

R E S I D E N T S '

# Journal

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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.

## Our Readership

In January 2001, Target Market News Service, national experts on African American media markets, conducted a readership study for **We The People Media** sponsored by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Below are findings of this study:

\* **Residents' Journal** is the unique source of critical information for Chicago public housing residents. Nearly every respondent (92 percent) said they wanted to see **RJ** printed more often.

\* **RJ** readers are actively involved in the transformation of their communities. Respondents ranked "Neighborhood News" (80 percent) and "CHA Stories" (75 percent) as their favorite sections, closely followed by "Citywide News" (61 percent) and "Health Stories" (52 percent).

\* **RJ**'s readers are active citizens. 84 percent of the respondents voted in the last

election while 67 percent attend religious services regularly.

\* **RJ**'s readers shop at large chain stores such as Walgreen's (73 percent), Jewel (70 percent) and Aldi's (67 percent). Readers also eat monthly at restaurants such as McDonald's (69 percent), Popeye's (39 percent), White Castle (34 percent) and KFC (39 percent).

\* Readers spend a large share of their income on groceries. Fifty-five (55) percent spend between \$100 and \$299 on groceries monthly; 22 percent spend between \$300 and \$499 on groceries monthly.

\* Readers are extremely interested in enhancing their skills: 52 percent are interested in computer training, 41 percent are interested in job training and 20 percent would like to receive nursing or health care training.

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# Publisher's Box

by Ethan Michaeli  
**Publisher**

## *The Times They Are A'Changing*

**T**he indictment and arrest of former Chicago Police Commander Jon Burge on October 21 is yet another indication that a complete transformation of American life is underway. Along with the presidential election, the indictment of Burge, who has long been suspected of torturing and abusing suspects in the 1980s, shows that the way politics have been conducted in this country for the past 30 years is over. Or to put it in other words, a new generation is stepping up, kicking tail and taking names.

U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald indicted Burge, 60, on two counts of obstruction of justice and one count of perjury. FBI agents arrested Burge at his home on Florida hours before Fitzgerald held a press conference in Chicago.

Saying that Burge "shamed his uniform and his badge," Fitzgerald explained that he was charging Burge for lying in court in a 2003 civil case:

"For his lies about torture and abuse, we intend to hold him accountable."

"Police are sworn to uphold the law when others break it," Fitzgerald added. "Burge broke the law when he was supposed to uphold it."

Burge was a former high-ranking policeman who was fired in 1993 for allegedly torturing suspects personally and for overseeing other officers who did the same. They – allegedly – put plastic bags over suspects' heads to suffocate them, shocked their genitals with electricity, and beat confessions out of suspects. Burge has always denied that the torture took place. But over the years, elected officials from both major political parties and at every level of government felt that the Burge case deserved more scrutiny. In 2003, former Republican Governor George Ryan pardoned four men who were sent to death row because of evidence Burge and his crew obtained. In 2007, the city settled a number of law suits about the torture allegations with a whopping \$20 million. In September 2007, five aldermen wrote to U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald asking him to prosecute Burge. U.S. Rep. Bobby Rush (D-1) has been urging the U.S. Congress to hold hearings about Burge's actions.

One of the biggest chinks in Burge's armor of denials was a 2006 report authored by attorneys Edward Egan and Robert Boyle. Egan and Boyle found that the torture claims were credible in dozens of cases they reviewed, but concluded that Burge could not be prosecuted. Too much time had passed since the men were in Burge's custody and the statute of limitations on the actual acts of torture had expired. Many advocates for the torture victims thought that Burge could be charged for lying in court in 2003, when he denied the torture allegations in court during a civil trial in the case of Madison Hobley, one of the men on death row freed by Gov. Ryan. But Egan claimed that Burge couldn't be charged that way because it was a "perjury trap."

U.S. Attorney Fitzgerald, however, appeared to dismiss that conclusion. In what was an otherwise unemotional presentation, Fitzgerald bristled when asked about the 'perjury trap':

"I don't know that the law has ever recognized a perjury trap, and if it has, this ain't one," Fitzgerald quipped. To him, a lie is a lie, and a lie in court is a crime.

The Burge indictments are an earthquake in local politics. Current Mayor Richard M. Daley was the Cook County State's Attorney when Burge was - allegedly – torturing people. Daley and his first deputy, Dick Devine, who is now the outgoing state's attorney, used evidence gathered in those torture sessions to put people behind bars and on death row.

Daley issued what a local daily newspaper called a "sarcastic apology" about those cases a few days after the Burge indictments. His dismissive attitude is probably due



in part to the situation at the time Burge was most active. The drug war was raging in those days.

Chicago saw some 1,000 murders a year and citizens – especially white, middle-class folks – were demanding action.

If Burge and others went too far in trying to crack down on the bad guys, many people thought it was a necessary evil. In their minds, the bad guys were exploiting the nation's liberal laws and customs. For many people, the gains of the civil right era went too far. The ultra violent criminals who were targeted in the War on

Drugs were direct descendants of the Black Panthers, the protests outside of the 1968 Democratic National Convention and the Summer of Love. Essentially, Burge and his cohort were operating in the '70s and '80s on the mandate of a conservative reaction to the turbulent '60s.

But now, the public is demanding accountability for those people who exceeded their writ. Fitzgerald's entire career has been based on cleaning up the messes left over from the last generation. He began his tenure as a federal prosecutor in New York, going after the men who tried to blow up the World Trade Center the first time, in the early '90s. Many of those men were Arab veterans of the secret

Hussein, an erstwhile American ally who had become a problem for yet another set of former Cold Warriors.

Just as the Burge indictment suggests that people are sick and tired with the old ways, Chicago is also the springboard for all of those who are hungry for change at the national level. U.S. Senator Barack Obama successfully burst onto the national stage by transcending the racial and political swamp of Chicago politics. He predicated his argument on pulling out of the mire of Iraq. But the Obama campaign has gained momentum by overturning all of the old arguments about what makes the country run. On health care, education, abortion, religion, the social welfare system and now on the economy, Obama accelerated in the polls by getting away from the old, polarized paradigms. Even in personal style, Obama won by being different.

It is a fair criticism of Obama to say that he has refused to confront Daley and the other members of the ruling generation. It remains to be seen if he will deliver the change that he has promised. But his political success is a sure sign that people everywhere are hungry for something different, and that this new generation – a generation that has been maligned as disengaged and cynical – is willing to declare that the emperor is naked. This is a generation that does not confuse wearing your hair long or your jeans ripped for a political statement.



Photo by ANJULI MANIAM

**US Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald (at podium) speaks about the indictment of former Chicago Police Commander Jon Burge on Oct. 21 while Robert Brent (from left), special agent in charge of the FBI's Chicago office; Mark Templehof, chief of the criminal section of the civil rights division of the Department of Justice; and Jeffery Cramer, assistant US attorney, look on.**

battles in Afghanistan between the CIA and the decaying Soviet Union. Given that Burge was a Vietnam War veteran who likely developed his torture techniques of Viet Cong prisoners, it's ironic that Fitzgerald has prosecuted at least two sets of Cold Warriors who brought their tactics to the home front.

More recently, Fitzgerald was the special prosecutor investigating abuse of power in the White House of the second Bush Administration. His successful prosecution of Lewis "Scooter" Libby, Vice President Dick Cheney's chief of staff, might have led to other arrests further up the ladder if President George W. Bush hadn't commuted Libby's sentence. It's important to keep in mind that Libby's crime was also about lying in court, in his case to cover up for the lies of his superiors who were fabricating a case for a U.S. invasion of Iraq to displace Sadaam

My own personal confirmation that the times are surely changing came as I walked out of the room where Fitzgerald held a press conference to announce the Burge indictment. There I saw Wallace "Gator" Bradley, a former gang leader who participated in more than his share of drug war battles. Now a political operative and 'urban translator,' Bradley expressed exhausted satisfaction with Fitzgerald's targeting of Burge. And he attributed Burge's going down to a shift in the national trajectory.

"The politics of change is what made a difference," Bradley said. "If not for this election, they would have never made this indictment."

"The eyes of the world are on Chicago."

If Bradley is correct about the global focus being on Chicago, than I can only join those who say: Finally.

## **News Briefs**

### **Immediate Steps Needed to Improve Gas Pipeline Safety**

Gas workers of the Local 18007 Union who service Chicago's natural gas infrastructure, submitted a letter to the Illinois Commerce Commission on October 21, 2008, expressing concerns about "unrepaired" gas leaks at consumers residences and business establishments, and a lack of manpower to address the leaks.

Their concerns were based on a recently released independent audit report of Peoples Gas residential and commercial natural gas operations.

The Liberty Consulting Group August 14, 2008 audit found "significant safety-critical weaknesses in several areas, including the management and repair of gas leaks. That Chicago's gas leak backlog was "too high," and revealed that internal Peoples Gas records show that gas leak severity often was "downgraded" without necessary repairs being made, and that gas leaks often went unrepairs for months, even years."

The audit, during the period from May 2007 through the present, also found "insufficient staffing" in some areas for field supervision, insufficient training for many of the safety-related programs, and a lack of performance monitoring to identify areas needing improvement.

The union urged ICC to have Peoples take immediate steps to deploy at least 1,000 gas workers on Chicago's streets to "adequately cover emergency, regulatory, and customer service."

### **Next President and Congress Urged to Build 21<sup>st</sup> Century Transportation System**

On the heels of the Wall Street bailout and hours before the final presidential debate, local community and transportation policy leaders hosted one of eight events across the country, calling on the next President and Congress "to strengthen our economy by building a 21<sup>st</sup> Century transportation system."

At Union Station in Chicago on October 15, 2008, local dignitaries of the Transportation for America Campaign (T4) presented their "Build for America: A Five-Point Plan to Get Our Economy Moving" agenda that they said "has the potential to create millions of good, green jobs nationally, save Americans thousands of dollars per year, and reduce America's dependence on oil once and for all."

The Five-Point Plan also "calls for investment in public transit, high-speed and intercity rail, neighborhoods that are less car-dependent, more walkable and more affordable, and restoring thousands of roads and bridges."

T4 called on the next President and Congress "to reach across the aisle and make better transportation investments so our cities and towns can meet the unprecedented demand for quality public transportation choices, maintain our current system, and create jobs that put Americans back to work."

### **Home Energy Winter Assistance Available**

Beginning Sept. 1, low-income seniors and customers that live in households with a person with a disability can apply for LIHEAP (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program) funds for the 2008-09 winter heating season.

The application period for the upcoming winter heating season will continue through April 30, 2009, or until funds are exhausted, according to ComEd in August 2008.

Households with incomes of \$82,600 for a family of four may qualify for a one-time grant of up to \$1,000 in their Residential Special Hardship Program, and members of the U.S. National Guard and Reserve on active duty can get help managing their electric service bills in ComEd's "CHAMP" Program.

To apply for LIHEAP in Chicago and suburban Cook County, the number is 1-800-571-2332. Outside the Chicago area, the number is 1-877-411-9276. To find the nearest local administering agency visit <http://www.liheapillinois.com> or <http://www.ComEd.com>.

# **To All CHA relocated residents with Housing Vouchers or those residing in temporary CHA replacement units!!!**

If you and your family have or do not have any relocation issues of concern such as, utility, unit, rent, or safety, **Residents' Journal** would like to know.

**We The People Media**, the publishers of **RJ**, are currently tracking where everyone is going to find out if they are living in a safe, affordable and decent replacement unit as promised by the Chicago Housing Authority. Call Mary C. Johns at (312) 745-2682.

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# 'Train Wreck' Expected for TV

by Mary C. Johns  
*Editor-in-Chief*

**T**ime is running out for millions of the nation's consumers who are unaware and unprepared for the television switch from analog to digital on February 17, 2009.

With just a few months before the digital television transition, a large number of Americans, especially in the West and Midwest, major metropolitan and rural areas, don't know how to make sure they continue receiving the over-the-air signals, according to several academic researchers, two members of the Federal Communication Commission and some U.S. Congressmen.

The researchers, legislators and officials predicted that many TV sets will not work if they don't have the proper antennas to go with their converter boxes, or if a person doesn't have the right type of TV set programmed for their particular converter box. Some TVs will have to be rescanned, and reports suggest stores do not have enough converter boxes and antennas, which are needed before consumers' free federal coupons expire.

Most recently, Illinois' senior senator expressed concerns about a large number of consumers in his district having coupons which will expire before they had the opportunity to purchase a converter box, and about a lack of available converter boxes in certain rural areas.

Congress passed a law that will require television stations to stop broadcasting on analog channels and switch to digital signals in order to "free up airspace for other services, including police, fire, and other emergency services," such as tornado warnings, news on school closings or other breaking news, according to data from civilrights.org, a web site produced by a broad coalition of organizations including the National Council of Negro Women, AARP and the Asian American Justice Center.

**T**here are a lot of technical things we don't know about such as, how well do those new digital signals travel? Do they travel the way analog TV signals travel? How many people will need new antennas to receive digital?

**- Michael J. Copps, Federal Communication Commissioner**

A vast majority of Americans will benefit from the switch from old analog to new digital signals by getting clearer pictures and better sound quality. Broadcasters will be able to transmit more channels.

But 21 million households – including those on fixed-



Photo by MARY C. JOHNS

FCC Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein said during the National Convention on Media Reform in Minneapolis in June 2008 that the FCC's lack of a technical assistance plan for America's DTV transition is "an opportunity for a train wreck."

incomes, seniors, minorities and individuals with disabilities – may be "hard hit by the transition," according to researchers who presented their findings at "DTV Transition: Will Your TV Go Dark?" at the National Convention on Media Reform in Minneapolis in June.

## *A Converter Box Shortage in Illinois?*

**I**llinois residents are already experiencing problems in getting their converters because free federal coupons which were supposed to pay for them have expired, and there is a shortage of converter boxes in certain areas, according to a recent report by U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL).

In September, Durbin announced that he had received many complaints from constituents about the availability of converter boxes. In a letter to the National Telecommunications Information Administration (NTIA), Durbin urged the agency to allow consumers with expired coupons to reapply.

"In Illinois, 1.3 million coupons have been requested but only 530,000 have been redeemed and nearly 400,000 have already expired," the senator wrote. "As many as 700,000 households in my state rely on analog sets, and many of these households are low-income, elderly, disabled, non-English speaking, minority, or live in rural areas."

In a press release, Durbin added that "the lack of response to the coupon program highlights concerns that households are not receiving information about, or not understanding the implications of, next February's transition."

**RJ** called the NTIA to see how they would address Durbin's concerns.

Bart Forbes, a public affairs specialist at the Washington, D.C.-based NTIA, told **RJ** in a phone interview they could not change the rules and allow consumers to reapply for the coupons, even if they had expired.



Photo by MARY C. JOHNS

**Federal Communications Commissioner Michael J. Copps** said during the National Convention on Media Reform in Minneapolis in June 2008, that there might be a need for TVs to be rescanned during the digital TV transition in February 2009.

need to be 're-scanned.'

Copps said, "Just imagine what's going to happen if that is true. You get your converter box, you hook that into the set, you go get a new antenna if you need that, you go through all this stuff, you turn on the TV and there's still snow there because maybe you had to rescan your set."

Copps called for more field tests to identify and address unexpected problems.

Commissioner Adelstein said the FCC's lack of a technical assistance plan for America's DTV transitions is "an opportunity for a train wreck."

"In England, they spent the equivalent of a billion dollars on a technical assistance site program," Adelstein said. "Now, who's going to help the seniors? Who's going to help those with disabilities? Who's going to help people who can't do it on their own in this country?"

"There really is a lack of preparations that is astounding given the magnitude of what we're doing here. It takes a long time to get a plan in place to help out tens of millions of Americans on one day to get all of those resources in place. We'd better figure out a way to do it and fast."

U.S. Rep. Doyle said congressional members were looking at the results of the test market in North Carolina.

"When I think about 50 million television sets going dark in the middle of somebody's favorite program, and then the calls starting to come down to Washington D.C., that's scaring a lot of members of Congress. So I think we want to try to help these guys out during this test market to get it better," he said.

## **How to Prepare Yourself for the DTV Transition**

**C**ivilrights.org recommends that if you currently use a rabbit ears or a rooftop antenna for your analog television set, you have three options for your television to continue working on February 17 and beyond:

1. You can get a converter box, a small electronic device that plugs into your TV. But you have to purchase the right one. There are over 60 approved digital converter boxes with some best suited for rural and others better for big cities. You will also continue to need the correct antenna. Until March 31, 2009, the federal government is offering a free \$40 coupon for the converter boxes. Every household can request up to two coupons. The converter boxes cost between \$40 and \$70.

2. Another choice is to subscribe to cable, satellite, or other pay television service which does not need a converter box.

3. You can purchase a new digital television with a built-in tuner to receive the broadcast signals. If you have a new digital television purchased in the last few years, you may already have the ability to receive the digital signal and you do not have to purchase a converter box. But you should check your owner's manual if you are not sure if your television has a built-in tuner.

# Transforming CHA

## CHA Seniors Keep Waiting to Return

by Mary C. Johns

**A** Residents' Journal investigation has found that renovation of three public housing buildings for senior citizens is years overdue, despite previous proclamations from the Chicago Housing Authority that all of its senior buildings have been rehabbed.

Elderly public housing residents who were relocated from the CHA senior buildings are eagerly waiting to return to their former homes.

Since the CHA's \$1.6 billion Plan for Transformation officially began in January 2000, CHA's agreements with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) stated that approximately 9,480 senior units in 58 buildings throughout Chicago would be rehabbed. All residents relocated during the Plan would have "a right to return."

But currently, two of the 58 senior buildings remain closed with no renovation work ongoing or planned.

One is currently undergoing renovation as of July 2008, after being closed for over three years. The closed buildings are the Kenmore Apartments located at 5040 N. Kenmore and the Pomeroy Apartments located at 1039 W. Hollywood Blvd. The Britton Budd Apartments, 501 W. Surf St., is being rehabbed as of July 2008.

59 residents occupied the 136-unit Kenmore Apartments at the time of the building's closure in the first quarter of 2005, and 61 residents occupied the 120-unit



Photo by MARY C. JOHNS

Former CHA Bud Britton senior residents Josef Plagov (from left), Wanda Marshall and Judy Backstrom.

In 2003, the CHA spent \$1,179,300 for facade repairs at the Pomeroy Apartment which was to be completed "365 calendar days from the date of the Notice to Proceed," according to their Board of Commissioners "Authorization to execute a contract with Fine Line BT Corporation" IFB No. 01187," on June 17, 2003. The senior building closed two years later.

For a number of years, CHA has been reporting to having only 55 senior buildings, apparently leaving the three closed buildings off its official lists. CHA's web site

We were told that maybe in one or two years, we will be back. But it has already been three years and we haven't been back to our homes

- Josif Plagov, former resident of the Budd Apartments  
and a member of the Jane Adams Senior Caucus

Pomeroy senior building at time of that building's closure in the first quarter of 2006, according to the CHA's written response to Residents' Journal's questions in September 2008.

currently states: "The CHA's Plan for Transformation provides the backdrop for the work we are striving to accomplish in our senior properties. It is our 10-year, \$1.56 billion commitment to rehab or rebuild 25,000 units, of which more than 9,400 apartments are in 55 senior build-



The Chicago Housing Authority's Pomeroy Apartments, a 120-unit senior building, 1039 W. Hollywood Blvd, has been dormant since closing in 2006.

ings throughout Chicago."

Some senior advocates say the CHA has been giving the public the false impression that the rehabilitation process for their entire senior housing portfolio is complete.

"I think that sometimes when they are talking about senior properties, they sort of imply that all the senior buildings are renovated and that's not true," said Lori Clark, executive director of the Jane Addams Senior Caucus, a grassroots senior-citizen advocacy organization, during an interview at her North Side office on September 11.

### Budd Britton Senior Reloctees Eagerness to Return Home

**C**HA's senior resident population is far more diverse than its family housing. The 173-unit Britton Budd Apartments included Russians, African Americans and Latinos. Many of the former residents are eager to return their former homes.

Several former residents of the Budd Apartments attended a Sept. 18 groundbreaking ceremony for the rehab of the Budd Apartments, which was designated a Chicago landmark by the City Council last year.

Josif Plagov, a former resident of the Budd Apartments and a member of the Jane Adams Senior Caucus, said at the assembly that there was a need for rehabilitation at the building but it was hard for some of the senior tenants to move out.

"It was not easy for the most elderly and disabled people to move out and find a good place, in our opinion, to move to. We were told that maybe in one or two years, we will be back. But it has already been three years and we haven't been back to our homes," he said.

Plagov added that he was happy that the people involved worked together and came up with a consensus to get renovations started on the building. He added that he was also pleased that the building would continue to be reserved as affordable housing so that the former senior residents could return.

"I think that is democracy in action. This is a safe neighborhood. It has many hospitals, many places to relax like the lake shore and Lincoln Park. There are also six or seven bus routes close to this building. So we wait for the renovation to be completed in 2009, and we want to return to our homes," he said.

Judy Backstrom and Wanda Marshall lived at Britton Budd and were both relocated to another senior building at 2720 N. Sheffield Ave.

Interviewed after the groundbreaking, both women said that weren't happy with the relocation because the same property management company manages their new building and because they feel they have not been well received by their new neighbors.

Backstrom, 68, lived at the Budd Apartments for 8 years. "Number one, it's the same management company [Legum and Norman] and once they took over, it took about five years of not doing the work, not doing the repairs. Leaving everything go because it was supposed to get rehabbed.

Then we had to get put out because it wasn't happening. And the other building now has the same management company and they're not any better. That building is going the same way now. In five years, that will be uninhabitable if they continue at the rate they're going," she declared.

Backstrom also said that CHA agreed in writing that all the residents would return back to the Budd building.

"We made sure that it was in writing before we left. We made sure that all the residents got it in writing before we left," she said.

**CHA SENIORS KEEP WAITING TO RETURN**  
*continues on Page 7*

# Transforming CHA

## U.S. Reps Call For Moratorium On Public

by Mary C. Johns

U.S. Representatives Maxine Waters (D-CA) and Barney Frank (D-Mass.) want the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to "immediately cease approval of all demolition and disposition applications" currently pending from all public housing authorities across the nation.

"We believe that the loss of public housing units has now reached epic proportions and further loss of units must be averted immediately for the sake of the nation's low-income families," they proclaimed in a joint letter to HUD Secretary Steven Preston dated Aug. 13.

The congressmen wrote out of concern "that more and more housing authorities are choosing to relinquish their public housing stock and with it their responsibility to provide affordable housing," by using housing vouchers to replace former public housing units.

The two congressional members called for HUD to stop approving all 89 current applications, "representing 16,672 public housing units, pending from housing authorities for demolitions or dispositions."

"Due to the high number of pending applications and the clear need for legislative reform of the demolition-disposition program, we call on you to immediately cease

approval of all demolition and disposition applications until legislation is enacted to reform this program," they wrote.

Currently, housing authorities are not required to replace demolished or disposed units on a one-for-one basis.

And according to the letter, last year, with HUD's permission, "the San Diego Housing Commission got out of the public housing business" by voucherizing out its entire stock of 1,366 units. In July 2008, HUD also approved applications submitted by housing authorities in Las Vegas and Atlanta "to dispose of all their public housing units."

"Public housing serves a vital need in communities across the country by providing much needed affordable housing – especially for families with extremely low-incomes-and supportive services," they wrote.

"A further decline in the number of public housing units exacerbates the affordable housing needs of our most vulnerable populations, including the elderly and disabled, and forces low-income families into unstable or unsustainable housing situations or homelessness."

HUD officials did not return *RJ*'s telephone calls seeking comment on the congressmen's letter.

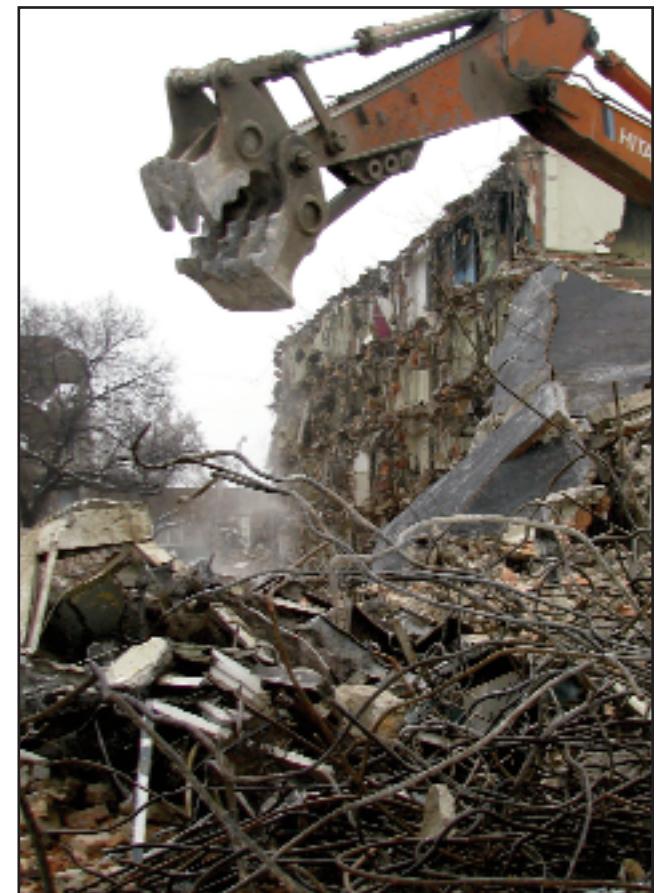


Photo by MARY C.JOHNS

Ida B. Wells Homes demolition in Dec., 2007.

## CHA Seniors Keep Waiting to Return Home

*continued from Page 6*

Marshall, 75, who lived at the Budd Apartment for 7 years, said she couldn't wait to come back to the building because when she arrived at the Sheffield location,

"One of the women got up and said, 'Why did you have to bring those people over here?'

"They already have our transfers to come back. If they said that I could move in the corner in there, I'd come in there today," she declared.

At the groundbreaking ceremony, CHA CEO Lewis A. Jordan said that "Britton Budd is an example of how we continue to deliver on the promise of the Plan, and how our seniors are an integral part of it."

The 11-story Budd senior building, originally constructed in 1917, had been designated for "proposed disposition," according to the CHA Draft FY2009 Moving to Work Annual Plan for year 10.

HUD allowed CHA to convert some of its senior housing units into project-based voucher units, according to its recent amendment of the CHA Moving to Work Agreement.

The amendment "includes waivers for HUD regulation rules for conversion with respect to the CHA's conversion of public housing units in the Britton-Budd Apartments, Kenmore Apartments, and Ralph Pomeroy Apartments to project-based voucher units pursuant to 24 CFR 972 Subpart B (Voluntary Conversion of Public Housing Developments)," which will "count toward the CHA's commitment to build, develop or rehabilitate 25,000 units under the Plan for Transformation."

Lewis told *RJ* during the groundbreaking that the units at the Budd Apartments would remain public housing units.

"All public housing units," Jordan said.

CHA documents state that the building was closed for so long because "They needed rehabilitation and were therefore vacated."

In 2006, the CHA reported that funding for Budd Apartments rehab would come from "a combination of pub-



Photo by MARY C.JOHNS

The Chicago Housing Authority remains uncertain about what will happen to this 136-unit Kenwood Apartments senior building, 5040 N. Kenwood Ave., which has been dormant since closing in 2006.

lic housing subsidies, Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, and project-based voucher subsidies."

CHA's project partners in the rehab include Red Stone, Bank of America, the Federal Home Loan Bank and Harris Bank, according to a press release.

U.S. Rep. Rahm Emmanuel (D-5) and Ald. Thomas M. Tunney (44), the Jane Adams Senior Caucus and the Center on Poverty Law worked together with the CHA to get the building renovated, and get the agency to agree in writing that the residents would be allowed to return to the building.

Bill Little, CHA's executive vice president of development, told *RJ* following the Sept. 18 groundbreaking, "We

ground leased it to a partnership that includes CHA and the investor who's providing capital for the rehabilitation of this building for 99 years."

There were 173 units initially at the Budd Apartments. But only 172 new studios and one-bedroom public housing units will be available when the rehab is complete.

One unit will be reserved for an on-site janitor, according to Little.

Renovation of the Budd Apartments is expected to be complete in late summer of 2009.

There are no plans currently to renovate the other two senior buildings.

# Transforming CHA

## Harold L. Ickes Homes News

by Jacqueline Thompson

The lives of Harold Ickes' residents were disrupted when three buildings out of the remaining 11 were ordered to be vacated of their tenants.

Families moved daily for three months. In the final days, pressure was put on the few remaining families to go, and eventually, no one lived in the three buildings in the 2400 block of South State Street.

Meanwhile, the rest of the development began to suffer an ebb and flow of humanity as more and more homeless and what appear to be drug addicts became daily inhabitants of the outdoor benched terraces, indoor stairwells and hallways in Harold Ickes. Residents from the remaining occupied buildings snatched up their Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers and fled in a stream of escape from the undesirable living conditions. The sudden sense of loss and separation from long-time friends and neighbors left an emptiness hard to accept by those of us still living here.

These physical changes at Harold Ickes influenced the day-to-day patrolling duties of the Chicago Police Department. One major change was that police officers used new methods of people control.

The practice of officers filling out 'contact cards,' forms with personal information on them, and making arrests for trespassing at random became a huge upset to an already disturbed community. Many legal residents were stopped in error and forced to experience the humiliation of being handcuffed and arrested in front of their neighbors. Some former residents returning to see family still living in Ickes were stopped, asked for information for a contact card, and sometimes arrested because they had rap sheets. Many friends that were visiting residents were mistreated in the same manner.

Aaron Boyd, a 34 year old man who grew up in Ickes and works at Henry Booth House with the community's youth, took the brave step of inviting the Rev. Jesse Jackson of the Rainbow Push Coalition into our midst. Boyd hoped Jackson's visit and the accompanying mass media coverage would produce better treatment of residents by police. Jackson and the Coalition exhibited true interest in our plight by providing a lawyer for those who had suffered false arrests, making many on-site visits, talking to the young adult residents, holding several news conferences and supplying large gifts of food.

One such news conference included Dr. Leon Finny Jr., the executive director of the Woodlawn Corporation (TWO), which manages Ickes. Their collaboration stimulated a dis-



cussion of plans to create after-school, recreational and educational programs for the youth in our development. These programs were planned to take place in the now empty large building that has class rooms, offices and a gymnasium but is empty of all furniture, educational materials and gymnastic equipment. CHA emptied out the building when the center was vandalized beyond recognition. As of this deadline date, no arrests have made of the culprits.

The bright light of Jackson's presence at Harold Ickes soon dimmed, however. With more than six months since his visit, the residents have heard no more about any plans that were aired at that meeting.

I received an opportunity to interview Tamara Holder, the lawyer provided by Jackson and the Rainbow Push Coalition for residents who were caught in the web of new police tactics for people control.

**Residents' Journal:** Has there been a Class Action Suit filed on behalf of the residents of Harold Ickes concerning police harassment with contact cards and trespassing?

**Tamara Holder:** Yes. The suit was filed for many based on the contact cards, only after the trespass cases had been solved and thrown out of court. About five more people have trespassing cases pending in court and once they are done, there will be a separate class action suit filed for them.

**RJ:** Can you tell from your experience in court with the residents whether or not the City is sympathetic or apathetic about the residents' complaints?



Photo by JACQUELINE THOMPSON

**As tenants vacate their units, more homeless people and drug addicts become daily inhabitants of the outdoor benches and terraces of the Harold L. Ickes Homes.**

to this new agreement, I visited some and talked with them about the document:

**Residents' Journal:** Do you know about the new 48-page Amended and Restated Moving to Work document that all residents should get from their management office?

**Jackie Jemison:** Yes. But I was recovering from surgery and I couldn't get down to get one.

**RJ:** In one part, it mentions that there may be a limit for

**Public housing is sort of a back door shelter. Anybody can come in, defecate, urinate, vomit and trash the place.**

**- Attorney Tamara Holder**

**TH:** I think they are disinterested in the issue because the CPD is part of the City of Chicago and an extension of it. If they were sympathetic, they would make the officers cease and dismiss these practices.

**RJ:** It is a known fact that there are a lot of homeless people in and around Ickes and sometimes at night they are raided whilst sleeping in the halls and are arrested for it. What are your feelings about the City's role in servicing the homeless population? Do you know if the City addresses the situation in any way?

**TH:** The city's condo housing has protection from illegal entry by guards at the front doors. You can't get in without a key or a key card. The residents of public housing should be protected from strangers or non-residents too. They have just as much right as others. Homeless people need homes. Chicago has made no provisions for them. Public housing is sort of a back door shelter. Anybody can come in, defecate, urinate, vomit and trash the place.

**RJ:** Are you in touch with clients of other developments for the same or similar incidents of harassment, trespassing or arrests?

**TH:** No. I only know that the Cabrini Green development has a community activist group that is addressing resident treatment from CPD.

### New CHA Rules

**O**n top of all the unrest and uncertainty about continued occupancy at Harold Ickes, we and all the other tenants of public housing developments and scattered site housing received letters to pick up a 48-page Amended and Restated Moving to Work Agreement between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Chicago Housing Authority. Residents were given 29 days to read, decipher, decode and guess the legal written changes that may affect the lives of over 20,000 lease holders and their families. Plus, the letter urged us to be ready to comment on the whole document.

In order to understand some of the residents' responses



Photo by JACQUELINE THOMPSON

**The remaining residents of a building in the Harold L. Ickes Homes move, leaving the three buildings of the 2400 South State St. block vacant.**

# Transforming CHA

## CHA Goes on the Defensive about Child's

by Mary C. Johns

The Chicago Housing Authority recently went on the defensive after a toddler was killed in the Cabrini-Green row houses in June.

The housing authority reacted to media reports stating that the agency was warned by federal housing inspectors about the potential threat of physical harm posed by some rod iron gates and fencing at the North Side public housing development.

On June 27, 2008, 3-year-old Curtis Cooper was crushed to death by a 7-foot tall rod-iron gate while he was playing nearby.

At the time of his untimely death, talk was that kids had been playing on the leaning gate which made it come off its "rotten" hinges. But relatives and other residents living at the public housing complex told reporters that the gate eventually fell off on its own.

While at the scene of the incident on July 10, an unidentified man who spoke to Residents' Journal about the incident said the gate was already unstable and leaning off its hinges. He faulted the private management company for the young boy's death.

He said their failure to do something about that gate created "an accident waiting to happen."

"They didn't inspect nothing," the elderly man said angrily.

"And nobody was playing on that gate. That gate just fell on the little boy when he was playing and riding his tri-



Photo by MARY C. JOHNS

**Stuffed animals mark the spot where 3-year-old Curtis Cooper's body was found after being crushed to death by a rod-iron gate at the CHA Cabrini-Green Rowhouses on June 27, 2008.**

cycle," he added.

On July 8, CHA suspended the management contract of

Urban Property Advisors (UPA), the private management firm at the Cabrini-Green Rowhouses for the past two years, until the completion of an investigation into Cooper's death.

UPA is run by Cullen J. Davis, a licensed attorney and real estate broker and the son of Allison Davis, a highly influential city developer.

For the present, the Cabrini-Green Rowhouses will be managed by H.J. Russell & Company, which currently manages the other areas of the 60-yr-old Cabrini-Green complex as well as other CHA properties.

In an Aug. 22 press release, the CHA stated that an earlier report from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development identified metal gates and fencing at the Cabrini Rowhouses as being "damaged/failing/leaning" and graded the condition as a "Level 3."

CHA appeared to downplay the seriousness of the situation when they stated in the same press release that areas of the fences and gates at the site were only "in need of repair," which didn't necessarily mean an emergency situation.

"While this designation is regarded as 'in need of repair,' the report clearly states that the damaged gates are considered 'Non-Life Threatening.' Therefore, any conclusion that HUD's designation of 'Level 3' indicates the highest level of emergency would be inaccurate and misleading," the CHA stated.

"Because the incident is the subject of litigation," the CHA stated that they were not "at liberty to discuss specific details regarding the inspection reports, nor discuss CHA/property management firm responses to those reports."

## Harold L. Ickes Homes News

*Continued from Page 8*

When I visited Melissa Manning, she attacked the document squarely on the first page because of the legal terminology.

**RJ:** When you got your copy of the ARMWA document, could you read it with understanding?

**Melissa Manning:** I think the words the residents were supposed to read are overly complicated. Who knows what "whereas" over and over means? It needs research and study to understand what "section 9(e)(1)" means, and what Act so and so, etc. is all about. Where is there a copy of the 1937 Act for comparison reading? At one time, I typed for a lawyer. This reading is for highly educated individuals. I did attend the meeting with some of the other residents held by attorney Robert D. Whitfield and even he agreed that those of us who were there should try and help our neighbors and seniors understand just what it's all about.

### CHA Comments on Plans for Ickes

**N**ext I called CHA spokesperson Brian Zises, hoping to get some straight answers from some straight questions.

**Residents Journal:** What are they going to do with, about and/or for Ickes?

**Brian Zises:** We haven't made a decision yet.

**RJ:** Well the residents want and need to know because they're unsettled.

**BZ:** I would hope that the residents would have a part in the decision. The best part would be to redevelop if the money can be found.

**RJ:** Is there anything I can write to ease the deep sense of confusion between rehab and redevelopment among the residents?

**BZ:** Everyone has the option of moving into a rehabbed apartment in another development or they can make the decision to take an HCV if they are so unhappy where they are.

**RJ:** Many seniors I spoke to have no desire to move into a smaller unit in a strange neighborhood. What chances do you think they have to live in the same way when they move?

**BZ:** They would be very pleased with the newly rehabbed senior housing. Many of the senior buildings were totally gutted and renewed with new kitchens, bathrooms and one bedroom apartments. Four hundred million dollars was

spent on the whole rehabilitation project for the senior housing. I think they should take some time to go and view some of the new work that has been done.

**RJ:** Looking at the ARMWA document on page 42 of 48 item 20, I noticed that based upon the information provided by CHA, HUD had determined that Dearborn Homes and Cabrini Rowhouses are not subject to the requirement to redevelop and carry out a plan for removal over time from the public housing inventory under Section 202 of the VA, HUD and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act of 1996 and its implementing regulations at 24 CFR Part 971. The Trumbull, Altgeld Murray, and Harold Ickes Homes developments are also not subject to Section 202. This statement leads me to understand that Harold Ickes Homes residents should not be in doubt about what will happen to their homes. Already, Trumbull and Altgeld Murray have been rehabilitated and residency is being offered by CHA. What is the truth about the future of Ickes? We read one thing, which is a legal document, and told another. What is the answer, please?

At this point in our interview, Zises advised me that he did not have information about exactly how item 20 on page 42 of the above mentioned document affected the future of Ickes. At the meeting for all residents from all developments, held at the South Shore County Club, I asked the new CEO of CHA, Lewis Jordan, what were the plans for Ickes. His answer was, "We're looking at long term redevelopment for Ickes, long term."

Then I asked him would he come to Ickes and talk to the residents and he said, "Yes. I will come to Ickes and talk to the residents."

It was with welcome relief that Jordan fulfilled his promise to come to Ickes and meet with the few remaining residents to dissipate the most unsettling rumors about their living status. He brought with him Alderman Pat Dowell and Gloria Seabrook, a special assistant for resident services at CHA.

Our own LAC president, Gloria Williams, welcomed our guests and encouraged the leaseholders to come forth with the most pressing questions concerning the future. With that said, she also cautioned them not "to act like you don't care."

Jordan began by looking at a list of "serious rumors" that are not true. First of all, Ickes is not closing in the fall of 2008. Then he explained why when he referred to the future



Photo by MARY C. JOHNS

**Lewis Jordan, the new CEO of the Chicago Housing Authority, speaking in the fall of 2008 at the Harold L. Ickes Homes to dispel rumors that Ickes would be closing.**

of Ickes, he talked about a "long-term redevelopment."

"When I first came out to look at Ickes to determine what should happen here, it appears that with the conditions of the buildings, it would cost too much to rehab them. It would be more to our benefit to redevelop in the long term. Jordan then informed the residents that they would soon receive appointment letters to come into the office to discuss with a staff member other housing possibilities such as our housing choices, our family make up and how far CHA is going to assist us in relocating, when the time comes. Jordan also said they would have an opportunity to view our housing choices from the past.

Then the question of time limits for occupancy came to the floor. Jordan said that even though it was a possible choice for them to insert into a lease agreement, CHA is not considering using it now.

The most important caution, however, was that when we receive a letter and do not reply, nothing will happen for us.

The meeting was interrupted by a few angry residents who had strong opinions about management, LAC contact and other personally overwhelming experiences. Jordan calmly invited them to come and sit down with him and talk about the issue to see how it can be resolved.

# Congress Accuses HUD of

by Mary C. Johns

Section 8 tenants from around the city rallied downtown recently to protest what they described as "deliberate miscalculations" by the federal government which are threatening the housing of thousands of families and seniors in communities across Illinois.

Led by the Lakeview Action Coalition (LAC), the protestors alleged mismanagement of Project Based Voucher Program by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development at a press conference and briefing outside HUD's local headquarters in downtown Chicago on October 6, 2008 – International Housing Rights Day.

The group reported that owners, concerned about HUD's ability to meet their obligations, have responded by "offering tenants month-to-month leases, diminishing services in the building, or in some cases, refusing to renew their contracts with HUD, displacing hundreds of families."

They added that Congress recently passed a continuing resolution with language that allows HUD to access funds at an accelerated rate so they can pay owners of the buildings with expiring Section 8 contracts from the past year.

"Housing is a human right, and at a time when we are talking about spending \$700 billion to rescue banks and other private entities, we need to make sure that our own government programs are in order and fully funded," the protestors stated.

"We need to know about why our government agency does not have enough money," declared Barbara Campbell, a member of the Lincoln Park Plaza Tenant Association and the LAC.

Campbell explained the significance of a poster featuring a huge drawing of a calculator displayed by one LAC member:

"HUD clearly needs some help calculating its budget



Photo by MARY C. JOHNS

Project-based Section 8 tenants from around the city, including members of the Lakeview Action Coalition, gather outside Federal Plaza on Oct. 6, 2008.

and we are here to help them do the right math. There is a \$2.8 billion dollar shortfall in the HUD budget, and we need to make sure that this 2009 budget addresses that shortfall," she declared.

During the briefing, Campbell and other members of the organization called on Democratic U.S. Sens. Dick Durbin and Barack Obama, and U.S. Rep. Rahm Emanuel (D-IL), to intervene.

"We invited Sens. Obama and Durbin and Rep. Emmanuel to join us today. They have been helpful in filling in the gaps, but HUD created the gaps and we need to get them all filled," Campbell said.

Sheldon Edidin, a disabled veteran who lives in the Commonwealth Apartments for elderly and disabled peo-

ple in Lincoln Park, said he was grateful for the Project-Based Voucher Program's existence.

"Until I was able to move into the Commonwealth, I had been constantly homeless, living in shelters and my car, and now I have stability in my life for the first time in a long time. Thanks to the Project-Based Section 8 Program," Edidin said.

Kathy Hoddeson, another Project-Based Section 8 recipient who lives in the Belmont Towers Apartments, discussed her high-rise building, which is home to 277 families, many of whom are elderly and disabled with low-incomes, in the demographically diverse Lakeview community.

"At one time, I was unable to find a good paying job and my husband was repeatedly hospitalized for heart problems," Hoddeson said. "Living in a HUD building ensured that we didn't also end up homeless. The reason I'm here today taking a vacation day from work is that, funding for affordable housing across the nation is in peril. Housing and Urban Development programs are especially at risk due to the budget shortfalls."

Evelyn Jones, a senior resident of the Commonwealth Apartments who uses a wheelchair, told *Residents' Journal* after the press conference that she was scared that she might lose her housing.

She said that she and others at the building had already received their letters informing them that their 12-month leases were soon to expire.

"Hopefully, the government, the city and everybody will see that this is really a serious problem," she said.

Emma Davidson, a Ukrainian resident of the Belmont Towers for the past 32 years, told *RJ* after the event that she and her neighbors were upset with HUD for not fully funding the Project-Based Voucher program.

CONGRESS ACCUSES HUD OF MISMANAGEMENT continues on Page 17

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# New Funding for Chicago Rental

by Michael Ibrahim

**A**pproximately 1,500 additional households will be assisted with new funding from the Low Income Housing Trust Fund, according to Ted Dygus, a media liaison for the Chicago Department of Housing.

Dygus told me during a phone interview in March that the new funding, which is to be allotted locally from the State of Illinois' program, is to provide annual subsidies to reduce rents for a specified number of units in buildings so that the units are affordable to tenants with annual household incomes within 30 percent of area median income.

Now in its 18th year, the Low Income Housing Trust Fund is the largest locally funded rental subsidy program in the country, he said.

Two years ago, the State of Illinois passed legislation creating the Illinois Rental Housing Support Program that was modeled after one already in operation here in the City of Chicago. The state program provides funding for rental assistance to very low-income families through a \$10 surcharge on the recording fee for real estate transactions.

From the revenues collected, 90 percent goes to the local body that administers the program. The City of



Chicago has designated the Chicago Low-Income Housing Trust Fund as the agency to administer the rental subsidy program.

Later that month, Molly Sullivan, director of communications and Freedom of Information inquiries for the Department of Housing, said during a phone interview that the Trust Fund also receives \$7.5 million from the City of Chicago to support the program.

Sullivan said the Trust Fund began soliciting applications from landlords in late 2006 and received more than 1,300 applications. Then she explained the application process.

She said the applications are first reviewed by the Trust Fund board to determine if they meet program priorities, including providing housing for large families, the disabled and/or the homeless. Once applications are approved, the units are inspected.

Next an agreement is sent to the landlord. Landlords are then responsible for finding income-qualified tenants.

This spring, 154 new landlords were approved, bringing the current total of landlords involved in the program to 470. Landlords are made aware of the program via news releases, daily and community newspapers, announcements at the Trust Fund's annual meeting and on the Trust Fund's website. The landlords chosen represent

43 Wards and 60 community areas, according to Sullivan.

She added that tenants can apply to the program only through referral. Organizations such as Access Living, Chicago Coalition for the Homeless and the Spanish Coalition for Housing refer individuals in need of assistance to the Low Income Housing Trust Fund.

Julie Dworkin, a passionate housing activist, described the Low Income Housing Trust Fund as doing a "pretty good job."

But during our phone interview in March, Dworkin also expressed a desire to see more direct tenant accessibility to the program for the people who need it the most.

Suzen Reiley, a disabled resident currently living in a Forest Park subsidized housing unit, told me during an interview that when she went to the Progressive Center on West Madison Street, she was told that median rents in the Chicago and surrounding area are at \$785 monthly.

This figure represents 135 percent of Reiley's monthly Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. With the Trust Fund rental subsidy, however, Reiley only pays 30 percent of her income towards rent.

Bob Palmer, policy director at Housing Action Illinois, broke down for me how really bad it can be for people living on a fixed income during our March phone interview.

**NEW FUNDING FOR CHICAGO RENTAL SUBSIDIES** continues on Page 19

## Sisters Form a

by Cenabeth Cross

The ladies of the 7th District Women's Advisory Committee joined U.S. Rep. Danny K. Davis (D-7) to host a town hall meeting on March 30 at the Westside Center of Truth. The meeting was to explore women's issues and celebrate Women's History Month. It also was to highlight the achievements of female leaders in the community.

Davis began the meeting by saying, "Americans have made a lot of progress but we still have a long way to go." He went on to note that not so long ago, women weren't considered citizens with the right to vote. In 1920, a constitutional amendment was passed to allow women the right to vote. African Americans, however, had to wait until 1965 for discriminatory laws to get nixed by the Civil Rights Act. Before then, they were cut completely out of the primaries and were charged a poll tax of \$2 when they did vote. If you worked in the field, \$2 was an entire day of work. Davis remarked that it's important to know history and the changes that have been made.

The 7th District Women's Hall of Fame was created to honor those women who have made great contributions to the community. Women such as C. O'Quinn, who started the Young Peoples' Club; Ida Mae Fletcher, who founded a day care center; and Earline Lindsey, who created the Mile Square Health Center and other health programs for the West Side, were all awarded a place in the Women's Hall of Fame at the meeting. Among these women was also Belle Whaley, who established Operation Brotherhood (OB) with the help of her husband.

Operation Brotherhood is an organization that was formed because of the urgent need for the basics like food for the elderly. The desperate and depressing way some of Chicago's elderly and the handicapped were living gave Belle and Eugene Whaley the idea for the organization. Its aim was to aid and assist a group of people that had been neglected by society and the government. In 1970, this West Side operation began providing for and protecting the elderly by teaching them how to be self sufficient.

Some of the people are separated from their families; some have no family at all. These people are cut off from any human contact except from those in the organization. Staff and volunteers provide basic needs to the commun-



ty in a way that enhances the quality of their lives and which helps to make each person independent.

In 1975, OB incorporated as an Illinois non-profit corporation and received their federal tax-exempt status. Belle Whaley served as Operation Brotherhood's director for 15 years until she died in 1990. OB is now governed by a board of directors and staffed by individuals who receive a minimum wage. The organization's advisory board includes the Rev. Jack Bomar, Dr. Sarah Harper, Marsha Harris, Mark J. Maluga -MA, LCPC, Marvin Philpot, and the Rev.

Vernon F. Ward, Jr. The staff includes Floyd Allen, Matthew Bell, Flora Brockman, Crystal McGee and Cecelia McKenzie and numerous volunteer members who mostly live in the Lawndale community.

OB supports the low-income and no-income by offering employment to low-income seniors, placing people on parole in jobs in the community, initiating programs for the homeless and assisting with payment of utility bills for those in financial need. They have purely social programs where the people of the community go on field trips or visit museums and city-sponsored events and ethnic festivals. This is considered a great way for the community to bond and enjoy each other's company. Most importantly, they always serve lunch.

The True Life volunteers are seniors who also receive the services they provide. Other volunteers come from nearby churches and organizations. Volunteers help with the daily tasks that keep the operation running smoothly.

OB gets extra help from donations, foundations, clothing and food that is donated by individuals as well as from America's Second Harvest – the nation's food bank network. OB also has ties with different clinics, hospitals and other organizations which allow OB to offer on site-health services. Once a month, Dr. Scholl's College of Podiatry Medicine examines and treats people for free. Moreover, an optometrist is available and OB has staff who periodically check blood-pressure, blood-sugar and cardiopulmonary rates.

In addition to health services, OB has a range of classes that teach exercise, dance, music and arts and crafts. Currently, OB is planning a culinary program. The new cooking classes will be run in conjunction with the Chicago Public School system and will teach students how to cook and serve in a real setting.

## RJ Condolences To Family of Mary Wiggins

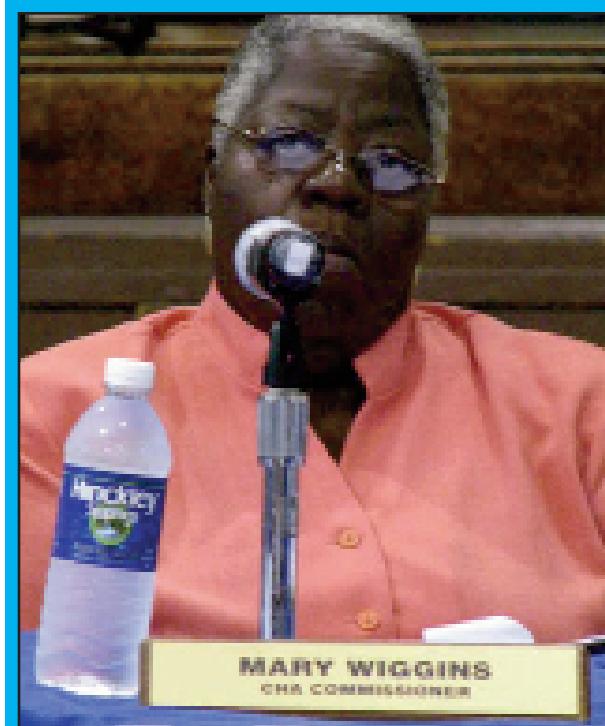


Photo by MARY C. JOHNS

Mary Ellen Wiggins, 68, died of heart failure on Sept. 7, 2008. Wiggins was "known nationally for being an advocate for public housing residents," according to a press release from the Central Advisory Council, the umbrella organization for all of the elected public housing tenant groups in Chicago.

Wiggins achieved a long list of accomplishments throughout her 36-year residency in Chicago public housing. At the time of her death, she was the chairperson of the Central Advisory Council, president of the Local Advisory Council of the Washington Park Scattered Sites, and a member of the Chicago Housing Authority Board of Commissioners.

In honor of her social and political involvement in her community, state Sen. Mattie Hunter wrote Memoriam Resolution 881 for passage by the Illinois General Assembly. Hunter announced the resolution at the October meeting of the CHA Board.

# An Inside View

**Students from Little Village Lawndale High School and George W. Collins High School share the news and their views about current changes in their lives**

## Phased Out

by Sharron Chestnut

In the 2005-2006 school year, Collins High School students, staff, and faculty heard the tragic news that we were no longer going to be in existence. We were being phased out. Faculty members who had been

the end of the 2005-2006 school year, students would have to say their good-byes because we knew we were no longer going to see those teachers again. Many students felt like the teachers who would have to leave were the ones who really cared about students.

Students took action going through the process to petition to save teachers and the

support from the community, teachers, former students, staff and even the support of a former principal. The Board said their reasons for closing Collins were low academic performance, low attendance rates, and low standardized test scores. However, the Board had to be well aware of the other schools in the same area whose academic levels were the same or even lower than our school. We then knew the situation was much deeper than only our academic levels. We did all we could, we petitioned, we called and we wrote letters but nothing worked.

Jessica Jones, a current senior who has been at Collins for four years told me, "It is wrong. Phasing out Collins should have not gone into effect. Ten years from now, we will not have anything to come back to or look back on. We cannot look forward to class reunions and grade school students won't have a chance to see what Collins is like or what it could have been like in the future."

If only Collins had been given the chance to improve, we could have shown what we are capable of doing. If only better teachers had been hired who really cared about the students instead of a paycheck, I am quite sure there could have been a brighter future. However, I'll remember the Collins family and we will always hold a special place in this building - forever. We are the Cobras.



George W. Collins High School senior students

here for over 15 years were saddened to hear this news. They knew it would result in long-time teachers being laid-off who would eventually have to search for new jobs. At

school. Students, faculty, and staff planned a charge up to City Hall to voice our opinions. But the doors of City Hall were not even opened for us. Collins had a great deal of

## Both Sides of Police Brutality

by Scott Benson

Police brutality in our neighborhood is rising day by day. Everyday you look on the news and in the community you see that people are being beaten and even killed by police. The police are the people who are supposed to be protecting us.

I interviewed my uncle who's been on the force for eight years and a county deputy for three years. He said that there have been a lot of people he worked with who were there to do good but there have been those who didn't help people but hurt them. He told me there are police officers doing the same

thing as people on the street. "But," he said, "besides that, it's still a lot of good officers that's here to stop bad officers from doing crimes and at the same time stopping the crimes on the street." Sometimes, he said, he feels bad because some people look at him like he's a bad officer because of what other officers do.

I also interviewed one of my fellow senior classmates who is on the other side of police brutality as a young Black man. He was beaten up by the police last year for no reason he could find. He was walking up the street by himself one day after school when two police officers in a detective car rode up on him and got out and began to search him. He asked the police why were they searching him and they said he fits the description of

someone they were looking for. Then they put him in handcuffs, threw him in the back of the police car, took him in an alley and began to punch him in his face and in his body. He said it felt like he was going to die. A little while after that, his mother got a lawyer and tried to sue the officers. They went to court, the police officers didn't even show up and the case was thrown out. He said his mother is still trying to sue the officers and get justice.

If this continues to go on in our community, then it will go too far and people will start doing everything and thinking it is okay to get away with it. I think this is a serious matter and needs to be taken care of as soon as possible so we can feel protected again in our neighborhoods.

## DCFS: Inside View

Carolyn Cain

My father Jimmy Cain works for DCFS (the Department of Children and Family Services). I asked him and a student involved with the DCFS system for an inside look at the system.

Jimmy Cain started working for DCFS in 1976 at the Lawrence Hall School for Boys.

"I was 22 when I discovered working with kids was for me," he said. "At that time of my life I had a lot of energy and I also saw many situations that kids were in. I saw their faces light up when I participated in activities with them and though their ages weren't that far from mine, I learned that I needed to be firm and consistent but fair.

This also helped me in my household."

He said it is a very stressful job but he is always willing to go back the next day "because a lot of the time the smile on the kids' faces will relieve some of my stress."

"The things I enjoy most about my job are helping unfortunate kids who need me

**Being part of DCFS sometimes makes me feel very sad, stressed and sometimes it makes me feel like I stand out from others.**

and also working with co-workers as a team," he said. "It makes me feel sad which motivates me to want to help. I feel that it affects the kids in a positive way because we as staff are helping to put back things that are missing in their lives."

A student in DCFS who asked to remain

anonymous said, "Being part of DCFS sometimes makes me feel very sad, stressed and sometimes it makes me feel like I stand out from others. Sometimes I feel that my friends can be disrespectful to my parents because of the fact that they know my guardian is not really my real parent. I sometimes feel that they don't treat my parent like I treat theirs."

The student has been a part of DCFS since infancy.

"My mother and father are both on drugs and have no way of being proper parents to me or my four sisters. I have always had to be the mother and father pretty much to my little sisters because I have no parents. Being in DCFS affects me mentally but I am glad I have a home with a guardian who I feel cares for me. I am thankful because I could have been on one of those group homes unhappy."



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From George W. Collins High School:

Sharron Chestnut

Jessica Jones

Sharda Smith

Scott Benson

Shemika Nichols

Carolyn Cain

Jackie Jones

Katera Allen

Shanquette Jones

Jerlinda Gray

Mendell Hodrick

Anthony Carr

Ashley Fisher

Shawnesse Evans

Patrick Rogers

Ileshia Matthews

Mattie Thompson

Ramia Davis

Christian Cummings

From Little Village Lawndale High School:

Carmen Alvarez

John Mayida

Javier Garcia

Julio Reyes

Walter Duran

### My Thoughts About Fatherhood by Anthony Carr

In the year 2008, there has been a lot of news on television, on radio, in newspapers, and in magazines about fatherhood. One topic on television about fatherhood has been about the father's role and support of the child. I asked Jerry Green, the father of a three year old girl, to answer a few questions. The first question I asked was,

### Are You Warm for the Holidays?

by Jerlinda Gray

The beginning of November marked the start of cold weather before and during the New Year. This would have been the perfect time to snuggle up with your loved ones and enjoy a nice cup of hot chocolate or to cook a delicious feast for Thanksgiving. Unfortunately many people were not lucky enough to have a warm place to go and food to eat. Why? Because they are homeless.

Homelessness has been an issue in Chicago for a long time - a December 2006 estimate by the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless (CCH) shows that there were 210,178 people who experienced homelessness in the course of the year in the United States, and that on a given night in Chicago, 73,656 men, women and children are homeless.

The study showed 30 percent have substance abuse problems, 20 to 25 percent suffer from mental health issues and 56 percent of women are domestic violence survivors. Ten percent of homeless are youth. As far as ethnicity, 76 percent are African American, 10 percent Latino, 10 percent Caucasian and 6 percent Asian. Homelessness is affecting Chicago greatly and the news reports that it isn't safe for anyone to be outside in cold

how do you feel about being a father? He commented that he really doesn't know how to feel about being a father because his own father has been gone since birth. Another question I asked was, how does single parenting affect your child's life? Green told me that a single parent has to strive to play both roles of being a father and a mother.

Being a father is a very important role in every child's life. A boy can't easily become a man being around only women. In Illinois there were over 10,000 pregnancies in one recent summer alone, according to the internet. Most of the pregnancies were teenagers who were not expecting

temperatures, not even animals.

I became more curious as to see what is being done about homelessness in Chicago. I called CCH and spoke to a woman named Ann Bowey who said, "They are working hard to get more homeless people help." I also interviewed Samir Goswami, who worked for the CCH for nine years and was the associate director of policy for the coalition.

### On a given night in Chicago, 73,656 men, women and children are homeless

"I lobbied around to make sure that there were more state funds for job opportunities and housing," he said.

I asked if he sees a lot of homeless children.

"Yes, a lot of moms also," he said. "There are moms with their babies that are homeless and a lot of youth, an estimate of 25,000."

I asked what bad things and good things he has seen among homeless people.

"One of the good things I've seen is that they all have hope," he said. "The bad things are the horrible living conditions and a lot of discrimination towards them, they feel like they are invisible and left out of society."

I asked if any homeless people are trying to change

while."

Tonia, the proud parent of two teenagers, says: "Teach them coming up before it's too late. Have your children work as soon as possible to develop more and more skills, which will help them to be more experienced in the future."

Ms. Pepper, a teacher for 19 years at George W. Collins High School, said students should not work while attending school.

"It takes far too much away from studying time, and having fun as a teen in general," she said. "However there is always summer and spring break when teens can work."

I am an employee at the infamous AMC River East

gets to a point where you get used to gunshots; you grow "immune to the cries."

Is this how our people feel? Are we truly becoming immune to the cries? I'm not immune. I'm not used to the gunshots. You want to know what I am though. I'm fed up. Fed up to the highest possible point. How can we believe that it is possible to become immune to the cries? Are we that naive? Are we that heartless? Wake up and drink some coffee. It is not acceptable to say you are "immune to the cries" in our community.

### It is not acceptable to say you are "immune to the cries"

Talking to my 3 year old brother, I learned that little kids are worried too. I took time and asked him how he felt about the "bang bang" he hears at night. He answered with one word: "scared". And it shocked me because I didn't think that little kids understood what all this meant but they do. They are just as afraid as everyone else in the community. Ask yourself: are you immune to three year olds going to bed every night scared?

Just at my school alone we've had several threats that people were coming to "shoot us up". We should be learning, right? Not leaving school in fear of being shot. And

to get pregnant. Everyday a young, single mother struggles trying to do everything on her own. For instance, she has to work, cook, clean, protect, provide, and show her love from a mother's and a father's point of view. I asked Lashawna Mcwright what single parenting is like. She replied that she wants to always show her child that she loves her and that she will always provide for her.

Personally, I have some concerns about fatherhood because I am now a young adult male and while I'm out in the world alone I can only rely on my mother's advice about how to survive.

their lives and make them better.

"Yes, but it's up to the rest of us to make sure that they have access to jobs, freedom to walk the streets with no discrimination and affordable low income housing," he said.

I said, "In our society you always hear that homeless people put themselves in that situation, do you think they deserve a chance to start over?"

"First, that's a mischaracterization," he said. "Some of us are just luckier than others. Minimum wage in Chicago is \$7.50 an hour. There's no way you can get an apartment making that wage. No one deserves to be homeless."

While watching the news I saw CCH marching in the cold holding signs demanding more low income housing. CCH says homelessness is caused by a complicated set of factors from the critical shortage of affordable housing and living wage jobs to our society's lack of care for people experiencing homelessness.

In my opinion, I believe this is true. Homelessness is a serious issue and everyone should try to have some part in helping to prevent it because you never know when you could be the one needing help. There were veterans fighting in Vietnam and Iraq for our country who are homeless and need immediate attention. The CCH has a team of great strength and I wish them the best of luck in their race to end homelessness.

Movie Theater downtown near Navy Pier. In my personal opinion, students who work have somewhat of an advantage in being properly productive in school over those who don't. Since I have a first hand experience attending school everyday and afterwards reporting to work, I know it can be challenging at times. But it's not impossible. Besides, it's easier to pay for things like activity fees, clothes, prom, pictures, lunch and many more important events. Overall, I think students should seek employment to prepare themselves for the future work force and to maintain financial stability.

don't you think that students will have second thoughts about coming back to school the next day? "I think that all this violence in our schools is affecting the way we think," said Miekel Smith, a senior at Collins, "My friends are getting to the point where they don't even want to come to school."

In a country where education is key, why aren't students protected? Because for those people who think we are, they are horribly wrong. We are not protected when you have students that don't want to go to school because of gang violence. Is our education really as valuable as they say? You tell me.

It's time we take a stand. We, as in the teens of the community. The future of our nation. Let's do it. Let's stand up and show these murderers that we are not going to sit back and accept the fact that our friends are dying. It's time to show everyone we are not immune to this horrible thing called murder. And don't believe that there aren't people out there to help you because there are. There is an anti-violence center for youth. The name of it is Center on Halsted, located at 3656 N. Halsted. It provides a place to talk about the problems in the community and do something about them. The number is (773) 472-6469. Take time and call this place; find a way to take action. Or, you could just become immune.

### Teens Working In and Out of School

by Mendell Hodrick

Krystyna Long is a 17-year-old senior who attends Orr High School located on the west side of Chicago. Long also has a job at an ice cream parlor located downtown. When asked what positive and negative effects come with working both in and out of school, she replied, "I may be a bit tired in the morning as I struggle to make it to school on time, but I still am able to help my grandmother with the bills and treat myself every once in a

### The Times We Hurt Most

by Patrick Rogers

Imagine coming home, watching some television and then going to lie down for a nice sleep. And without warning: Bang! Outside my window at night all I hear are gunshots! And I'm not talking about celebratory gunshots like you hear on the 4th of July. These are gunshots that are killing people - killing people for not much of anything. Can I ever turn on the news in the morning and not hear that someone else has been shot? Is this possible? Does anyone know the answer?

It has become an everyday thing. Teens are shot outside of their schools, their houses, and at the parks. I mean where can we go? It's said the shootings are because of gangs but not everyone is in a gang. Young kids aren't in gangs. Honor roll students aren't in gangs. But they're often the ones dying. Does this make sense to you?

The violence in our communities has become a thorn in the side of everyone who lives in them. People are afraid to sit outside at night, worrying that gunshots might put a stake in the heart of their future. "It's just too much going on out here," said Lorraine Hawkins, a 56 year old longtime resident in the Humboldt Park neighborhood, "It

### Truancy Fees

by Christian Cummings

Chicago City Council has proposed to enforce new truancy regulations for Chicago school students. One key problem in Chicago Public Schools (CPS) is the large percentage of students ditching school. The city council states that these new regulations could result in fees ranging from \$50-\$75 or possible jail time for a parent due to their child's truancy. In a first and second offense, parents would be fined but with a third offense, parents could receive jail time. As a Chicago Public School student, I don't support any sort of controlling influence over students from outside officials. Meaning, I do not endorse most decisions made by minor groups of legislators for major groups of students. I could understand if parents and teachers pulled together in efforts to decrease student ditching. But this decision was made by a group of people who possibly don't even have children or if they do, they may be in another school district or in college.

Would you trust a decision for your child being made by someone who doesn't even have children? Especially CPS students who often come from low income homes where there are sometimes three or more children in one household.

Concerned parent, Laresha Hopkins, a local mother of three, says she has two sons in high school and they often ditch without her knowing. Hopkins works a 14 hour shift and makes a considerably low salary. Her two sons, although old enough, do not work. She also says that in all the years she went to school, there were constant reinforcements against truancy and tardiness policies that ensured students wouldn't dare ditch. Hopkins does concede that student ditching has in fact increased but she feels there are other resorts to minimize it. Hopkins says, "I don't support a choice like that, which could affect families or even households with one child; the percentage of single parents is increasing daily. Single parents who have jobs and responsibilities that I'm sure do not include the payment of a \$75 truancy fee."

The current status of the law is pending; the council hasn't made it effective. A vote may take place soon to determine whether or not the truancy policy will be permanent. Aren't there enough rules regarding ditching for students in their own schools? In my school there is an absence penalty for truancy. If you ditch one class you will be marked absent for half of that day. In addition, your parent or guardian is also contacted to inform them of their student's ditching. For certain classes in my school, depending on the teacher, there are also

additional rules that apply to those who purposely miss a class. Some teachers penalize the students by not allowing them to complete make-up work or they'll assign them work that was based on the material reviewed the day they ditched. I believe that is penalty enough for a student, not to mention the parents. Students' actions and achievements reflect on their parents.

Although, student ditching is increasing, there are other methods that could be considered. Initiating new fees and a legal penalty resulting in jail time is just not the solution. Taking in the fact that some parents are not involved in their child's education and attendance in school, new policies should be enforced, just on other conditions. Many former students of high schools in the urban areas of Chicago are not pleased with this possible enforcement and plan on doing what they can. Crane High School alumnus and teacher for the Chicago Board of Education, Sidney Garth, attended high school in Chicago when tardiness and ditching weren't as common as they are today. Garth said, "In most schools around my neighborhood, there are tardiness, truancy and ditching regulations that have been instilled in students from the beginning. They were not required to adapt to a new change, for it was already standard protocol!"

### The Birth of Death

by John Mayida

Some people may still think we are doing OK right now. That can be true from your perspective, but not from that of the Earth's wildlife. Species are now diminishing. You see it every time you turn on the TV or turn on your lamp and start reading "I Am America (And So Can You)" by Stephen Colbert. The reality is animals that you may or may not know of won't be around any longer. Endangered species deep within the earth's exotic regions are now at risk. Endangered species aren't the only list of organisms at risk. There are also the threatened species, which are defined as likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future. Endangered species are likely to go in all or a significant portion of their range within the near future. Madagascar, Southeast Asia and Alaska are three major diversity regions where hazardous emissions, crime and destruction of habitats are causing harm not only to us but to the wildlife that roam in these regions.

Foremost, Madagascar is well known for its biodiversity of organisms. It's also known for being the world's 34th biodiversity hot spot. The island has nearly 550 threatened species, one of which is the well known Golden Bamboo Lemur in Madagascar. The Golden Bamboo Lemur is small like a house cat, with golden brown coloration on its face and underbelly. The Golden Bamboo Lemur is one of the world's rarest mammals. This unfortunate creature is found in mid-altitude rainforest associated with bamboo. The Golden Bamboo Lemur is threatened by the continued loss of its forest habitat due to slash-and-burn of agricultural land. This is the process of cutting down rainforest and the burning it. These stricken creatures have been endangered since 1996; the Golden

Bamboo Lemur is one of three other lemurs who are also facing extinction. Madagascar's scientist and government say there is a possibility to restore Madagascar.

Although Madagascar may have its environment endangered, Southeast Asia is the center of the black market. The black market in Southeast Asia is known for its illegal animal trade. The black market in Bangkok, Thailand has a multibillion dollar business. Some animals are sold alive; some are killed and their parts sold. Tourists and locals can purchase exotic birds and other animals openly in markets. One highly known animal that is sold are baby elephants. They are credulous to people and a very social animal; hunters and poachers take advantage of their naive character to capture them. Police have failed to stop this. It has become an illegal law to raid in a closed store. In Vietnam, police found two tigers in an apartment along with two soup kettles filled with animal bones. The 40-year-old woman confessed that she had hired three experts to cook tiger bones to make traditional medicine, \$500 per 100 grams. Skins are sold as rugs and cloaks on the black market, where a single skin can fetch as much as \$12,000. Tiger meat is marketed as "strength" and bones are ground into powder or vast wine. This creates "tiger bone wine" tonics for the traditional Chinese medicine market. China and Vietnam are currently taking steps to stop the illegal hunting of endangered species. Three of the world's 9 tiger's sub-species fell extinct last century. Many scientists believe a fourth species of tiger in south China is already extinct. On the bright side, there is a sanctuary in Cambodia where workers help rescued animals. They rescue animals and rehabilitate them. In the end, they try to set them free into a region where no poachers can trespass.

Lastly, everyone is familiar with global warming. In

Alaska, USA, and across the Arctic, the sea ice is melting away, making floods occur. Alaska is twice the size of Texas and its temperature has increased by 3 degrees in the past 50 years.

"Scientists say what happens in the one-third of the planet which lies within the Arctic Circle is a harbinger of what might occur in the contiguous U.S.," according to CNN.com. These floods do harm humans but also the indigenous polar bears. Polar bears do their hunting and living on the sea ice. Scientists had proposed to enlist polar bears in the endangered species list. This was first published in January 4, 2007. This primary threat is the decrease of sea ice. Any significant change in the distribution or existence of sea ice will change the behavior of animals and their prey. The Center for Biological Diversity listed this form of petition dated back on February 16, 2005. This service published in the Federal Register on October 5, 2007. There is a notice extending the public's comment period until October 22, 2007. On September 20, 2007 a 15-day extended notice from Federal Register stated the previous, indicating this is a real issue we have to be aware about. Fourteen individuals from fields of polar bear/ marine mammal biology, climatology, sea ice behavior and traditional ecological knowledge reviewed the situation facing polar bears. In conclusion, many species are endangered. The ecosystem is diminishing by the hour. What will be said of us in the near future? Stirring up wars won't help in the recreation of the world. What we are doing is not helping us. We need to find a leader who will fight for a cause and not for a war that will ruin us. Overall, we need to be untied so we can struggle together as brothers and sisters or perish as fools. Through this we can accomplish anything we set our minds to.

### Why is the Question I Ask

by Ramia Davis

On June 5, 2007 I found out my little baby brother Jeremiah was beaten to death. I was in the car with my father when I got a call telling me.

Why did this have to happen to a 15-month-old baby – my little brother? What did he do to deserve such cruelty? Even though I didn't get the chance to know him well, it still hurts when I think about it. When I saw the news coverage, it really had an effect on me. It happened so fast. Anytime something bad happens to a baby it makes you sad, but when the baby is a part of you it hurts even more. I didn't know this would affect me as much as it has.

The first half of junior year was the worst year for me, I didn't want to live anymore. I felt like I couldn't breathe and I was always sad. You try to hide the pain and heartache, but you can't. I would be sitting in school and

it would cross my mind that my baby brother died. My teachers could see that something was wrong because I was falling behind in my work, I wasn't participating and I was always sad, like my air had been taken away from me. My grades were dropping and I was no longer happy. I didn't want to do anything, my world had just come tumbling down around me.

I didn't want to do anything, my world had just come tumbling down around me.

I asked my mother Chereana what she thought about it. Jeremiah was beaten to death while she was at work. The funeral was on June 11. It was hard for her to speak about it, but she bravely answered me.

"Jeremiah was my little man, he was so intelligent and happy and healthy, he was my baby," she said. "He loved to give out hugs and kisses. That's my baby and that will never change. My Jer-bear."

I asked her why she thought it happened.

"It happened all because of jealousy," she said. "Mimi, listen to me, if you have a child by somebody else, don't let your boyfriend or friend guy come around your baby, because they might hurt them. I want to apologize to you for what happened to your brother. If only I was more protective...he looked like you with light skin, curly hair and brown eyes. With your daddy's nose, mouth and curiosity, not to forget his handsomeness."

What did he do to deserve this punishment? He was only 15 months old, not a care in the world, a happy, healthy, handsome baby. When I found out about it I felt like it was my fault because I should have been there watching him. But I have to remind myself it's not my fault.

I used to blame God, but God has his own plan for our lives and we just have to play the hand dealt to us. If God didn't want this to happen it wouldn't have, so maybe it was his time to go. He got his call to go home early. During different changes and obstacles like this you have to remember that what doesn't kill you makes you stronger.

### What people think about Little Village Lawndale High School?

by Javier Garcia

Some people from the community, at Pitrowski Park, and students, that we interviewed had some comments about the high school. Before we got their comments we asked them, "How was the community like before Little Village North Lawndale High School was here?" These were their responses. "When I was a kid the streets were filled with gangs, drugs, and violence," said one resident. Another one had this to say, "As long as I could remember these streets were never safe to walk on by yourself especially after dark." Our last resident said, "Every where you go you'd see something happening." This is what they said about the community before Little Village High School was here. The students we interviewed were juniors and sophomores from Social Justice and Mas. Half of the students said, "To me the community is still the same before and during the school's appearance." The other half said, "The community was a bad place before the school came."

Now we asked the residents at the park, "How is the community now that Little Village High School is here?" Their response, "Crime here has increased ever since that school was built, gangs, drugs, violence, and police patrols have increased since the school was here." Another one said, "Teenage pregnancy increased, we were better off without the school than we are now." Our last resident said, "I don't know much about the school but I heard good things about it and I don't know why because from

what I see it isn't that good." But Julio Reyes, Mas/sophomore said, "The community is better now than it was back then." John Mayida, SOJO/junior said, "There are more African Americans living in Little Village and more Latinos living in North Lawndale now." [Pitrowski Park is just east of the school] Any high school you go to there will always be drama for better or worse.

After interviewing with the people from the park they had some suggestions on how to make the community and school a better place to be in. Someone said, "We should get more police to patrol around here because there was one that was here in the park and everything was quiet until he left, then the madness started up again." Another one said, "We should create programs to get rid of and prevent violence from happening." Someone responded by saying, "In order to create this program we will need more funds to get it started."

I think to stop the violence we will need to make a program and get some patrol cars around here but in order to get these things we will need to get some funds to start the program and pay for the protection or at least a neighborhood watch system to stay alert at any time.

The students' suggestions were: "We should all get together and form a workshop," said Walter Duran, Mas/Junior. "I don't think we can fix anything, we should just start a new school at a new location," said Carmen Alvarez, SOJO/Junior. "I think we should shut down the power plant and lower the bus charges, the CTAs," said Mayida.

The school's birth is very unusual but honorable. "On May 13th, 2001, fourteen community residents of Little Village neighborhood staged a nineteen day hunger strike demanding the construction of a new high school. The

high school had been promised, but was put on hold for monetary issues," says the school's website. Almost four years later, in fall 2005, the Little Village Lawndale High School campus opened its doors for 400 students. "There are a number of parents, educators, community advocates and even students to thank for the hard work, continuous struggle and ongoing dedication to make this dream a reality. Our campus will work to honor the struggle it was born from."

I think we should come together and stop the violence so those who sacrificed themselves will not be in vain. They have given us a gift and now we are taking it for granted, we must repay them.

Little Village North Lawndale High School has some great features, even though some people say that it's a bad school LVNLHS has good things to offer. The school is made up of four different schools, they are: Multicultural Arts H.S. (Mas), World Language H.S., Social Justice H.S. (SOJO), and Infinity: Math, Science, and Technology High School. Each school has different ways to help the community. There are some places in the school in which everyone can use like the library, swimming pool, courtyards, auditorium, dance studio, child care center, the north and south gyms, health center, long distance learning labs, literacy center, and the basketball court. "Thus, students get the advantage of a tight-knit school environment without sacrificing the advantages of a larger facility. Students from every school will participate in the same sports and after school activities," says the website.

These students had this to say. "I like the school because of the teachers, especially the young ones," said Alvarez. "I like the school because its new and we get all the new things, books, computers, etc.," said Mayida.

**CA:** What obstacles did you have to overcome to reach your goals?

**A:** Tons of obstacles, mostly people assuming a lot of stuff because I was Latino, tons of obstacles at home. It was hard for my mom to be supportive. Tons of money obstacles, at times I did not have money to do laundry. The obstacle of having to work ten times harder on schoolwork because the public school did not prepare me.

**CA:** What are some important lessons you learned as a student?

**A:** Perseverance - never give up - to help my family by accomplishing my goals and to help my community

**CA:** Do you have any helpful tips for the Little Village students?

**A:** Yes, think about the big picture, don't just think about today and today's problems, issues or drama, think about ten years from now, where you want to be, how you want to help and change things for others, believe in yourself, remember SOJO who will always believe in you.

**CA:** What is the most difficult part of being a principal?

**A:** All the reports, forms, and meetings that I have to attend.

**CA:** What is the most fulfilling part of it?

**A:** Seeing a dream become true.

**CA:** What does social justice mean to you?

**A:** Education with values, being empowered through education and using that power to change and better our community, society, and world for the better.

**CA:** What part did you take in building this school?

**A:** This is my 8th year working on this school. I have played almost every part except being a hunger striker.

**CA:** Describe the perfect school.

**A:** What Sojo is becoming.

**CA:** In your opinion what are some issues affecting our school?

**A:** Drugs, family problems, gun/gang violence, poverty.

**CA:** What can the students do to help fix these problems?

**A:** Never lose hope.

**CA:** Where do you see the school in 10 years?

**A:** One of the best schools in the city that every one wants to attend.

**CA:** Where do you see yourself in a decade?

**A:** Being the best father I can possibly be.

**CA:** For how long have you been married?

**A:** Four years.

**CA:** How many children do you have?

**A:** Three: Joaquin 3 and a half, Chava-21 months, Carlitos-6 months. I am so busy at home! Yikes!

**CA:** What is the hardest part of being a father?

**A:** Letting my kids learn on their own and not sheltering or over protecting them.

**CA:** What is the most rewarding part of it?

**A:** The love, their smiles, their eyes, their hope.

**CA:** What do you hope for your children?

**A:** For them to be safe, happy, and become good people.

**CA:** What do you wish for the school?

**A:** A place where kids can leave all of their problems at the door, feel loved, feel like people believe in them, a place that is fun, the place where we learn together - good and bad. A place where the seed of hope begins to grow in the hearts of every student.

### Who is Principal Martinez?

Carmen Alvarez

Rito Martinez is principal of the Social Justice High School (Sojo). Here we learn a little more about him.

**Carmen Alvarez:** How old are you?

**Rito Martinez:** 39

**CA:** How old were you when you graduated from high school?

**RM:** 18

**CA:** College?

**RM:** 22

**CA:** What high school did you graduate from?

**RM:** Bogan High School

**CA:** What college?

**RM:** Greenville College

**CA:** What were your goals as a high school student?

**RM:** Had none, not to get jumped, to work, and not to get any one pregnant. It was not till my senior year in high school that I thought about college then my goal was to better myself. I did not think it was fair or right that most people of color struggle so much including my family. In college, freshman year was just to survive. The first year was the most difficult year of my life. I felt out of place, I felt stupid, I did not have the skills to do well, I did not belong. Every moment was so much work. My only goal was to not quit or drop out. After that my goal was to graduate and be successful in college.

**CA:** How did you reach those goals?

: Hard work, determination, sacrifice, tears, help from others and help from God.

### Making It Harder for Students to Get a License

by Sharda Smith

The Drivers Ed program is making a change in the year 2008 for teens to get their licenses. Rumor has it that the age will move up to 20 to obtain a driver's license. It's said that the law will be boosting the age up from 18 due to young people's high rate of driving fatalities from ages 16-17. These changes will also make it harder for students

to get their licenses. "It will affect some graduates who are 18 years old and needing their license after graduating from high school," said Mr. Thomas, Collins High School P.E. teacher. The CPS Drivers Ed program for high school students has 3 phases. All students must pass Phase 1 in order to graduate from high school. It consists of 30 hours of classroom instruction and students must pass the Drivers Ed written exam. Next, students pay \$20 and must complete 8 hrs of simulation training and will then receive their drivers permit. Last but not least, students must go through the process of range and trafficking where students must drive a car in traffic at least 6 times and then

go to the DMV to take the final test. "The situation is making it harder for students who need transportation. Now that I'm 18, I have a car, and won't be able to drive it because of the age range boosting up," says Carolyn Cain, a senior at Collins high school. I think this situation is unfair and will affect me in my senior year in a lot of ways. As a senior, I still haven't gotten my license yet due to the simple fact that I haven't taken simulation training classes or range trafficking. This will be a hard situation for me to deal with my senior year, along with the many senior activities of luncheon, prom, and graduation fees, and studying my senior coursework.

# Lathrop Residents Want Vacant Units

by Mary C. Johns

Residents of the Lathrop Homes public housing community and their advocates marched through their community recently to get the Chicago Housing Authority to open up the large number of vacant units in the development to people in need of affordable housing.

"Keeping these units empty, in the midst of a housing crisis, is a terrible waste," declared Cynthia Scott, a member of the Lathrop Leadership Team, during the press conference that followed the Oct. 23 march and rally.

"Leasing 300 units would help families avoid homelessness and reduce the crime and maintenance problems that come with vacancies," she added.

Scott and the other protestors want the vacant units opened to house families at risk of becoming homeless because of foreclosure of rental buildings, condo conversions, fires and natural disasters, as well as for families who are already homeless and seeking shelter from the cold winter months.

Lathrop Homes has historically been the city's most ethnically diverse low-income and working class public housing community. It is located on Chicago's Near Northwest Side between the Bucktown and Roscoe Village neighborhoods bordered by Clybourn on the north, Damen on the east and the Chicago River on the south and west, and consists of three- and four-story apartment buildings and two-story row houses, according to CHA data.

Currently, over 600 units of Lathrop's 925 units are vacant, and a total of 252 are occupied, according to Juanita Stephenson, the Local Advisory Council president.

Stephenson told Residents' Journal after the march that the CHA was concerned about money "over morals."

"It's all about the benjamins. It's all about the money," she said.

"It's not about the people of the city of Chicago. It's about the money of the city of Chicago. This is a shame. There are people in desperate need of housing. We have some good units here. There are not people in desperate need of condos. There are desperate people in need of affordable housing," Stephenson added.

Stephenson said she and others met with CHA officials the day before the protest to get the agency to open



Photo by MARY C. JOHNS

Cathy Johnson, a homeless mother of four, urging the CHA to have compassion on the homeless and open vacant units to those in need during a protest and rally at the Lathrop Homes in October 2008.

some of the vacant units. But Stephenson said they were told by CHA officials that they couldn't open any "because there's no funding."

Stephenson said the march was held in an attempt to sway the CHA, the City of Chicago and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which will have new leadership under the next presidential administration.

"We're having the rally because we're saying to the CHA, and we're saying to the city, and HUD: We will stand, we will fight and we will talk and keep negotiating with you until we get a piece of this community.

"Just like CHA has changed, plans can change. Times change and people change, and these plans can also change. So that's what we're hoping for, another change for the residents of Lathrop Homes. We're hoping that after this election, there will be some change," she said.

Stephenson said some of the units became vacant when people were evicted for being behind in their rent. But she added the majority of the units have been closed for years after the leaseholders were evicted under the One Strike federal policy for public housing. Other tenants left on their own.

"A lot of people left," she explained. "A lot of people were evicted. Most of it was due to One Strike,"

Stephenson said.

Under the One Strike rules, a leaseholder can be evicted for a crime committed by them or a family member or friends on or off any public housing site.

Stephenson added that the CHA has plans for redevelopment at Lathrop into a mixed-income community of market rate, affordable and public housing units, but has not announced when that will happen.

"They have plans to have a third, a third, a third. But when that going to happen, they don't know right now," she said.

In an October 21, 2008, letter to the CHA Board of Commissioners, members of the Lathrop Homes Local Advisory Council, Lathrop Leadership Team and the Logan Square Neighborhood Association proposed that CHA put 300 vacant units back on line by 2010 to house those in desperate need of affordable housing.

In the letter, the groups referred specifically to "Lathrop Homes families that are overcrowded and need Split Transfers, and families and seniors that left Lathrop (not because of lease compliance issues) over the last ten years and are seeking to return, and families on CHA's waiting list, and military veterans and their families."

In the letter, the group of advocates also accused the CHA of purposefully creating vacant units at the public housing site over a nine-year period with the intent of them remaining closed.

"For nearly ten years, the CHA has told Lathrop's manager not to lease units after families move out. As a result, the number of vacant units at Lathrop has grown to over 600," the letter stated.

Cathy Johnson, a homeless mother of four and member of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, urged the CHA to have compassion on the homeless and open the vacant units to those in need.

"I hope and I pray that you all won't be one of us who are homeless. I'm asking and I'm begging CHA: Don't do this to these people. Open up the doors and let us in, and let these people keep their places. They need this housing. It's thousands of people out here homeless and living in shelters. We don't need to be living in shelters. We need to be living in housing," she said during the press conference.

CHA spokesperson Derek Hill told RJ on Oct. 27 that no one was available to comment on the letter to the CHA Board or to address the group's concerns.

## The Audacity of

by Latoya Wolfe

On Election Day for the Illinois primaries in March this year, I willingly walked into a police station.

I marched through the doors just as boldly as police officers used to storm through the door of my childhood home in the Robert Taylor projects.

Growing up, the police were not my friend. They accused with their eyes, insinuated with their questions, and brutalized with their hands. So, when I entered the station, with U.S. Sen. Barack Obama on my brain, I felt like I was crossing enemy lines.

I walked into the room where I was supposed to vote and resisted the urge to thank the volunteers. I was beginning to get emotional. I thought about how once upon a time in America, Black people couldn't vote and that now, they were organizing volunteers at polling places.

I was giddy. I wanted to skip to the booth. My emotions were like hot grits bubbling up on a stove. I was so pumped up that I couldn't understand what to do with the ballot!

So, I went back to one of the lovely volunteers and asked. With my new-found knowledge, I went over to the privacy booth. I wasn't sure why it was so private, though. Shouldn't we be proud to vote for whomever we choose to vote for?

I chose Obama for President, and as I shaded in the other names, I kept looking at the top of the page at Obama. It was



surreal!

A man of color's name was listed next to the choice of President of the United States.

Yes, I've watched all of the coverage. Yes, I knew that he was thinking about running, but when I saw his name next to President of the United States, it just moved me.

During my long train ride back to Michigan, where I now live, I thought about the police. I knew that "those" police officers were probably not the men who choked my brother.

I realized that maybe they weren't even in the police academy when I lived in the Robert Taylor Homes. But I wondered, at this new stage in my spiritual life, what I would have done if I had recognized one of the men from back in the day – would I have forgiven him?

Forgiveness is a funny business. We all want to be forgiven by God, but it's real hard to let some stuff go. I used to feel like I had a right to be angry at some folks, but now I know better.

I'll always remember the day I decided to walk into a police station.

I'll remember that later that day, the Holy Spirit used Super Tuesday as a lesson. I realize now that it really wasn't about Obama after all.

It was about me learning to forgive, like my father in Heaven.

## Reports Finds Child Care More Expensive than

by Mary C. Johns

Child care costs are rising faster than inflation for Cook County families, according to a recent report by Illinois Action for Children.

Their 2008 report, subtitled "Elements of Child Care Supply and Demand," finds working families who need child care struggling with high costs, limited availability and long waiting lists.

The report also provides an analysis of "the costs of different types of child care, the availability of child care for different areas and schedules, parent choices and the role of the public sector."

On average, "Child care costs the average Cook County family as much as 35 percent of their income, and is more expensive than rent or tuition to state colleges and universities. The costs for center are also rising rapidly. For a two year old in Chicago, the cost had risen 40 percent since 2000, while the cost of before and after school care in homes has risen 59 percent.

42 percent of Illinois parents work evenings, weekends or variable hours, but only 2 percent of child care centers and 8 percent of licensed child care homes offer weekend care, similar shortfalls exist for evening care.

In north and northwest Chicago, there are 77 infants for every available child care center slot.

# One Man Giving Back to the

by Quintana Woodridge

Many people have been known as the ‘greatest’ for the work they have done in their communities and on the TV screen. One who will always be remembered is “Rocky.” He is one of television’s most known fighters. No matter how bad “Rocky” was beaten, the crowd would cheer him on and he’d win the boxing match in the end.

Some people say the same for Bernard “Bo-Da” Clark. Clark is a former resident of Ida B. Wells Extension Homes and a former employee of the Chicago Housing Authority’s CADRE (Combating Alcohol and Drugs Through Rehabilitation and Education) program. When CADRE ended in 2000, so did the programs he mentored for young people out of the CADRE office.

Clark got a new job at the Centers for New Horizons so he could continue encouraging young people to use their talents to stand up for a better community and to build a bridge of communication between youths and adults. But just when things seemed to be going well, Clark’s operations took a blow; the office where he worked closed and consequently, the programs ended. However, that didn’t stop Clark. He continued to work in the community with a program called Inspiring Youth. Although Clark hoped that this would become a long-lasting program, it soon ended as well, leaving the young people and the adults involved furious at the loss of yet another community program.

I interviewed Clark to find out what keeps him coming back to the community where he has lived for over 30 years and also to find out how he got the nickname “Bo-Da?”

**Residents’ Journal:** How many Chicago Housing Authority programs did you participate in as a youth?

**Bernard Clark:** I don’t remember CHA having programs as a youth. I started organizing some of the guys to clean up the community and started coaching sports to the young guys when I was 16 years old.

**RJ:** When did you start working for CHA?

**BC:** I started working with CHA in 1993 with CADRE and other CHA programs like Summer Food, Midnight Basketball, Mama Said, Wells Community Initiative, Youth Power and Just Say Know.

**RJ:** What are Just Say Know and Youth Power?

**BC:** Just Say No (Know) is a national program that teaches young people to say no to drugs. I changed the “No” to “Know,” because Knowledge was more important. If young people knew the reason for not doing drugs, they



wouldn’t want to use them. Youth Power is a youth-implemented program that the young people in the community headed. The youths started Grandparents Day, Red Ribbon, Hands Around Wells, and Kwanza Celebration.

**RJ:** What is it that keeps you coming back to help young people in the community?

**BC:** I always believed it was a blessing of God. The young people in the community are important. They are the present and the future. I just wanted to give them hope. They inspired me too as they worked together to make positive things happen.

**RJ:** Do you feel the programs that closed down would have helped make the new Oakwood Shores (formally Ida B. Wells/Madden Park) a better community?

**BC:** It would have helped if the CADRE, Mama Said, Midnight Basketball, CHA Choir, and Youth Power programs could have transitioned with the change of the buildings. You can’t just build new buildings and not continue to build the character in the people.

**RJ:** If you could start your own program, what would it be like?

**BC:** My dream is to have a program that would combine youths interacting with adults and seniors to gain an understanding on what the community should be. My wife Latonia Clark - also a former Ida B. Wells resident - and I are working on starting a program by the name of Off the Edge with our own money and we are working on getting funding. The purpose of the program is to bring old and new residents, youths and adults, together to make Oakwood Shores a great community.

**RJ:** Are you affiliated with any programs at this time?

**BC:** I am part of a fellowship by the name of Doing Our Part (DOP). DOP consists of me and another brother by the name of Jack Carter praying with the men young and old. We talk to them about stepping up to make a change in their lives and community, so they can be the men God intended them to be.

**RJ:** Who do you credit for your accomplishment?

**BC:** To God goes the glory for all that he has allowed me to accomplish.

**RJ:** How did you get the name “Bo-Da?”

**BC:** When I was younger, I played basketball. I would elbow people when I rebounded the ball and had a left hand shot like Dave from the New York Nicks.

I also spoke with Kierra Winter, Mardell Scott, Kierra



Photos by QUINTANA WOODRIDGE  
**Top:** Members of Doing Our Part meet in the lobby of the Ida B. Wells Extension Homes. Left: Bernard Clark, fellowship member of Doing Our Part

and Anthony Whitehead, Kelly Griggs and Kelly Woodridge - a few of the young people who were inspired by “Bo-Da.” “He was like a father for the youths in the Just Say Know program. I’m glad to have been part of the programs like Grandparents Day and Red Ribbon March,” said Kierra Winters.

Mardell Scott said, “He was a great sports coach and encouraged me to stay in school. I participate in the prayer circle every Friday with the program that Mr. Clark is affiliated with.”

“It made me mad when Inspiring Youth program ended. I miss hanging with my friends from the program. I also learned basic art, basic photography, creative writing skills and how to D.J.,” Kierra Whitehead said. She added that “With the proper funding, these programs would have been around for more young men and women who could have been helped by Mr. Clark or others with the skills to help the community.”

Anthony Whitehead said, “Learning to be a D.J. was my favorite part. I wish the program would never have ended.”

“Bo-Da to me stands for Bernard Clark being a strong Black leader and organizer, an intelligent educator to young people, a protective father figure to all he comes into contact with, and most of all a fighter for all residents to have a voice,” commented Kelly Woodridge.

## Congress Accuses HUD of Mismanagement

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“We are very upset that HUD cannot calculate properly how much they need money,” Davidson said. “This is the second year. I am surprised that they still did not take the lesson. From 1976, I just came to this country and lived in the same building. It is the best building in the world for me.”

Davidson said her rent had fluctuated between a flat rate and a subsidized amount.

“Sometimes it was not subsidized but I paid full rent when I worked and then it became again subsidized and I didn’t want to go out anywhere else. It’s the best,” she declared.

### The Senate Accuses HUD

The Lakeview residents’ concerns are part of a national dust-up between the White House and Congress. In July, the Senate Appropriations Committee accused HUD and the U.S. Office of Management and Budget of “deliberately misleading the Congress and the public” by not requesting adequate resources needed to stabilize the national Project-Based Rental Assistance Program.

They added that HUD’s and OMB’s “budget game-playing” has resulted in “deliberately delaying payments to owners for periods of up to 6 months - causing owners to miss mortgage and utility payments and calling into

question the government’s commitment to this long-term rental assistance program.”

The Project-Based Rental Assistance Program provides a rental subsidy to a private landlord that is tied to a specific housing unit as opposed to a voucher, which allows a recipient to seek a unit. In both cases, the tenants pay 30 percent of their adjusted income for rent and the federal government is responsible for the remainder of the rent, up to what HUD determines as the fair market rent. Currently there are 1.4 million families in Section 8 housing, over half of whom are elderly or disabled. Close to 80 percent of the current Project-Based Section 8 units, or 14,000 contracts, are funded by 1-year contracts through annual appropriations.

On July 14, Senate Appropriations Committee member U.S. Sen. Patty Murray’s (D-WA) rebuked HUD on their funding request for the program:

“For over 2 years, the Committee has attempted without success to work with HUD to determine the full costs needed to renew all expiring project-based contracts for their usual 12-month term. These efforts have made it clear to the Committee that both HUD and OMB have been deliberately misleading the Congress and the public on these actual program costs.

“In so doing, HUD has put hundreds of contracts at risk covering thousands of tenants across the Nation.”

HUD was unavailable for comment by **RJ** press time.



Nellie Shaakov (from left) and Emma Davidson, Ukrainian residents from several federally funded projected-based Section 8 properties, were among the rally participants calling on Illinois Senators Dick Durbin and Barack Obama and U.S. Rep. Emmanuel (D-IL) to make sure that the HUD 2009 budget was fully funded for them to remain in their homes.

# Stop The Violence

by Cenabeth Cross

In an effort to save our youth, Diane Latiker, a young mother and founder of Kids Off the Block (KOB), decided that the kids in the Roseland area needed a way to fulfill their dreams without resorting to the violence that has been spreading citywide.

I had been looking for anyone willing to help stop the violence, so I went to meet Diane in her office at 11621 S. Michigan Ave. A fairly young woman opened the door and invited me in. She told me that she was the mother of 8 children, 4 boys and 4 girls, all of whom were over 18 except for her 17-year-old daughter.

Diane began telling me how she manages her remaining child and what she did to keep her other children from gang influences and the like when they were younger.

She said she would escort her 17-year-old daughter to social events, and then Diane would just "hang out" with the kids living in her area.

After a while, Diane said she got to know all the kids in the neighborhood and would spend time with them. She asked them questions like what they wanted to be when they grew up and listened to them as they expressed their aspirations and ambitions.

Because Diane was so good at handling and inspiring some of the children, her mother, evangelist Ruth Jackson, suggested that she start an organization to stop the kids from just hanging out and tearing up the neighborhood.

In July of 2003 'Ms. Diane', as she is called by the children, took her mother's advice and started KOB. It was meant to give the kids a chance to create positive change. When the organization started, 10 kids were enrolled. Now, 225 kids are enrolled and there are 100 more on the waiting list. The kids find out about the organization by word of mouth; kids telling other kids.

The organization's main focus is on high school youth. The staff has always reached out to people who seem the hardest to reach by interacting with them in positive ways and enrolling them in programs and activities that hold their interest. While the youth can act as an organized group, they still need social support from adults to help them overcome their current circumstances. KOB normally helps kids from 12 - to -16 years old, but they will accept children as young as 6.

Their youth programs include music, drama and sports programs as well as the After-school Matters (ASM) program and the Hip Hop Light Plate program. KOB also offers tutoring and mentoring programs. Some of the programs allow the children to travel locally and out of town and the children are always engaged in doing community service.

In May 2007 KOB "village leaders" hosted a "Speak Up, Speak Out" rally against the ongoing violence in their neighborhoods. At the event, the youths voiced their concerns and opinions about the latest killings in their communities and at the schools in all the neighborhoods in and around Chicago. The kids also set up a memorial right across the street for the school-aged children who had been killed.

So far this year, I have counted 30 names of kids who have been killed. Diane said that they add a name for any child who had been killed, regardless of whether they were in school or not.

This past March, KOB had an anti-violence youth march, which started at 111th Street and ended at 116th Street on Michigan Avenue. The "Save a Teen/Do Something" youth anti-violence campaign organized the march to break the cycle of youth violence in 2008. After the march, they had video shoots and a "Juke Jam." The party was sponsored by WGCI, with Lil' John as their DJ. The citywide campaign "Save A Teen/Do Something," will continue to address the violence that face the youth of Chicago and young people nationwide.

One of Diane's success stories is Abdullah Brewer, a kid who joined KOB in 2003. At that time, 15-year-old Abdullah was in a gang, sold drugs, and had dropped out of school. His mother could not handle him.

He was interested in music, and KOB provided him with a creative outlet through its Music Entrepreneurship program. Since then, Abdullah has been honored with the "Heroes in the Hood" Award at the DuSable Museum, and was designated one of "The Young Movers and Shakers" on local radio station WVON.

Abdullah went back to school and received two perfect attendance awards. He has been a panelist on the Illinois Youth Violence Prevention Forum/Development Community Project (DCP) several times. He also received a letter from the National Honors Society announcing his membership. Now a youth advisor for Kids Off the Block, Abdullah has performed in many talent shows and has taken home awards for 1st place. He performs as a rap and spoken word artist.

KOB has sparked a citywide movement as our children continually face the kind of violence that occurred in the past year. The Roseland-based organization has



Photo by CENABETH CROSS

**The Kids off the Block memorial for school-aged kids killed in the community and in schools in neighborhoods in and around Chicago in 2007.**

nity, including Steve Young from the Illinois Campaign to Prevent Handgun Violence, Dr. Michelle Gittler of the Schwab Medical Center, and Ron Holt, the father of Blair Holt, a public school kid killed last year saving another youth from getting killed on a bus, spoke and exchanged ideas on how to best stop gun violence.

"Reasonable gun laws, laws that balance the need to protect the rights of gun owners with the necessity of reducing the threat of gun violence, are the right thing for us to do. Gun violence in America is a national disgrace and we will never give up or give in to the gun extremists," Daley was quoted in a press release as saying.

"I know some people wonder why I continue to pursue the passage of gun reform legislation in the face of strong opposition from the NRA and other gun extremists," he went on. "It's very simple. Reasonable laws are

**Non-violence defined Dr. King. What would he think of us today, with our homes and our neighborhoods under the violent assault of gangs, guns and drugs?**

**- Richard M. Daley, Mayor of Chicago**

inspired other communities to find a way to stop the violence in their own neighborhoods.

## Addressing the Surge in Violence

The Virginia Tech massacre happened just over a year ago but here in Chicago, children are being killed on a daily basis. My son, Benjamin David Cross, was killed on Nov. 19, 1991. He was shot in the back with a handgun by a gang member. He had just left the home of relatives in the Dearborn Homes Chicago public housing development.

We did not live in public housing at the time. Nothing was done about it because, as I was told by the police, "no one would lay a finger on the youth."

My son was 23 years old when he was killed. He went to Olive-Harvey College in the daytime and worked at the White Castle hamburger joint on 103rd Street at night. He could walk to work from where we lived. He didn't have time to be in a gang.

I attended the Million Mom March to advocate for more gun control. The National Rifle Association won that battle. My fight is still trying to get guns off the street. In Diane's case, one person made a difference but I can't fight the gun laws alone.

On April 1st, 2008, Mayor Richard M. Daley held the first of many rallies to get guns off the street and out of the hands of our children. He wants the Illinois General Assembly to approve "common sense" laws to end children's easy access to guns. The rally was the first of several planned by Community Assistance Programs (CAPS) in a year-long violence prevention initiative that will be held in the city and the suburbs.

At the rally, people from various parts of the commu-

the thing for us to do," he said.

Daley also reminded people that 40 years ago Martin Luther King was killed by a gun.

"Non-violence defined Dr. King. What would he think of us today, with our homes and our neighborhoods under the violent assault of gangs, guns and drugs? Let's stand together and continue to speak out against whatever threatens the safety of our children our families and our people. Working together, we can solve these problems. And working together, we will keep our neighborhoods safe, stable and strong," he said.

In the spring, CAPS and the city's Department of Children and Youth Services, in partnership with Clear Channel Communications, sponsored a teen violence summit. Teenagers came together from all around the city to share their thoughts on what the city and its people can do, according to a Chicago Police Department press release.

The rest of the year, CAPS plans to conduct the "Voices Against Violence" campaign, where they will spread the message through the children themselves. They will sing, create art, tape videos and films to get the message across in their own way.

We are losing an entire generation of children. Something has got to be done. Diane's mission is to provide low-income youth with an alternative to truancy, drugs, and gang violence. This is a way to keep kids out of the juvenile justice system. This is a way to keep our kids alive. I think it's going to take more than talking to solve these problems.

KOB is in partnership with the city of Chicago, CAPS, the Chicago Police Department, the Roseland Youth Safety Network Coalition, Park National Bank, and St. John's Baptist Church.



Photo by CENABETH CROSS

**Diane Latiker founded the Kids Off the Block program in July 2003 to create positive change for the children in her community.**

# Crystal Clear Views

by Crystal Medina

Let me start by noting that I have been the lease holder of my scattered site unit for 8 years and I love my home! It is where I have been able to raise my child and share great memories with family and friends. It is my own humble sanctuary, my getaway from the rest of the world. Part of the reason that I have had such a great experience as a resident of public housing is that the management office for my building has been so wonderful and competent. I have heard horror stories of living in the developments, other scattered site units around the city, and even in the Section 8 voucher program and consider myself blessed.

But things have changed recently. After looking around my living quarters and speaking with other residents, I realized that problems in our units are not being taken care of properly and in a timely matter. Recently, there have been more inspections than usual by the management offices and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). During these inspections, huge problems are being overlooked. Sometimes inspec-



tions are scheduled and after residents have prepared their units, no one shows up.

I have always loved being a resident because I live in a great neighborhood with lots of resources that I can utilize. My apartment is beautiful and spacious, and the management office has always done a great job in maintaining the units. But what are our rights as residents if we see things starting to change and the management offices are not keeping up with their duties? What can we do to make sure our living space is maintained properly?

First of all, always stay lease compliant. Follow the rules. Adhere to any requirements that need to be followed during inspections. The management office usually gives you the choice of being home or they will use the master key. Make a list of problems in your unit and try to be home so that you can point out exactly what is wrong with your unit, just in case the staff overlook things. If you cannot be home for whatever reason, tape your list to the door, where the management office will see it, along with a note explaining why the list is there in the first place. Keep a copy of what you taped up for yourself and for your records. Wait about a week, and if management has

not attempted to address your problem or if you didn't have an inspection and just have a problem that needs to be addressed, call your management office and put in a work order. Make sure you record the time and date of your call, and who you spoke to. If they still fail to attend to your situation after the date that you were given on the phone, go in person and speak to the property manager and explain the entire situation, showing them your records.

We are no different than anyone living in the private market when it comes to our living conditions and we should be treated with respect. Our homes may be subsidized but there is no reason why we should have to deal with poor living conditions that jeopardize our safety. Make your concerns known.

I hope that these tips work well for you, and remember you can always write to me about your problems. Please address your letters to Crystal or Crystal Clear Views and I will try to help you out! Send your questions via U.S. Mail to: Crystal Clear Views, Residents' Journal, 4859 S. Wabash, Chicago, IL 60615. You can also e-mail me at [crystalmedina@live.com](mailto:crystalmedina@live.com).

## Chicago Rental Subsidies Funding



Photos by MICHAEL IBRAHEM

Suzen Reily (from left), a disabled resident living in a Forest Park subsidized unit; Betty Harris, a participant at the "Keeping a roof over their heads" conference; and Rosanna Marquez, President of the Eleanor Foundation.

Continued from Page 11

"Monthly Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments for an individual are \$603 in Illinois. If SSI represents an individual's sole source of income, \$181 in monthly rent is affordable, while the fair market rent, FMR, for a one-bedroom is \$721 [in Illinois].

A unit is considered affordable if it costs no more than 30 percent of the renter's income. The FMR in Chicago metro for a one-bedroom is \$832, so the gap is even bigger," Palmer said.

The National Low-Income Housing Coalition's (NLIHC) study, "Out of Reach," offers some other significant figures. The study states that "In Cook County, a minimum wage worker earns an hourly wage of \$6.50. In order to afford the FMR (Fair Market Rent) for a two-bedroom apartment, a minimum wage earner must work 111 hours per week, 52 weeks per year. Or, a household must include 2.8 minimum wage earner(s) working 40 hours per week year-round in order to make the two-bedroom FMR affordable."

Additionally, statistics in the study show how in Cook County, including Chicago, the estimated average wage for a renter is \$16.05 an hour. In order to afford the FMR for a two-bedroom apartment at this wage, a renter must work 45 hours per week, 52 weeks per year. Or,

working 40 hours per week year-round, a household must include 1.1 workers earning the mean renter wage in order to make the two-bedroom FMR affordable.

On Friday, March 28, I attended a conference called "Keeping a roof over their heads: Low-income working women and affordable housing," where Rosanna Marquez, President of the Eleanor Foundation spoke of the wonderful things being accomplished by the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

She commented that one of their programs was seeing a 100% success rate with zero foreclosures on homes purchased through their Home Ownership Program.

Betty Harris, another participant at the conference, suggested a turn away with the emphasis on procuring rental places for low-income people. In Harris' opinion, there need to be more groups focused on assisting low-income people by encouraging them to pursue home ownership.

"This needs to become a new trend where activists may try to build pride of self and pride in America, where not only economics keep some people from experiencing the American dream, but ignorance, or lack of knowledge of how the 'system' actually works, and how that lack of knowing what our options are has often kept both women and minorities down," she said.

## "Hoops in the Hood" 2008 Cross-City Final at Seward Park



Photo by ANJULI MANIAM

Englewood community kids ages 10 to 13 compete with seven communities across Chicago in the Hoops in the Hood Cross-City Final at Seward Park on August 23, 2008. Hoops in the Hood is a collaboration of Chicago community basketball leagues that aims to provide kids with safe and healthy summer activities.

# My Life, My Story, My

by Mia Dunlap

Sometimes I feel like crawling under a desk and convincing God to allow me to die. Frankly, it's not easy being the first in my family to graduate high school in four years and also being the first to go to college. That reality puts an indescribable pressure on me that causes me to be too terrified to fail and even more afraid to admit to myself (let alone anyone else) when life gets overwhelming. Some nights I have found myself laying in my dorm room hiding under my pillow, wishing I didn't feel so alone, so empty and so forgotten. Most of my associates have decent relationships with their parents, giving them a place to be vulnerable and cry. I, on the other hand, have successfully mastered the unwanted skill of not knowing how to cry, even when I want or need to. In the moments where I have felt safe enough to be vulnerable, I've been too afraid to let those times slip away in fear of their infrequent return. In the rare instances that tears form, I surprise myself.

Spelman College did not always feel like an option for me; \$27,000 a year seemed out of reach for a poor girl who grew up in the Robert Taylor Homes public housing development and whose family income never exceeded the poverty line. But the nurturing environment at Spelman is priceless. Every once in a while, though, it would be comforting to get a card from my family that simply says "Be encouraged," or "I'm here if you need me," or perhaps a telegram to say, "I believe in you." However, when that doesn't happen, I ask God for the strength to get out of bed and help me to encourage myself because giving up is not an option. Sometimes, my courage comes from reflecting on how history has proven that girls like me, living in the projects with a part-time father, have a slim chance of making it through high school, and college isn't even on the radar screen!

I hold on to God like Jacob did when I remember times my family pressed ourselves against the floor and froze at the sound of bullets outside our window. When I think about the time we were homeless, six of us living in a one-bedroom senior building because my eldest brother sought the help of gang-bangers to make money, I remember why I can't throw in the towel. I reflect on how I pretended to be strong when those gang bangers beat him into a jaw brace and a night in the hospital.

I think about how my mom had my brother when she was just 15 and me at 17 and never finished her sophomore year of high school and now is trying to reclaim her childhood. I remember wanting to see the face of my parents at my assemblies, plays and speaking events, and the day I stopped inviting them so I wouldn't continue to look for them. I remember wishing my father spent more time at home than he did in jail so that he could see me graduate college. I remember wondering why my family had to live in the projects for over half my life. I remember wishing my siblings and I had tangible



examples of people overcoming the bondage of struggle, hurt and shame. I remember believing that I could break that cycle and every day I'm striving to do just that and be someone that my siblings and my community can look to and be proud of.

A rising junior, English major and philosophy minor at Spelman College in Atlanta, I plan to attend law school and earn a dual degree in law and social work. I want to be a social worker and a lobbyist for children in broken homes, detention centers and foster facilities. I want to give back to my "inner-city" community like mentors have given back to me. Along my journey, I have had many people and programs pour into me and help shape the woman I am becoming. People like Toni Straight, my 5th-8th grade teacher, who believed in a future I could not imagine; the University of Chicago program, where I was not only allowed to dream, but also met a number of women who took me under their wings; Sharon Tillman, my high school social worker, who always highlighted my resourcefulness and my strengths; Leak and Sons Funeral Home, who always has a job space for me whenever I'm home from college; the folks at Residents' Journal, who are still trying to convince me to use my powers of communication to speak for my community; Lisa Rhodes, whose embrace helps make my college transition less frightening; Earick Rayburn, my high school calculus teacher, whose advice means the world to me; the mother figures and sister-friends in my church who's loved me without question; Ora Sheares, whose thoughtfulness has brought me many smiles; and recently, Kanika Magee, my internship supervisor, who has a unique way of making me feel special. Although my family isn't very close with each other, they have certainly shared a part in my growth experience as well, especially my grandmother.

Each of these inspirations, and some who aren't named, have met me at critical stages in my plight and have played a large role in the direction that my life is guiding me.

When I read the quote in *Lanterns*, by Marion Wright Edelman, "I startle myself at my audacity and am outraged by my timidity," I instantly knew I could use it to describe myself. I am breaking the rules of my community and daring to believe that it is possible to progress. I am ripping apart the cycle that bound my family to drugs, jail, mental and physical abuse - the cycle that has betrayed my family for years. I am surviving and collecting the memories, the stories, and the song that have been a part of my voyage. I am exposing the truth of my journey in order to take charge of it. Unexpectedly, fear seeps in and prompts me to believe that I am dreaming too big and the risks I'm taking are too indefinite. And so again, I want to crawl under a desk.

But this time, as I pray, I'm reminded of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s quote, "If you can't fly, run. If you can't run, walk. If you can't walk, crawl, but by all means keep moving!"

# Reforms Needed at Tamms Supermax Prison

by Mary C. Johns

**R**eform is badly needed at the Tamms Supermax Prison for the "egregious abuses" to inmates occurring there, according to Tamms Year Ten (TY10), an activist and prisoner support group.

TY10 reported on Sept. 23 that since the opening of the prison on March 8, 1998, "Allegations of torture and lack of due process have dogged the prison."

Most of the 210 inmates at Tamms "are kept in permanent solitary confinement, fed through a slot in the cell door, denied phone calls to family, and have no access to rehabilitative or communal programming, including religious services."

They added that some of the men at the prison have been kept in "solitary confinement for years—many for a decade" and noted reports of "insanity, self-mutilation and suicide attempts" at the Supermax.

The prison, also known as "Tamms C-Max," located in Tamms, Illinois, consists of 500 single 8 feet by 10 feet concrete cement cells, stainless steel sinks, toilets and mirrors, with a hard to reach window that cannot be opened, according to information at Supermaxed.com.

"The CMAX facility houses an execution chamber for administering lethal injections and houses the most disruptive and violent inmates, deemed unsafe to house with the general prison population," according to Wikipedia, the free on-line encyclopedia.

TY10 said the super-maximum prison was designed as "a short behavioral-modification" facility, but "more than a third of the population had been held there a full decade" which raised concern among legislators that the prison had strayed far from its original purpose.

"88 men have been at Tamms since the prison opened 10 years ago and are being held indefinitely," according to a report issued by the MacArthur Justice Center in October.

Jean Maclean Snyder, an attorney with the MacArthur Justice Center who has represented mentally ill prisoners from Tamms, "emphasized the short-sightedness of indefinite terms of isolation" for the prisoners in a press release.

"Total solitary confinement for years at a time, with no end in sight, is a form of psychological torture and often leads to mental illness," she stated.

Snyder estimated that nearly a third of current prisoners will be released to their communities in the next 10 years, after years in isolation, and may not be ready for society.

"When some of these men finally do return to society, they will be worse off than before they went in," she said.

TY10 reported that in response to the criticism and organizing from activists and prisoner support groups and the introduction of the Supermax Reform Bill, the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) acknowledged problems at the southern Illinois facility and agreed to meet with members of TY10 and sympathetic legislators.

That meeting took place on October 10 with Illinois Rep. Julie Hamos (D-Evanston) and other state officials. The meeting was followed by a hearing at the Bilandic building at 160 N. LaSalle Ave.

At the hearing, top IDOC officials discussed possible reforms at Tamms prison with advocates "who have sought to achieve more humane conditions at the prison."

According to the MacArthur Justice Center, the "reformers are hoping that these discussions will lead to major policy changes, including regulations about why someone is sent to the supermax, for how long, and how they can earn their way out."



Photo by MARY C. JOHNS

## 'Action Now' For An Equitable 2016 Chicago Olympics

Denise Dixon, executive director of Action Now, declaring that Mayor Daley and the Chicago 2016 Olympic Committee need more city strategies in place to protect affordable housing, living-wage jobs, workers rights, public safety and education in low-income South Side communities of colors at a press conference in August 2008 hosted by the Communities for an Equitable Olympics 2016 coalition.

# Sheriff Gets Safeguards for Evicted

by Mary C. Johns

**R**enters in Cook County will now be notified before they are evicted from buildings in foreclosure, according to Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart.

Steve Patterson, a spokesperson for the sheriff, told *Residents' Journal* on Oct. 20 that Dart halted evictions for a few days in October because many renters were evicted without knowing their buildings were in foreclosure.

Dart "was worried that in a foreclosure, the person with the mortgage would know what was going on. But the person paying the rent would have no idea," Patterson said.

"(The Sheriff) just saw too many cases of people finding out they were being evicted when we knocked on the door. And he just said, 'I'm done with it. I'm not doing it anymore.'

Patterson explained that the sheriff agreed to resume making evictions after judges agreed to require banks to notify renters. The judges resolved a stand-off after banks and other property owners threatened to sue the sheriff.

"They threatened to and they wanted Sheriff Dart to be held in contempt in court for not keep doing the evictions. And he said he was willing to be held in contempt if that's what it came to. It never came to that. The judges told him that they would kind of work with him on a solution rather than hold him in contempt of court. And this was the solution," Patterson said.

"Now there's a whole form that has to be filled out by the bank saying 'On this date, we went to this address and talked to these people and they have to name all the people in the building, and told them about this foreclosure. And then they have to sign it swearing that that's the truth, and that's the only way he would resume the evictions."

The new procedures come as a result of several discussions between the sheriff's office and members of the Cook County Circuit Court's Chancery Division over a week's period of time.

Dart stopped making evictions earlier in October after an unprecedented number of evictions in the wake of the growing mortgage home foreclosure crisis, according to a press release at the time. The sheriff stopped the evictions to protect "renters – most of whom are dutifully paying their rent every month, only to later learn their landlord has fallen behind on mortgage payments and the building has gone into foreclosure."

Describing the renters as "innocent victims," the sheriff



Cook County Sheriff web site photo

**Cook County Sheriff Thomas J. Dart plays a hand game with youth.**

said many people were oblivious to the financial straits their landlord might be in.

Dart added that the "mortgage companies only see pieces of paper, not people, and don't care who's in the building" and that "they simply want their money and don't care who gets hurt along the way."

"On top of it all, they want taxpayers to fund their investigative work for them. We're not going to do their jobs for them anymore. We're just not going to evict innocent tenants. It stops today."

According to the press release, last year, "Dart pushed a bill before the legislature that would have required mortgage companies to identify any children or senior citizens living in a unit before requesting an eviction."

He said he hoped to link those vulnerable residents with social service agencies, "but banking and real estate industry lobbyists killed the bill."

Dart – who is believed to be the first sheriff of a major metropolitan area to take such a step – "wants a safety net to be established either by the judiciary or state legislature, to protect those most harmed by the mortgage crisis, and he wants mortgage companies to be forced to provide sufficient information to the Sheriff's Office in order to conduct an eviction."

He said "that will provide greater notification to tenants that their building is in foreclosure and will require mortgage companies and their attorneys to do more leg work in advance of an eviction. "Because the banks aren't doing that now, more than one-third of all trips by sheriff's eviction teams' result in finding nobody home to verify who lives there or finding someone other than the mortgage-holder."

Foreclosure filings have steadily climbed in Cook County since 1999 and the number of foreclosure evictions has almost tripled in just two years, according to Dart.

In 1999, there were 12,935 mortgage foreclosure cases filed in Cook County. Noticeable increases came in 2006, when 18,916 were filed, and last year, when 32,269 were filed. This year, Dart projects more than 43,000 to be filed. Dart said his office is on pace to conduct evictions stemming from mortgage foreclosures at 4,500 properties this year. "That compares to just 1,771 in 2006," according to his press release.

## New Safeguards for "Innocent Renters"

**B**anks holding the mortgage are now required to do several things prior to the eviction process.

They must provide the court a detailed description of the building and name all its occupants at the time of the initial foreclosure filing. They must provide a date that bank representatives were last at the property for an inspection prior to the entry of an eviction order. The bank must first prove to the court notice of the foreclosure has been given to all building tenants, if the bank requests additional parties be added to the eviction order. Finally, banks must also prove they informed tenants of the 120-day grace period, granted to them by state law, allowing them to secure new housing before moving out.

Additionally, Dart announced that the sheriff's office "will hire a full-time social worker, who will work with evictions unit personnel to help those evicted find alternative housing and connect them with other community social services; Assign an attorney to the eviction unit to help identify instances of possible mortgage fraud, and expand the Sheriff's Financial Crimes Unit to include investigations into claims of mortgage fraud."

"Those steps not only protect tenants, but also taxpayers, who will no longer foot the bill for conducting due diligence investigations for the banks," according to the Sheriff's office.

# Increasing Numbers of Homeless

by Mary C. Johns

**T**he number of homeless people over 50 is increasing at an alarming rate and they have limited resources for support," according to a first-ever report on the issue released June 2, 2008 by the Chicago Alliance to End Homelessness and Loyola University Chicago's Center for Urban Research and Learning.

"The groundbreaking report, which for the first time tracks homeless individuals aged 50 – 64, found that a majority of people in this age group became homeless for the first time in middle age," according to a press release on the report.

The groups stated that the nine-month study was created "in response to local homeless service agencies who were reporting an increasing number of older individuals seeking help."

The study, which also offers "a comprehensive portrait of the older homeless, the issues they face and trends in the homeless population," states that "between 2001 and 2006, Chicago-area agencies saw, on average, a 26 percent increase in older individuals needing services in the last five years."

Significant findings in the "Homeless over 50: The Graying of Chicago's Homeless Population" report includes homelessness among employable older individuals who find challenges to work and veterans being unable to access any military benefits.

Christine C. George, an assistant research professor at Loyola, stated in the press release that for the first time

ever, she and others who research the data now have an inside look at this "forgotten segment of our population."

"Important but often neglected issues such as proper nutrition, eye/vision care, or mental health greatly impact the quality of life for these individuals. This report should be used as a foundation to make some significant policy changes to better meet the needs of this group," she added.

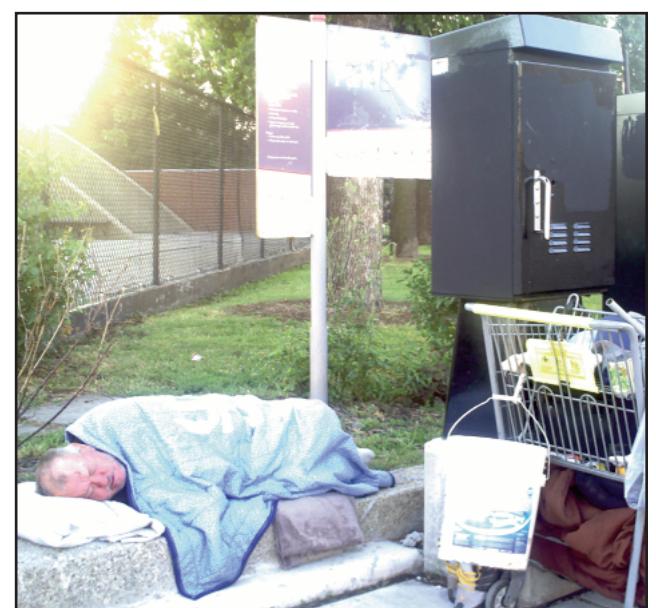
Nancy Radner, CEO of the Chicago Alliance to End Homelessness, said the report's "surprising finding" is that "these are not individuals who have been living on the streets for 20 years. Rather, they are usually people employed in low-wage jobs and one personal catastrophe, such as an injury or hospital bill, pushes them over the edge into homelessness," she said.

"While a younger person might bounce back by tapping into the resources of family or government-run programs, an older person generally has fewer options and eventually ends up homeless."

The report's authors recommend stronger partnerships between public and private agencies that serve people who are homeless and the aging, and the enactment of state universal paid sick time, so ailments and temporary disabilities don't completely cut someone out of their job. They also suggest expansion of job training programs for individuals over 48 and improvements in the Social Security Income Program for people to be able obtain benefits.

The Chicago Alliance to End Homelessness plans to use the findings "to help shape the implementation of the Chicago Plan to End Homelessness."

The study was built on a 2001 survey of more than



**A Homeless senior citizen huddled up and sleeping outside in Eckhart Park at the corner of Chicago Avenue and Noble Street in May 2008.**

1,300 Chicago-area homeless people, in which one-fourth of them were over the age of 50, and from focus groups with 53 homeless individuals and 60 service providers. The trends and demographic information came from administrative data spanning 2001 to 2006. The report also includes 10 in-depth life history interviews conducted in 2007.

# Saving a Piece of History in Cabrini

by Cenabeth Cross

## The William Walker Mural

One of the few remaining murals painted by William Walker is under threat. Walker, born in 1927, has three remaining works here in Chicago.

His "Wall of Respect," which he painted at 43rd Street and Langley Avenue in 1967, is credited with sparking the community mural movement, but that one has already been completely destroyed.

Now, one of his remaining murals is in danger of being demolished. This endangered work located at 617 W. Evergreen Ave. is known as the "All of Mankind" mural.

Walker painted the mural on the front wall of a church near the Cabrini-Green development.

In the "History of Parishes of the Archdioceses of Chicago" (vol. II), it is written that the church was originally run by an Italian Protestant minister. In 1927, the building was converted to a Catholic mission church, San Marcello for the St. Phillip Benizi Parish, to serve the Italian population that was dominant in the area at the time. Today, the building is a Baptist church owned by the pastor and his family.

Beginning in 1962, when the first of the Chicago Housing Authority developments were built in the area surrounding the church, the population of the neighborhood began to change. After the 20 years it took to complete all of the Cabrini-Green developments, the community was comprised of mostly African Americans. At this time, Dennis Kendricks, the priest at San Marcello, invited Walker to paint his church inside and out. Kendricks wanted the artwork to represent "love and unity in the community."

Today, Walker, a co-founder of the Chicago Public Art Group, is trying to save the mural and the church as well. Walker lives here in Chicago. He is the only living African American muralist in the Midwest. His first work, entitled



Photo by CENABETH CROSS

**The endangered "All of Mankind" mural, located on the front of a church at 617 W. Evergreen Ave., is one of the few remaining murals painted by artist William Walker, who currently lives in a CHA senior building.**

their work on the project.

In a letter dated Oct. 22, 1972, priest Dennis Kendricks writes to John Weber, co-founder of the Chicago Public Art Group: "This is certainly Mr. Walker's finest work of art. He worked on the wall every day for five months with constant community participation. The wall belongs to the community. They protect and celebrate his art. He expresses their hopes and loves."

There have been many articles written about William Walker. On November 12, 1972, Midwest Magazine published an article, "Out of the Gallery and into the Streets," written by Linda Friedman and Mary Ann Skweres. It begins by saying "Mural art is for the people: gallery art is for the uninvolved." It explains how Walker

**These murals have inspired people in the city for a long time. But as neighborhoods change, those messages are not always understood. What's sad is that the poor condition of these murals makes it difficult for people to even try to understand them.**

**- William Walker, artist**

"Peace and Salvation," was painted in the Cabrini-Green area also. The Rev. Jesse Jackson and Margaret Burroughs spoke at the dedication in 1970. This mural was destroyed and used to make space for advertising.

In 1972, Walker began work on the mural on the San Marcello Church. Its full name is "All of Mankind: Unity of the Human Race (Why Were They Crucified?)." The theme of the work of art is "unity and disunity of the human race." It depicts four interlocking heads of different races which symbolize brotherhood and goodwill. Surrounding the imagery are the names of the individuals who died fighting for African American civil rights, including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, John the Baptist, Jesus, Gandhi, John and Robert Kennedy, Black Panthers leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, and Emmett Till. Also represented are the victims of the My Lai massacre, the Kent State shootings and the Jews in Nazi Germany. The mural covers the entire front of the building and stands 60 feet high and spans 40 feet wide.

The people of the Cabrini-Green community and those in nearby neighborhoods helped in any way they could. They prime-painted and protected the wall until the work was completed. It was funded in most part by the people of the community. The National Endowment for the Arts also contributed. The entire amount of cash spent was \$5,500: \$1,500 to repair the wall and to fill the windows in with bricks, \$2,500 for scaffolding costs and \$500 for the paint. Additionally, the community was given \$1,000 for

goes into each neighborhood to talk to the people and find out what they want and what they will accept. "I do murals to bring consciousness to the people," Walker was quoted as saying.

In 1997, the free weekly Chicago Reader published an article in which Jeff Huebi discussed "The Man behind the Wall." Its subtitle reads "Thirty Years Ago Bill Walker Helped Start an Art Revolution. Why Are Some People Trying To Paint Him Out Of The Picture?" The article describes how Walker always hung out on the corner of Woodlawn Avenue and Hyde Park Boulevard in the '60s.

In August 1967, Walker began painting "The Wall of Respect." This mural was said to have sparked a "people's art movement" that spread to other cities. Those who were once considered vandals by destroying public property with graffiti were now being considered "socially relevant" artists.

On June 12th and 14th in 1991, Victor Sorrell interviewed Walker at Chicago State University (the school where I received my bachelor's degree in art that same year). The theme of their talk was "An Art of Persuasion, Resistance and Affirmation." During the talk, Sorrell described Walker as "An articulate witness to his own place and time. He is committed to demystifying the aura surrounding the artist and the artistic process. People-to-people communication and street-side public art are hallmarks of this contemporary 'prophet with pigment.'"

Sorrell stated that the mural reflected the great gains we have made in our national movement for civil and human rights. He compared Walker to the Mexican

muralists Jose Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros and African American artists like Charles Alston, Aaron Douglas and Charles White.

On Easter Sunday, I went to see the mural for myself. In Cabrini-Green, most of the old housing development buildings are gone. On one side of North Clybourn Avenue are brand new buildings. On the other are four square blocks of vacant land where developers are clearing the ground for more new houses. At 700 N. Clybourn, sitting just behind the Mark T. Skinner Elementary School, you see the San Marcello Church surrounded by vast empty space. I kept walking until I was standing in front of the mural. There is a sign above the mural that reads "Northside Strangers Home M.B. Church: Rev. Demsey Thomas, pastor, founder, and Christmas Trotter." Just below it reads, "We have come this far by faith." Although the mural's colors have almost completely faded, it is still a sight to behold. My heart sank from the thought of the mural disappearing from sight.

Walker said himself in an interview with the Chicago Tribune on October 15, 2005, "These murals have inspired people in the city for a long time. But as neighborhoods change, those messages are not always understood.... What's sad is that the poor condition of these murals makes it difficult for people to even try to understand them."

A coalition to save the "All of Mankind" mural has been formed in Chicago. The group advocates the preservation and restoration of the mural. Coalition members include Lee Bey, architecture critic and writer, who was quoted as saying, "What better place than a re-gentrifying neighborhood to restore a mural that embraces co-operation, equality and the value of all humanity."

I interviewed Jon Pounds, the executive director of the Chicago Public Art Group and Save the "All of Mankind" Mural Coalition member. He said, "I think it would be a tremendous loss to the city and the spirit of the citizens of Chicago if this mural is lost. We know the meaning. It's valid today. We have not solved the issue of race. This mural was painted 36 years ago and calls on us human beings to think about and to live the message." Pounds added that the coalition is searching for people who remember the time when the mural was painted, were involved in the process, or have any pictures of the process.

Alderman Walter Burnett Jr. (27) has given the coalition's goals his support. When asked how he was helping to save the church building and mural, the alderman told me, "Legally, all I can do is if a different development needed my help. I have spoken to the people who want it but I'm not sure they can (keep the mural). The challenge is there is no parking space. They need more land for parking."

Burnett went on to explain that he is worried about the family who owns the church. They are planning to sell to get on with their lives. He informed me that the pastor is trying to get another church. The current church is too small and there is no parking space. I also learned that the large amount of empty space around the church is in fact a park. Burnett said that it would be good if the park district took over to increase the use for the children.

I have a thought: If the church were sandblasted, the mural touched up, the interior remodeled, and some tar and gravel put down on the side for parking, the people would come from everywhere to see this marvelous piece of art. It would be a pleasant place to worship God. Not like the churches we go to now, where we get lost inside. No one even knows you're there. I think we have a responsibility as a people to restore it for ourselves. This mural unites us to live together. It's a wonderful piece. It gives a person a good feeling inside. Check it out.

***Editor's Note: Another of Walker's murals, "History of the Packinghouse Worker," has been restored and is on the side of the Charles Hayes Center, 4859 S. Wabash Ave, which is RJ's headquarters.***

# Letters to the Editor

## Paying the Bills

Dear Editor:

The Inner City Youth and Adult Foundation is a not-for-profit organization that has provided a long history of service in Chicago to ex-offenders and the anti-violence movement concerning youth in our schools and neighborhoods. We are currently seeking financial support from the community for the high cost of utilities, food and other operating expenses sorely needed to deliver services.

We currently have ex-offenders living at the Swift Mansion that have no resources and no where to go and live. At the Mansion, ex-offenders learn life management skills and make positive progress with their dispositions, future goals and direction. Without the refuge of the Swift Mansion, many of these ex-offenders face homelessness which could lead them to return to activities that could take them back to prison.

With winter fast approaching, our organization will be faced with increased natural gas heating cost, which in fact doubled last year putting us in arrears. We are seeking support from agencies and people concerned with the ex-offender population and place importance on programs such as ours that are vital to the health and welfare of the community.

If you would like to make a donation to our not-for-profit organization please send a check payable to:

**Inner City Youth and Adult Foundation Inc.**

Swift Mansion  
National and State Historical Landmark Site  
4500 South Michigan Ave  
Chicago IL 60653

- Maurice Perkins

Founder, Inner City Youth and Adult Foundation

## Breaking My Stride

Dear Editor:

On my normal route to work I cut through the DePaul Center and grabbed a Redeye paper without missing a step. On Wednesday, February 13, 2008, my stride was broken because the Redeye was not there. Instead there was this little paper called Residents' Journal with eight beautiful African American children on the front cover. I hesitated a moment and thought, "Well, I need to read something as I drink my morning coffee." Little did I know that I would be reading about my childhood and be moved to tears.

You see, I am a product of the Robert Taylor Homes (4848 S. State #1302 and 4500 S. State #801) and Wentworth Gardens (235 W 37th Street and 3839 S. Wells). It is amazing that I have not lived in these locations since 1988 but I remember these addresses like they are my social security number. I can't even remember the address of my college dorm or my first apartment or my condominium. But I remember everything about the projects vividly.

What specifically caused me to write to you this morning were the articles by Chantell Suggs, "Drug Addicts: A Childhood Life with a Mother on Drugs," Quincy Newell, "Haters" and all of the poems. To Chantell Suggs I say "You are an amazing person and persevere." My mother wasn't addicted to drugs but had a fondness for alcohol. I am the middle child of eight and I feel your pain and compassion for not wanting your siblings to end up in foster care. You can do it. One thing that helped me when it seemed that I was thrown three steps backwards was the thought, "It can't get worst then this and the only place to go is up." I used to go to sleep just to not think about how bad things were. You have a lot on your plate but only a very strong person can

handle what you are dealing with. Good things are coming your way. I just know it. It may not seem like it now but your sisters and brothers see how hard you are trying to help them and later on when they can protect and take care of you they will. It is obvious you love them; don't underestimate their love for you.

To Quincy Newell: I have a 15 year old nephew who I have been raising since he was 2 and a half years old. I have been trying to get him to understand for years the reverse psychology people use on each other. Your article should be made mandatory reading for all teenagers. It explained so well the meaning of the word "Haters." If only people, especially young people, understood that when someone is hating on you, it means you are doing something right. I tell my nephew when people are hating on you it is because you are a constant reminder of what they are not or what they should be. Therefore, they have to bring you down so that they feel better. I gave him your article to read. Forge ahead young man you are doing well.

To all the contributors to the Anthology. Wonderful, Wonderful, Wonderful. I understand your pain. Just because you are from the projects people automatically label you as a crackhead, killer, liar, dropout, criminal, ignorant, drug dealer, thief, bustdown, gangbanger, etc. I am also from the projects and I must tell you, I am 44 years old and have never taken drugs. Instead, I have a Bachelors degree from Northern Illinois University, a Masters Degree from DePaul University, own my home and live debt free. If there is one thing I must share with you it is that Education is the key. Stick with it; one class at a time. Before you know it, you are done. Besides when you remove yourself away from impoverish and destructive obstacles you come in contact with so many wonderful people who are willing to help you. I learned early in my college life not to share where I was

from because it was the other African American students who treated me like I didn't belong or made comments like "Dang, you barely made it." My reply was always, "If I barely made it, what does this say about you if I caught up with you and you are from a two family home in the suburbs. Shouldn't you be further ahead of me?" The Caucasian students and teachers were always willing to help and their reaction to where I was from was "Wow, and you are here, great job." I say this to share that far too often people from the projects think it is the "Man" who is keeping them down. This is not always the case. Keep your eyes open, keep your mind clear, and put yourself in a position where people see your hard work. Trust me, they will take a chance on you no matter what color you are but you have to show that you are serious and not a slacker.

Great job everyone and I look forward to breaking my stride and grabbing the next copy of Residents' Journal.

- Leonora Johnson

CM/ECF Analyst, United States Bankruptcy Court, Northern District of Illinois (ILNB)

## Checking for Cancer

Dear Editor:

The American Cancer Society is urging Illinois residents to learn about and protect themselves against colorectal cancer, which if detected early means a 90 percent five-year survival rate.

Colorectal cancer is the third most common type of cancer, excluding skin cancer.

The American Cancer Society says that last year 112,340 people in the U.S. were expected to be diagnosed with colon cancer and 52,180 were expected to die from the disease. In Illinois, nearly 7,360 people were diagnosed with colon cancer in 2007, and an estimated 2,630 died from the disease. Wider use of proven screening tests could save more than half of these lives.

Two-thirds of all cancers can be avoided by maintaining a health lifestyle, which means no tobacco use, moderate alcoholic intake, exercise and good nutrition and screening.

For colorectal cancer, those who are 50 years or older, or who have had a history of polyps or bowel disease, diabetes, or a close relative with this type of cancer are more at risk. Additionally, African Americans have a 15 percent higher incidence rate and a 40 percent higher chance of dying from colorectal cancer than their Caucasian counterparts.

The American Cancer Society recommends that people over 50 years old should be screened because in early stages of colorectal cancer there may be no symptoms.

If there are symptoms such as a sustained change in bowel movements, bleeding from the rectum or blood in the stool, cramping or steady stomach pain, or weakness people should see their doctor.

Those with questions about colon cancer or concerns about a diagnosis can call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).

In addition to learning about the latest colon cancer research and treatment options, patients and their families can utilize the Society's Patient Navigation Services, designed to fill a critical void in health care and social services by acting as a full-service navigator to anyone touched by cancer. Through this program, the American Cancer Society assisted Illinois cancer patients more than 60,000 times last year. Services include free transportation to and from treatments, lodging assistance and support programs that pair cancer survivors with cancer patients to help them cope with their diagnosis, treatment and recovery.

- the Chicago Office of the American Cancer Society

## Congratulations to Deverra Beverly

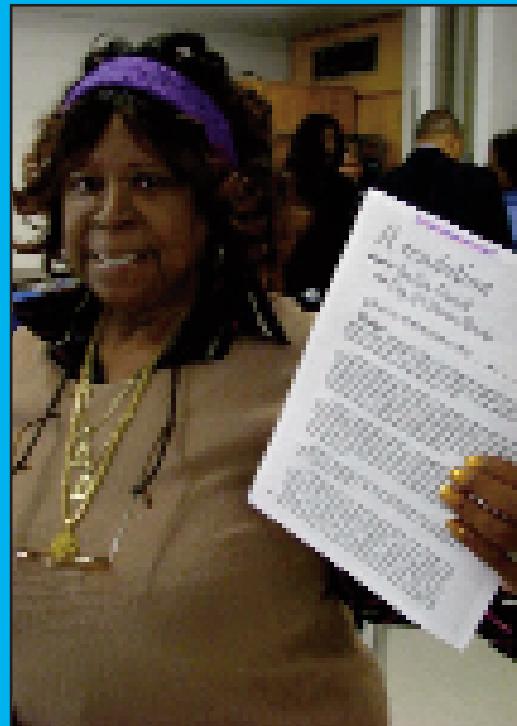
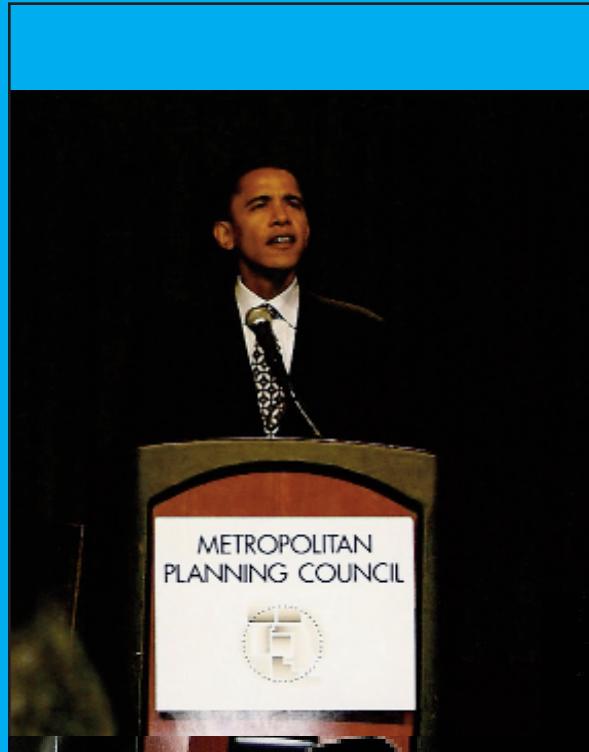


Photo by MARY C. JOHNS

Earlier in the year, CHA ABLA LAC President Deverra Beverly was honored with a Resolution adopted by the City Council of Chicago for her shared efforts in the Chicago Police Department's Operation Safe Passage, initiated to ensure the safety and well-being of Chicago Public School students.

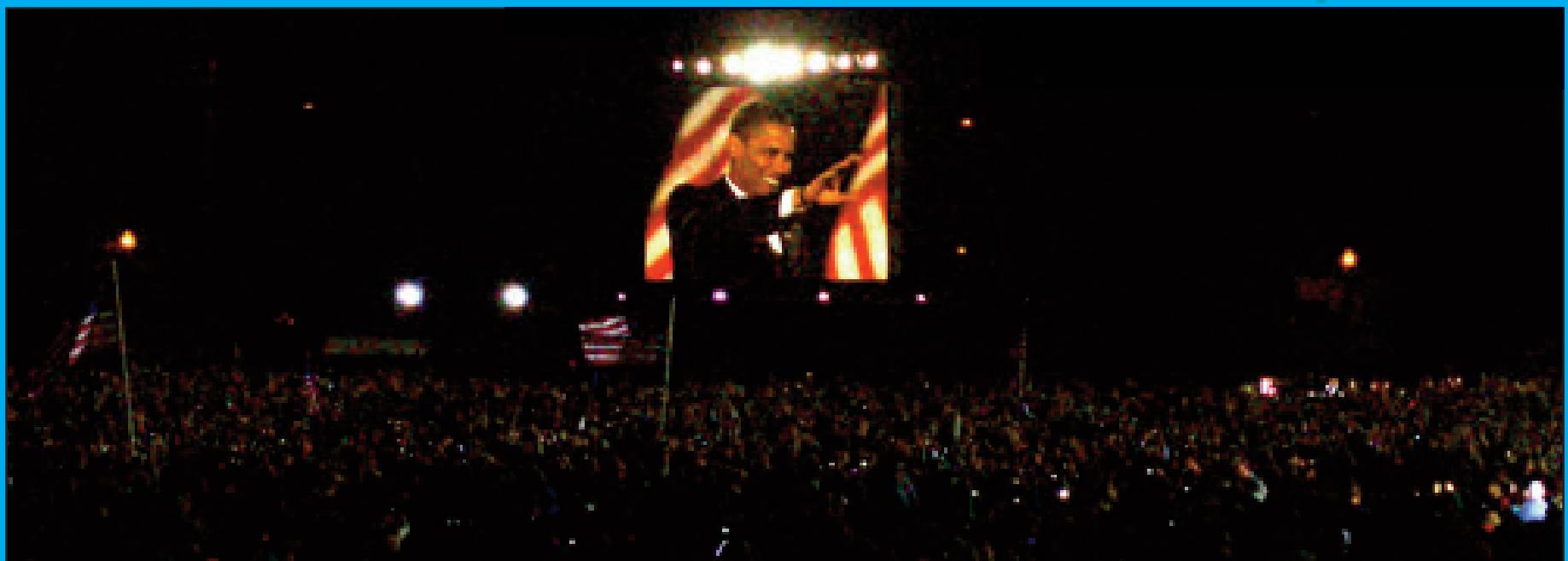
**Residents' Journal welcomes submissions from all of our readers and especially from public housing residents. Please send all letters to our address: 4859 S. Wabash Ave. Chicago, IL 60615. You may also call our office at (312) 745-2682 to discuss your ideas for submission.**



# On the Road to History

Photos top and right from the RJ Archives by Mary C. Johns.  
Bottom photo by Anjuli Maniam

U.S. President-elect Barack Obama (clockwise from top left) during his run for the U.S. Senate, at a debate on Feb. 4, 2004; Obama at the Metropolitan Planning Council's annual meeting on Oct. 7, 2007; Barack Obama at a town hall meeting on the privatization of social security on Feb. 28, 2005; Obama's children, Sasha (left) and Malia, at Chicago State University's pep rally for Obama's nomination as the Democratic candidate for the U.S. Senate in February 2004; Obama addresses the crowd at Grant Park after the announcement of his election as the 44th President of the United States of America on Nov. 4, 2008.



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