always end up leaving early because I can't stand the madness. Most of the time, I just go home by myself. I already know how I spend the holidays so I don't look forward to them at all. It even makes me feel worse when I see happy families and how they act towards one another.

I wish my family could get along, at least this one time. Any suggestions on how to save my sanity this holiday season?

- Wishing for a Merry Christmas

Dear Wishing,

No one's family is perfect, even the families that seem perfect. Believe me, they have problems too. I always say, if a family is too perfect, there's got to be something wrong. What can you expect when you get a bunch of people together with different personalities and stick them together when it's not their choice.

We cannot control the actions of other people, only our own. We can only deal with them as best as we can and try to stay sane in the process. Don't let these people bring you down. Try to lift them up. If you are around someone who is acting disruptive, just take them to the side and let them know nicely. If you don't feel it's your place, just ask someone else to do it. If you feel an argument coming on, say, "Do we have to be like this? It's

Christmas." Speaking from my experience, that one works. When you say that to someone, most of the time they realize why they came together with their family that day in the first place.

One way to avoid family problems is to have a well-planned event. Make sure the host is someone who everyone thinks is neutral and who they respect, like a grandmother or other family matriarch. Have games or other activities for the kids (and maybe the adults, too) to keep them occupied. Make sure the food situation is well-organized and assign jobs to people. Maybe you have a cousin who loves music; he/she would be the ideal DJ.

You could help the host with planning everything and when you are ready, consider hosting the event at your house. I know you're

thinking, 'Have all those crazy people in my house? I don't think so!' But think about it: Maybe this can be the change in your holiday that you've been looking for. If everything is well-planned in advance, you will head off problems and have the happy family event you always dreamed of.

I'd like to wish everyone safe and happy holidays. May your new year bring you peace, love and chicken grease.



Crystal Medina

Residents' Journal welcomes submissions from all of our readers and especially from public housing residents. Please send all letters to our new address: 4859 S. Wabash Chicago, IL 60615. You may also call our office at (773) 285-0200 x 3372 to discuss your ideas for submission.

Dear Resident

by Patricia Johnson-Gordon

Since Sept. 11, every day, everything and everyone is or should be somehow different. And even though Americans have returned to living as normal a life as we possibly can under the circumstances, we live it as if we are waiting for the other shoe to drop.

I am reminded of a song recorded by the Temptations in the '60s during the Vietnam War. The song asks the question, "War. What is it good for?" Then it answers, "Absolutely nothing!"

War, according to Webster's Dictionary, is defined as: armed conflict between nations or factions within a nation; armed fighting as a science or profession; active hostility or contention; aggressive competition in business or a struggle to achieve a particular goal.

I can remember going to Johnson's, the neighborhood funeral home, as we buried those returned to us from Vietnam dressed in Army, Marine and Navy uniforms. Their bodies were enclosed under a sheet of glass in flag-draped caskets.

Over the past three decades, how we live and report the events of our lives has changed dramatically. However, how we "war" has not. Perhaps it has not changed because war is the ultimate act of aggression. Peace can have varying degrees. War has only one.

Historically, America and others sharing the continent of North America have known a peace that few countries on Earth will ever know. Africa, Asia and Europe have lived with war and acts of aggression for countless years, resulting in countless loss of life, while America's wars have been fought on the soil of other countries. But now, America is becoming more like other countries in many ways as we move towards a One World concept through business and technology. The barriers that once separated America from other countries have been removed.

tion, many of the social ills and conflicts that have plagued other countries now plague America, i.e. acts of terrorism, joblessness, homelessness, hunger, despair, etc.

However, America's spirit continues to set us apart from the rest of the world. But soon, like everything else in America, we will only have as much as we can afford. How much spirit can you have when you have little

tives millions of dollars a year while they pay other employees minimum wage. Some employees make more money than they need to live, while others do not make enough to live.

Until Sept. 11, America lived without fear. Now the fear that other countries have known lies deep in the heart of America. In addition to the fear of terrorist attacks, Americans now fear the loss of their jobs,

Certainly, the worst fear would have to be having no place to live. If you have no place to live, you have no place to do anything else. And having no place to live is an increasing fear that public housing residents have lived with since the move to redevelop public housing in Chicago...

else?

The American spirit has always proclaimed life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness and justice for all. Of course, that proclamation did not always include us. But in the '60s,



Truly, a picture is worth a thousand words!

Photo by Patricia Johnson-Gordon

there was a social movement that sought to help most Americans attain a reasonable quality of life. The results? Public housing, affirmative action and other programs designed to

health insurance and homes. Certainly, the worst fear would have to be having no place to live. If you have no place to live, you have no place to do anything else. And having no place to live is an increasing fear that public housing residents have lived with since the move to redevelop public housing in Chicago began 10 years ago. For the past 10 years, we have been waiting for the other shoe to drop. The fear of homelessness runs deep through each individual and family in our community that is aware of the plan to redevelop public housing and the course that it has taken.

When my grandson grew to understand this at the age of six, and he is now 12, he asked, "Grandma, where will we live?" I gave him what was given to us when we asked that same question 10 years ago. We were told that the redevelopment would result in a mixed-income community. We were told that public housing would be spread throughout this community. We were told that public housing would no longer exist in Chicago as it had in the past. We were told that we would be able to live, work and play in a community that would create jobs and an increased quality of life.

In the past 10 years, since the redevelopment began, CHA has had four CEOs; Vincent Lane, Joseph Shuldiner, Phillip Jackson and Terry Peterson. And every time the CEO changes, it starts all over again. In the past 10 months, some residents have received as many as four relocation letters and relocation choice surveys.

Since the time past Sept. 11, our fear of homelessness has increased. If those outside of public housing fear homelessness, the more so do we. I hope that the American spirit will extend beyond a united front against a common enemy to a united front against social ills that again plague our country lest we become more like other countries versus other countries becoming like us.

I hope that the American spirit will extend beyond a united front against a common enemy to a united front against social ills that again plague our country lest we become more like other countries versus other countries becoming like us.

Via commerce, the Internet and news media, America has established a lifeline, a connection to the rest of the world. What occurs in one place is quickly transmitted, via that connection, to the rest of the world. No longer do events travel in waves; first one place, then another, often days, weeks or even months later. We all experience them at the same time. And today, through that connec-

raise our standard of living. And it worked for a while. Most began to share in America's prosperity, reducing the economic disparity (differences) between races (mostly Blacks and whites) and sexes (men and women) or at the very least, giving the impression of having done so. But today, the disparity is even greater. Many wealthy companies pay top execu-

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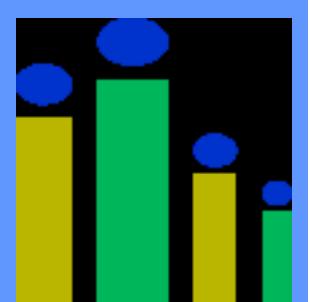
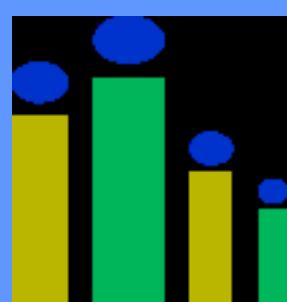
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