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Urban Youth International Journalism Program Section	Joseph, a resident of New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward, pauses from working behind the old Thomas J. Semmes Elementary School building in April 2009 to speak to Residents' Journal reporters.
	The school has been closed since Hurricane Katrina ravished the city in August 2005.
	Photo by Mary C. Johns

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Jovan Gathings	Sunil Garg
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Annie R. Stubenfield	
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Photographers	Residents' Journal is published by We The People Media, 4859 S. Wabash Ave., Chicago, IL 60615. All Chicago Public Housing residents and other low-income people across the city are welcome to contribute to Residents' Journal. Please call (773) 726-5780 x101 or 202, or fax us at (773) 285-2853 with your ideas, comments and concerns.
Clemelyn "Pennie" Brinson	
John Brooks	
Michael Ibrahim	
Crystal Medina	
Annie R. Stubenfield	
Jacqueline Thompson	
Quintana Woodridge	

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

Robert Taylor On Line

Robert Taylor Homes still exists – on the Internet. The last building in the Robert Taylor public housing development was demolished in 2006. Just a few dozen replacement units have been built, and most of the hundreds of thousands of people who lived in Robert Taylor's high-rises over the decades have scattered all over the globe. But on the social networking site Facebook, a 'fan page' for Robert Taylor has more than 2,300 members at this writing, with about 100 more added every week.

On the outside, Robert Taylor Homes was known mostly for the violence fueled by street gangs and drug dealers. Newspaper stories and television features about Robert Taylor almost always included descriptions of dark, dirty hallways and tenants desperate to get out. But for Robert Taylor Homes' 'fans,' the high-rise buildings were home, a place to form community and build lifelong relationships with neighbors. Even though there are frank discussions of the crime and violence, the most popular posts are those that recall good times.

On Valentine's Day this year, someone posted the following message: "Y'all remember people used to sell icy cups? I have not had one of those since the buildings have been gone."

More than 100 people made positive comments about this post. Many were similar to this one, "We had ice cups in all flavors because I loved them things."

Another fan wrote this, "Shout out to Mrs. Jackson from my building. She made the finest icy cups!!!"

In some ways, the Robert Taylor fan site is like a web site for people who graduated from the same high school or who grew up in the same small town. They plan reunions, get in touch with long-lost friends, and reminisce about old times.

Sometimes, reading the comments on the Robert Taylor Homes fan page reveals that the things which were so terrifying to outsiders were not so frightening to those who lived there. A darkened hallway was an opportunity for games of hide-and-go-seek and ding-dong-ditch, or just to lie outside and stare at the sky.

What makes the Robert Taylor site different are the conversations about what happened to their community. Most people can go back to their home towns, even if things have changed dramatically from the time they left. The former Robert Taylor residents currently have only empty fields where their homes once stood. Once the Chicago Housing Authority's Plan for Transformation is



completed – whenever it's completed – the new mixed-income developments planned for the vacant land will have different names and mainly different residents.

On Jan. 16, the Robert Taylor fan page administrator posted the following question: "How do you feel about public housing being torn down and in which way did it affect your life?"

More than 50 people responded, most with comments that placed the blame for the demolition on the behavior of residents:

Resonda wrote, "If everyone missed the projects so much then people should have stopped what they were doing and they would still be standing."

On March 20, Charrie wrote, "You cannot deny that some of the children and adults were out of control and when the government saw this, it was a ripe opportunity to come in and take over. Look at the Cabrini-Green building where the residents BOUGHT the building from CHA and had ownership!!

That DID belong to them and they had the right to do what they chose to, but it was for the best. There were some destructive behavior going on and in a sense, we destroyed ourselves and our community!"

In some ways, the Robert Taylor fan site is like a web site for people who graduated from the same high school or who grew up in the same small town. What makes the Robert Taylor site different is that most people can go back to their home towns, but the former Robert Taylor residents currently have only empty fields where their homes once stood.

This discussion was sad for me to read. No one talked about how the CHA's Plan for Transformation wasted millions of dollars on 'good neighbor' programs and 'service connectors' that even they now admit didn't work. No one talked about the CHA's failure to build promised mixed-income housing in a timely manner, which would have allowed residents to return to the community.

Instead, it seems that most of the former Robert Taylor residents blame themselves for the demolition of the high-rises. But it's fair to say that the Robert Taylor fan site – and many more sites dedicated to other developments and individual buildings – wouldn't exist in the first place unless the conventional wisdom about public housing was wrong. That a fan page for Robert Taylor exists at all indicates that the bonds of community formed by tenants were not so toxic as the powers that be would have us believe.

"They can take our neighborhood but they can't take us," wrote one of the Robert Taylor fans.

The existence of the Robert Taylor fan page is a sign post for how quickly we are rushing down the Internet superhighway and what our destination will look like. It is difficult today to get an education, look for a job, apply for job and do many other



Photo by MARY C. JOHNS

Youths playing during a Fun Day event in front of a CHA Robert Taylor Homes public housing building in September 2004.

basic things without going on line. Almost everyone knows how to check out videos on YouTube and send e-mail. In addition to the standard desktop computer with a wire connecting to the Internet, you can get on-line with a laptop that picks up a wireless Internet signal, through your phone, or through a new digital-ready television. According to the Federal Communications Commission, nearly three out of four Americans now have Internet access at home, and even more – 78 percent – consider themselves "Internet users."

This may be progress, but like most things in this country, it is progressing unevenly. The FCC found that African Americans, Latinos, people with disabilities, senior citizens and those who live in rural areas are lagging behind everyone else in Internet usage. The FCC was particularly worried about the number of people who don't have access to a high-speed broadband connection, which is needed to use most web sites and see

videos. Just 40 percent of people whose family income is below \$20,000 a year use broadband regularly, no surprise since the cost of broadband at home ranges from about \$37 per month to more than \$46 per month.

Incidentally, that's why you are reading this story in print rather than on-line. Residents' Journal is a news source for low-income people all over Chicago, and while most of our readers are as 'Internet literate' as anyone else, they are a population that cannot afford to get access at home. For the moment, print is still a more reliable way for our readers to get and store their news and information.

Maybe not for much longer, however. Residents' Journal may go on-line if the FCC has its way. Just a month after the FCC released this report, the agency produced their solutions to the problems they identified. On March 16, the FCC presented the US Congress and the American people with "Connecting America: The National Broadband Plan." The FCC plan aims to reduce prices for broadband service and make it available everywhere. The FCC plans to pump out billions of dollars to make broadband universal and affordable.

The FCC's proposal has attracted little attention amid the efforts of President Barack Obama's administration to give everyone access to affordable health care reform, the wars we are fighting overseas, and the ongoing financial crisis. But as the Robert Taylor fan page proves, the Internet is a way for people to maintain that sense of community which is so elusive in this new age. Public housing tenants have always known how to forge and maintain their own bonds of community – especially when others told them their community didn't even exist in the first place.



Photo by MARY C. JOHNS

A Robert Taylor Homes building undergoing demolition in October 2004.

News Briefs

CORE Sues CPS

The Caucus of Rank and File Educators (CORE) is a lawsuit against pursuing the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) for policies that have "a disparate impact on African American teachers," according to a statement.

For six years, CPS has laid off teachers and other workers after closing, phasing out, turning-around, or consolidating dozens of schools under its Renaissance 2010 program. The program has not been sitting well with many students, parents, school advocates and teacher union members.

On behalf of African-American teachers fired through Renaissance 2010, CORE filed a complaint with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). EEOC is responsible for enforcing federal laws that make it illegal to discriminate against a job applicant or an employee because of the person's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information — against the Board of Education, citing that

EEOC upheld the case and CORE is pursuing it, according to their February 25 press release, the day the public school board voted to "close or turnaround" "eight more of its public schools.

Study: Ill Children Getting Poorer

Children in Illinois are getting poorer, according to the new Kids Count 2010 report. Using data from the US Census as well as other government agencies, the non-profit Voices for Illinois Children found that the child poverty rate in Illinois increased even before the recession, from 15 percent in 2006 to 17 percent in 2008. Since the recession hit, the number of children in the Food Stamps program increased 22 percent from two years earlier, to 1.5 million children across the state. In 2007-2008, 38 percent of African American children, 22 percent of Latino children and 9 percent of white and Asian children were living in poverty. The report also found that by June 2009, just 20,000 Illinois families were receiving assistance through Transitional Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), a 90 percent drop from 1997, the year TANF started in Illinois.

New Online Protection Services for Victims of Domestic Violence

Victims of domestic violence can now go online to get an order of protection. Domestic violence victims can use SmartForms, a new online order of protection service, available on the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County's office web site at www.cookcountyclerkofcourt.org.

The self-service, interactive program asks questions in everyday language to facilitate the completion of civil domestic violence orders of protection. The program guides the users through a series of web pages, and the completed forms may then be printed out and presented at any courthouse to request the order of protection.

Gov. Quinn Signs Anti-Torture Law

On August 10, 2009, Gov. Patrick Quinn signed the Illinois Torture Inquiry and Relief Commission Bill into law, which creates the Independent Relief Commission that will conduct inquiries into the claims of men who say they were tortured by former Chicago Police Commander Jon Burge and officers under his command.

"The signing of the Illinois Torture Inquiry and Relief Commission Bill is a monumental victory because if the Commission concludes there is sufficient evidence that torture occurred, the men who were victims of these unjustifiable human rights violations will have the opportunity to be granted a hearing on their claims of torture."

Priority will be given to those persons who are currently incarcerated for the crime to which there are claims of torture by Jon Burge or officers under his command," according to Standish E. Willis, an attorney with Black People Against Police Torture, and the National Conference of Black Lawyers/Chicago, in an August 12 email sent to Residents' Journal.

Transforming CHA

Tenants Protest New CHA School Reporting Policy

by Mary C. Johns, Editor-in-Chief

Resident leaders said they would fight a proposed CHA policy that would allow the agency to get reports from teachers and other school personnel on the conduct of school children whose parents are public housing tenants.

Francine Washington, Washington Park Scattered Site president, told Residents' Journal she was upset after the CHA proposed the policy at a public hearing on March 29 at the CHA's Charles A. Hayes Family Investment Center.

"This is the last act," Washington said. "They're putting us back in slavery. I wonder when do we come and sign the master's books."

The new CHA policy requires tenants to sign a release which would allow teachers and other school officials to provide reports to CHA about "the conduct of any school aged child between the ages of six to 17." Any tenant that does not sign the release could be evicted, according to the new proposed policy, which is still in the public comment period.

During the public hearing about the policy, Myra King, a member of the CHA Board of Commissioners and head of the tenant Central Advisory Council (CAC), told CHA officials that the resident leadership warned that the policy would cause discrimination against their children and vowed to challenge this "unfair" policy. King and Washington said the policy would cause CHA kids to face discrimination from their teachers and fellow students.



"The CAC and all of the LAC presidents are in total disappointment and in disapproval of you wanting the children's report cards," King said. "It's unfair and it's discriminatory."

"We want our children to go to school, and learn, be just as smart and comfortable as all the other children."

"We have to look out for our children. And that's just not going to happen," declared King.

Also speaking to the CHA officials, Washington said, "You want our names, our social security numbers, our birthdates, our mother's maiden names, our first born, our last born. You want our bank accounts. Now, you're telling us you want the teachers at school to report to you on our children? What else do we have left?"

"The first time that child does something wrong and gets out of order, they are going to say, 'Oh, I should have known that was you. You're from the CHA'."

"That's putting a stigma on our kids."

CHA officials sat silently gazing at her.

An e-mailed statement on this issue from CHA reads, in part:

"This information will help CHA assess the impact and types of services offered to families with school aged children. It is very important to CHA that the privacy of our families and their children remain secure."

"The intention of this proposed change is to help families, not hinder them."

Relocation Rights Duel

by Mary C. Johns, Editor-in-Chief

Public housing tenant leaders recently chided the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) for trying to deny thousands of former residents their right to return to public housing.

CHA officials admitted in the summer of 2009 they didn't know the whereabouts of 3,200 families who were relocated under the Plan for Transformation, the 10-year-old effort to demolish most of the city's public housing developments and replace them with mixed-income communities.

Last July, the CHA placed ads in local newspapers trying to find residents they'd lost. But when the ads produced only limited results, CHA threatened that former tenants who didn't respond within 90 days would lose their right to be relocated.

That move did not sit well with the Central Advisory Council, the group of presidents of CHA developments. Robert Whitfield, one of the CAC's lawyers, told RJ on June 28 that as long as the former residents relocated during the Plan for Transformation and remained lease compliant, their rights wouldn't be relinquished.

"I don't care what they put out in the paper," Whitfield said. "When these people were moved years ago, nobody told them anything like that. All they told them is that they had some options."

Whitfield cited the Relocation Rights Contract established between the residents and CHA at the beginning of the Plan for Transformation, which gives all lease-compliant residents who lived in CHA units as of Oct. 1, 1999, a legally enforceable right to return to a new mixed-income unit, a rehabilitated public housing unit, or to get a Housing Choice Voucher.

Whitfield said he notified the CHA immediately that their new policy would violate the Relocation Rights Contract and

CHA agreed to create a new policy. Whitfield said he would work with CHA to craft a new legal document, and the resident leaders and the CHA would jointly announce the finished product.

"If somebody shows up four years from now, what matters is what happens to that person then. And that's what we're going to memorialize," Whitfield said.

CHA Recants

Back in July, CHA issued a press release that indicated the missing families who didn't contact CHA within 90 days would be dropped from CHA's lists unless they could "prove his or her inability to respond."

But CHA changed its position a month later. On Aug. 6, 2009, CHA General Counsel Scott Ammarell e-mailed a statement that said that non-responding residents would still be removed from the replacement housing waiting after 90 days, but added that qualified former residents who contacted CHA later would get reinstated on the replacement housing list.

They no longer have to prove why they didn't respond to CHA and will continue to have their right to return to a new mixed-income unit, a rehabilitated public housing unit, or to the private market via a Housing Choice Voucher (HCV). Ammarell stated that more than 1,400 families already had contacted CHA as a result of the outreach.

"In order to provide new and rehabilitated housing units to families who need them, it is imperative to have an orderly process to offer such units first to families who have a right to return under the Relocation Rights Contract," Ammarell wrote.

"Any family that is removed from the list may request reinstatement to the list at any time by contacting CHA and providing their current contact information."

Transforming CHA

Ickes Homes News: The Final Curtain?

by Jacqueline Thompson

For over two years, *Residents' Journal* has been reporting how the Harold Ickes Homes Chicago public housing site was supposed to be rehabbed along with Dearborn Homes, Cabrini Green Rowhouses and the Altgeld Gardens far South Side public housing complex, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) April 2008 Moving to Work Agreement with the Chicago Housing Authority.

In the interim, CHA closed down and demolished most of all the buildings at Ickes, and gave residents the choice to relocate to another CHA-rehabbed property or use a Housing Choice (Section 8) Voucher to rent housing in the private market.

At its peak, Ickes Homes—the boundaries of which are between Cermak and 25th streets on the north and south, and between State and Federal streets on the east and west—housed nearly 1,000 families in 11 buildings.

Five buildings were closed in 2007, and six were still occupied until late 2008, when only 132 of 492 apartments were full. At that time, the CHA announced that they were consolidating six buildings to three because of "security concerns and the dilapidated condition of the buildings."

As of July 16, 2009, there were just 79 households remaining in Ickes' three occupied buildings.

Although there are no finalized plans for the redevelopment/rehabilitation of Harold Ickes Homes....When complete, Harold Ickes Homes will contain 312 public housing units.

- **CHA FY2009 Moving To Work Annual Plan for Year 10**

On July 20, pre-demolition procedures for the \$3.1 million project began and the actual demolition commenced on Aug. 3.

The CHA said at the time they expected the demolition to take 150 days and that the two contractors for the demolition, Delta Demolition and Heneghan Wrecking, were expected to adhere to the contract compliance requirement of 40 percent minority and women-owned businesses and to carry out the Section 3 hiring law which dictates that public housing residents be employed with the contractors.

Six Section 3 security and labor jobs were expected to be created from the project, CHA announced.

The demolition was funded by the American Recovery and Rehabilitation Act, the so-called federal stimulus.

In their July press release, the CHA quoted Ald. Pat Dowell (3) as supportive of the demolitions at Ickes. Nevertheless, the CHA assured Dowell that a working group would convene soon after the demolition to "map future development for the site."

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

CHA Admits to Having No Formal Plan in Place for Ickes

CHA spokesperson Matthew Aguilar sent *RJ* an e-mail stating that Ickes will most likely be redeveloped into a mixed-income community, even though the agency has no formal redevelopment plan in place for the public housing site.

"While the CHA has annually reviewed its plans for the future of the Ickes property, it has not yet formally made the determination to redevelop the prop-



erty," Aguilar stated.

CHA's FY 2009 Moving to Work (MTW) Annual Plan for Transformation Year 10 document states that "Although there are no finalized plans for the redevelopment/rehabilitation of Harold Ickes Homes....When complete, Harold Ickes Homes will contain 312 public housing units."

The document states that 104 of the 312 public housing units will be rehabbed in CHA's FY 2011, 104 public housing units will be rehabbed in FY 2013, and the remaining 104 public housing units will be rehabbed in FY 2015.

When asked about the Moving to Work document, CHA said the Plan for Transformation is reviewed on an annual basis.

"As it has with many other properties, the CHA has put together an overall plan with preliminary targets for bringing back units at Ickes over the next several years.

"The CHA anticipates that in the very near future, a working group will be established for formal consideration of the options for the future of the property.

"As with other working groups, residents, community members and stakeholders will all have a voice in the process," the CHA statement read.

The CHA stated they made the decision over the last year to consolidate the six remaining buildings down to three because of "increasing vacancies, serious security concerns and the dilapidation of the buildings."

ing times. To move to a new or remodeled CHA property, or a mixed income space, or take a Housing Choice Voucher and fumble through the private housing sector are all daunting options, said Jacqueline Jamison, a 40-year resident.

"There are no direct paths to new housing with a voucher," Jamison said. "You search and search as if in a jungle, and hope and pray you can be satisfied and accepted."

Ickes LAC President Gloria Williams recognized the distress among the remaining residents and came up with an idea to smooth over the tensions between residents and management. Williams suggested a reunion of all former Ickes residents

Williams explained, "This seemed like the perfect solution to the question, 'What to do to change the climate in the area?'"

Williams said she planned the reunion with CHA employee Gloria Seabrook and other LAC representatives Martha Norris, Nancy Hill, Lori Williams, Diana Stone and Rhoda Ludy as well as Roy Saunders, a popular local DJ.

"We got busy working hard with me and we succeeded in hosting a party like no other get-together that was held before," Williams said.

"I was very proud of the outcome. One set of sign-in sheets revealed that 220 persons came to meet and greet each other in fellowship, friendship and love. Not one negative incident occurred.

"All of our hopes for the event came true. We passed around a list for future reference to locate individuals to invite to the next planned gathering.

"The only let down was those who did not attend for whatever reason. They were missed. It was snowing and raining, so for sure, the weather was involved.

"The very idea has already allowed the dwindling community to feel better about their new place in society by being in touch with others again who they have had to separate from after long years of being good neighbors."

Residents' Moving Concerns

Many of the residents are still reeling from the quick moves from where they lived for 30 to 40 years.

Those that are still in Ickes are fenced out of the demolition areas and carefully skirting workmen who are shoring up the buildings they live in.

Everyone has a memory to share of their time in Ickes. When asked, 'How do you feel about the development being torn down?' the most frequent answer from tenants was, "I hate it that they're tearing it down like this," or "They don't tell you nothing but they're tearing it down and we have no answers as to what's going to replace the demolished buildings."

Some of the residents left at Ickes wanted to remain anonymous. Yet they felt the need to vent.

Many of them were still just getting over being relocated from one building to another recently.

One resident who wanted to be called Mrs. R stayed in her apartment two hours after all of her things had been taken to the new apartment. "I was just sitting and staring," she said.

Some residents got sick because of the quick move. The idea of being forced to move again is not sitting well with the majority of people, and there are many older people who have not made any relocation decisions.

Ickes resident L. Sanders was concerned about her handicapped brother, who she said would have to learn to maneuver in a totally different neighborhood.

Like many Ickes residents, Willie Reed was sad. Reed said he grew up in Ickes from age two and is now in his 40s.

HAROLD IKES HOMES NEWS UPDATE
continues on Page 23



Photo by JACQUELINE THOMPSON
CHA Harold Ickes Homes public housing buildings being demolished by the Heneghan wrecking crew on August 28, 2009.

Altgeld Residents: New School Will Curb Violence

by Mary C. Johns

Parents, teachers, students and community members from the Altgeld Gardens public housing development are urging Mayor Richard M. Daley and the Chicago School Board to restore their neighborhood high school.

The Altgeld residents and their supporters say bringing back a neighborhood school will help curb the recent surge in youth violence in the area.

The Altgeld area received national attention in September when 16-year-old Altgeld resident Derrion Albert was beaten to death near Fenger High School.

The Altgeld community residents, along with members of the Grass Roots Education Movement (GEM) coalition which supports them, recently gathered at the Chicago Board of Education headquarters to ask the Board for a new, open-enrollment high school to share space in the Carver High School building, which now houses a selective enrollment military school.

The protesters want the new school to open immediately. Organizers also noted that the Altgeld area does not have a public library either.

The Altgeld residents and their advocates presented school board members with a petition along with other information. The groups said they are "committed to do whatever it takes to make sure that Altgeld students get their neighborhood high school back for their security, protection and education."

Organizers noted that the Carter Middle School building was closed because of under-enrollment and has been dormant for over a year while the public housing complex was renovated under the CHA's Plan for Transformation.

Since the transformation of Carver High School from a neighborhood school to a selective enrollment military academy in 2006, residents of the Altgeld area said they have been forced to send their children to Fenger High School, which is the next closest school at five miles and two bus rides away. The group said historic tensions exist between the Altgeld and Roseland communities, where most of Fenger's student body lives.

Describing their effort to create a new neighborhood high school a "reverse Renaissance 2010" move, organizers blamed many of their school issues on Mayor Daley's Renaissance 2010 initiative, launched in June 2004 to create new, higher quality public and charter schools.

When Fenger underwent a CPS turnaround under Renaissance 2010 in 2009, school board officials displaced all existing administrators and all but nine teachers, rupturing relationships built over years.

Despite the fact that some of the new teachers



Fenger High School parent on school grounds at the vigil for slain student Derrion Albert on September 28, 2009.

welcomed the Altgeld students, students and parents from Altgeld said the overall climate at the school is unwelcoming.

16-year-old Albert, an honor roll student at Fenger, died after being kicked and beaten with a wooden railroad tie during a brawl between multiple teens on Sept. 24. Albert's beating was captured on a student's cell phone camera and posted on the YouTube Internet site where it received national attention.

In October, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and U.S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan, Chicago's former schools chief, appeared in Chicago to address youth violence.

The Campaign

The group proposes to name the new school at Carver the Hazel Johnson School of Environmental Justice, after a famed local environmental activist.

Hazel's daughter, Cheryl Johnson, an Altgeld resident and director of the People for Community Recovery organization housed at the public housing site, told *Residents' Journal* before a CPS Board meeting in the fall that Carver should be a dual school instead of just a military academy. Johnson added that making Carver a dual school would help deter the ongoing youth violence between the Roseland area students and those bussed in from Altgeld, the two neighborhoods which send students to Fenger.

"First we have to create a place where they don't have to fear that violence. And the only way to do that is to have them in their own neighborhood. And it's going to be more of a parental and community involvement school," Johnson said.

Johnson added that since Fenger's 16-year-old honor student Derrion Albert's death, rivalry between the two community students attending Fenger has escalated, resulting in more fights within the school.

"Because they started bussing our kids, they can't fight on the outside. So, they have been fighting a whole lot on the inside of the school," Johnson said.

Before Board President Michael Scott committed suicide Nov. 16, Johnson said Altgeld residents and their supporters asked him to make Carver a dual school.

"Why not? We're not saying take away the military," Johnson said. "But, we also want it to be another school within that school that's not military."

Marilyn Stewart, president of the Chicago Teachers Union, chided the CPS Board members, saying they should remember that Carter was built for the Altgeld community, and they should reopen the dormant school buildings and let the community kids attend it again.

Now that Altgeld has been completely rehabbed, Stewart said Board members should "give the school back to the community."

"To have put millions of dollars into it and to give it away is absolutely appalling."

So, you need to listen to the community," Stewart said.

According to Jaime Guzman, the interim director of CPS' Office of New Schools, there are already plans for the vacant Carver Middle School to become a new Chicago International Charter Campus starting in 2010.

Guzman said several members of the Transitional Advisory Council from in and around the Altgeld community recently recommended the charter school.

Usually, charter schools have a selective process for students, which could deny access to many youths in the area. But Guzman said Altgeld students may get first



Photo by MARY C. JOHNS

Altgeld Gardens resident Cheryl Johnson (far right), pleads with CPS board officials at a hearing last December to create a dual school at Carver Military Academy, as other tenants of the Chicago public housing site look on.

preference to attend the new charter school.

"We do anticipate continuing to work with the community and other membership to ensure that in the future we may come to the Board with an overlaid boundary that will include first preference for students within the Altgeld Gardens community to be able to attend that Chicago International Charter School," Guzman said.

In addressing the Altgeld parents concerns about their children's safety attending Fenger, CPS chief administrative officer Robert Runcie said more than 150 students were transferred from Fenger to other schools in the weeks after Albert's death. The majority of the transfers went to Julian, Corliss and Harlan high schools, and to Carter Military Academy, he said.

Runcie concurred with Johnson about the violence taking place within Fenger High School and said that many of the previous altercations at Fenger occurred in the lunchroom area. But since the death of Albert, Runcie said the atmosphere has "drastically improved" due to "beefed up" security measures at the school.

Regarding the Altgeld residents' efforts to get a new library in the area, CPS chief Ron Huberman said during a fall Board meeting that they were "actively working on that" with the Chicago Public Library and the Chicago Housing Authority.

School Board on Closings, Consolidations and Turnarounds

In the fall, CPS announced modifications to their school closing guidelines and a new "School Closing Student Bill of Rights."

Regardless of the reason for school closures or consolidations, CPS will now only relocate students to schools that have performed "better than their original school on the CPS Performance Policy," according to a CPS press release.

The designated receiving schools will now be within 1.5 miles of the student's home address and will have a safe passageway that is "unimpeded by natural barriers."

If a better performing receiving school is not available, CPS said they "will provide transportation options to a better performing school during the transition year."

In addition, a student's school will no longer be closed or consolidated if that school has served as a designated receiving school within the last two academic years. Each student will be assigned a staff member at the new receiving school that is responsible for their transition, and receiving school principals and teachers will create personal learning plans for transitioning students.

CPS also pledged to provide special support for homeless and special needs students and families affected by school closure. CPS said students in these groups that previously received transportation services will continue to get them.

- by Mary C. Johns

Transforming CHA

Lathrop Tenants Object to CHA's Plan

by Mary C. Johns

Residents of the Julia C. Lathrop Homes and their allies recently declared that the Chicago Housing Authority is going forward with a redevelopment plan without their agreement.

Residents objected to CHA's release in January of a Request for Qualifications for developers hoping to participate in the redevelopment of Lathrop, a historic North Side public housing complex. Lathrop resident leaders said they have been meeting with CHA staff for months as part of a working group but that CHA issued the RFQ without their consent. In an attempt to stop CHA from going forward with development, Robert Davidson, president of Lathrop's Local Advisory Council, wrote a letter to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan.

"As the president of the Lathrop Homes Local Advisory Council (LAC), the elected residents' organization, I reject this RFQ. I urge you to ask the CHA not to issue an RFQ until the Working Group reaches consensus – the basis for decision-making that we agreed upon in our first meeting," Davidson stated.

"Why is the CHA taking new steps to deplete the public housing stock in Chicago in the midst of a worsening affordable housing crisis? Why is the CHA reducing housing opportunities for poor families just one year after more than 200,000 people applied for 40,000 wait-list slots for Housing Choice Vouchers? Why is the CHA eliminating public housing units when families spend more than ten years on the waiting list for coveted vouchers?"

Stephanie Villinski, attorney for the Lathrop LAC, told **RJ** on January 11 that Davidson had yet to hear back from Donovan. HUD officials didn't return RJ's calls by press time.

The Plan for Lathrop

CHA announced in January that Lathrop "is expected to be redeveloped into a mix of new and rehabilitated, low-income, affordable and market-rate housing units." The next stage of the planning process will commence in spring 2010.

In past public announcements and formal documents, CHA officials have indicated that 400 public housing units will be a part of the 1,200 total units planned for the Lathrop redevelopment. But now, CHA seems to be backing away from that number. The number of public housing units CHA expects developers to build at Lathrop was not included in the request for proposal. Lathrop current-

ly has 925 units.

In December 2009, CHA officials said "no predetermined plan exists" for Lathrop regarding unit distribution, income mixes or the total number of units.

"Such a determination can only occur when the Working Group completes its task and the planning process begins in earnest with the selection of a development partner and the engagement of the broader community," CHA's press office stated in a Dec. 3 e-mail.

But the fact that the 400 units weren't mentioned in the request for proposal disconcerted John McDermott, housing and land use director for the Logan Square Neighborhood Association and also a member of the Lathrop working group. Interviewed Jan. 8, McDermott told **RJ** that residents and their advocates actually want much more public housing in the Lathrop redevelopment than the 400 units CHA initially promised. McDermott said CHA was only willing to designate a third of the units at Lathrop for public housing, the same formula they have used at other redevelopment sites. But McDermott noted that Lathrop is in a gentrified North Side neighborhood, where there is a shortage of housing for low-income people.

"We will continue to fight for 50 percent public housing at Lathrop," McDermott said. "But they're so wedded to the cookie cutter that public housing should be only one third. So it concerns us because they could be setting up a situation where they'll say, the best plan for the place is 900, wherefore you would only get 300 public housing units, and that's just the last thing in the world that they should be doing at Lathrop. It's exactly the part of the city that's supposed to get new public housing."

Built in 1938, Lathrop is one of the nation's first public housing developments and was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency and the National Parks Service, according to Landmarks Illinois.

Calls to Preserve the Historic Lathrop Homes

Residents had been rallying for weeks before CHA issued the request for proposal. On Dec. 2, 2009, the Preserve Lathrop Homes Coalition – including Lathrop resident leaders and their allies – held a press conference at the Chicago Temple, 77 W. Washington St., calling on Mayor Richard M. Daley and the CHA to support historic preservation at Lathrop and to retain at least half of the development as public housing.

Members of the coalition said Lathrop is located in an area with a wide range of job opportunities, market-rate housing, retail and other businesses. The Lathrop residents, they added, are supported by a strong network of partnerships with social service providers as well as neighborhood and business organizations. The development is located near a police district station and has great access to roads, CTA and even river transportation as well as schools and universities.

So far, CHA has maintained that only one-third of the redeveloped Lathrop Homes will be reserved for public housing units. Coalition members said CHA's plan for Lathrop fails to address the historic lack of public housing on the city's North Side and the current shortage of affordable housing crisis there.

Ellen Ray, a board member of the Logan Square Association, said there is a shortage of affordable housing for low- and moderate-income families in the Lathrop community, while there are plentiful options available for market-rate rentals and for-sale housing. Citing



Families have long since moved out this closed multi-unit building at the Chicago Housing Authority's Lathrop Homes, located on West Leavitt Street. The historic site is scheduled for redevelopment into a mixed-income community against the will of the tenant leadership, other residents and their advocates living in the area and elsewhere.



Photo by MARY C. JOHNS
Anateresa Capps (right) and her daughter Lolita Gonzalez in their home at the CHA Lathrop Homes public housing complex in December 2009.

recent Chicago census data, Ray said the area surrounding Lathrop lost 34,000 affordable rental apartments between 2000 and 2007, largely due to condo conversion. She added that rents in the community around Lathrop are so high that few families with Section 8 vouchers are able to use them in the area.

Jim Peters, president of Landmark Illinois, said preserving Lathrop would also give the CHA access to new sources of financing through the use of federal rehabilitation tax credits, which are not available for demolition and new housing construction.

"These tax credits have been used all across the country for other projects, including the recent renovation of a completely affordable housing project in Memphis, Tennessee, whose residents included music legend Elvis Presley," Peters said.

A Long-Time Resident Speaks

This is a multi-million dollar property and they're trying to chase us out of our homes," Lathrop resident Anateresa Capps told **RJ** during a one-on-one interview at her home on Dec. 7, 2009.

Capps, a mild-mannered, soft-spoken, Southern-speaking, elderly woman of multiple ethnicity, was upset about the prospect that she will soon have to depart from her unit in Lathrop. Capps has lived at the development for the past 36 years, where she has raised four children, two girls and two boys, now all grown. Her 48-year-old daughter Lolita Gonzalez remains with her.

Capps said she wants to remain in her immaculately kept home. She and her daughter were frustrated and baffled as to why CHA wants to destroy the buildings instead of rehabbing them.

"These brick buildings are as solid as Allstate," Gonzalez said.

Lathrop is more than one-half vacant currently. Capps said the CHA should also open the vacant units to the homeless.

"At a time when people are homeless, they are making more people homeless," she said.

"This is all a political thing, and they don't want to give these low-income housing [units] to these homeless people. And this is what needs to be done."

Capps said if the CHA decided to tear down Lathrop, they wouldn't be able to build any replacement housing in a timely fashion because of the economy.

"The economy is horrible. They'll tear it down, put us on the other side like we're in some kind of encampment, and this will sit vacant for the next ten years," Capps said.

Capps said if she must leave the place she has long called home, she will choose to move into a CHA senior building with her daughter being her homecare provider instead of taking a Section 8 housing voucher.

Gonzalez said Lathrop was prime property and she believes that "greedy contractors" want to get their hands on the \$798 million CHA projects as the cost of building an underground parking tunnel and a new mixed-income complex in place of Lathrop.

Transforming CHA

LeClaire Courts' Demise

by Mary C. Johns

Residents have lost their battle to save the LeClaire Courts public housing site.

The 316-unit complex of townhouse-style apartments constructed in the 1950s, located west of Cicero Avenue between 42nd and 45th Streets, already is empty and will soon meet its demise.

What happened with the City/State side combining with the federal side? We were told that was an option."

- Natalie Saffold, tenant leader for LeClaire Courts federal side residents



Photo by MARY C. JOHNS

Residents of the LeClaire Courts public housing complex respond to the bad news from CHA chief Lewis Jordan (right) that they would have to relocate from the place they called home, during a May 2009 redevelopment meeting at the nearby park district's fieldhouse .

LeClaire. The board statement said the agency engaged in "fair consideration," including a six-month discussion with residents and months of cost analysis. The Board's May 19 decision affected the 41 families who remained in the federally-funded portion of LeClaire at that time. CHA said these residents had been offered the same housing options as the residents living in their City-State units. All residents were offered relocation to another public housing unit or a Housing Choice Voucher, with a right to return to a redeveloped LeClaire property.

CHA CEO Lewis Jordan announced at a May 28 meeting with residents that the entire development would be closed. Resident leaders were shocked.

Natalie Saffold, the tenant council leader of the federal side residents, asked Jordan, "What happened with the City/State side combining with the federal side? We were told that was an option."

Jordan answered Saffold, "That's not an option."

Rosie Eubanks, another LeClaire resident, told



Photo by MARY C. JOHNS

These vacant public housing units, at the former LeClaire Courts complex, will soon bite the dust under the Chicago Housing Authority's Plan for Transformation.

RJ she was confused by Jordan's change of position.

"[Lewis Jordan] said it's not an option, but before he said they could," Eubanks said.

CHA moved out LeClaire's last remaining families over the course of this summer, according to a Nov. 24, 2009 e-mail from CHA spokesperson Matt Aguilar. CHA plans to demolish the current structures at LeClaire and form a working group in early 2010 to discuss redevelopment of the site.

Aguilar added, "The residents were offered their choice of various housing options, including housing choice vouchers or other rehabbed public housing alternatives, temporarily and permanently."

In the following months, CHA took steps to close the development forever. On Nov. 17, 2009, the CHA recommended to its board of commissioners that they apply to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for demolition of 49 dwelling and two non-dwelling properties in LeClaire Extensions, and to demolish both federal properties as well as 55 of their City/State properties.

many levels."

"This is my first time ever being to anything like this," Tommy Lockett exclaimed. "The food was great and the people are nice. If they have any more events and activities, I will definitely get more involved."

Off the Edge's co-founder Latonia Clark told **RJ**, "This agency is working with men ages 18-35 to help them gain social skills, job readiness and obtain an education so they can be leaders and positive assets to their family and community."

Off the Edge will have mentors working with the men on self identification of issues such as education, employment, communication skills, leadership skills and adequate grooming techniques.

"The men will have to set short-term goals that they will accomplish," said Latonia Clark. "They will attend resource workshops and spiritual guidance workshops. They will be active with their families by attending school activities and helping their children with homework."

Participants are expected to volunteer their time to help better the community and make positive changes in their lives as well as in the other young men with whom they come into contact.

"Off the Edge's goals for 2010 are to generate a case load of 50-75 men ages 18-35, and assist them with employment, obtaining a turn-out rate of 60 percent or better," explained Latonia Clark. "Off the Edge will gain support from people and foundations that understand the vision and mission of this agency. This is to give the men access to resources that will encourage them and help them reclaim their place as head of the family, no matter their race, religion, or neighborhood."

"We all have been off the edge, either right inside the edge where we are barely getting by or just outside of the edge where we are trying to gain access to a better life."



Photo by QUINTANA WOODRIDGE
Rev. Bernard Clark (second from left) with participants and volunteers of Off the Edge, a nonprofit social services agency for men, after a dinner in their honor in November 2009.

the men in the community. The most important thing Off the Edge can offer the men is spiritual guidance to gain our communities back."

As the Off the Edge dinner came to an end, Clark asked the men to fill out evaluation forms to help him design the group's services.

Participant Michael Franklin wrote, "The food was good and the message was encouraging, so I'm going to tell other people about Off the Edge and get involved on

Transforming CHA

Invasion of the Bedbugs

by Mary C. Johns

Bedbugs! Yikes! As many of you know, there has been an invasion of the dreaded bedbugs around town. These blood suckers have even reached at least one newly created mixed-income community as well as other federally subsidized apartments across the city.

Bedbugs at Oakwood Shores

I used to have to deal with roaches. But I have never had (bedbugs) over there in Robert Taylor," said Mary Forney, a former public housing resident, on Nov. 10.

An RJ investigation found that the pesty insects have found a home in Forney's public housing unit and at least one other in the 94-acre Oakwood Shores mixed-income development created under the Chicago Housing Authority's (CHA) Plan for Transformation.

Forney said dealing with the pesky bugs has been both costly and time-consuming. Oakwood Shores, located on the city's South Side bordered by 35th Street on the north, Lake Park Avenue to the east, Pershing Road to the south and Martin Luther King Jr. Drive to the west, was created with the use of a \$35 million federal grant to replace Ida B. Wells, Clarence Darrow and the Madden Park homes.

People assume that bed bugs are present because of poor hygiene or poor sanitation. And really, there's no significant relationship between bed bugs and poor sanitary habits.

- Linn Haramis, Entomologist at Illinois Department of Public Health

Forney, who suffers from blood cancer, has been working with management to continue living in the public housing unit after the death of her mother in March 2009, who was the leaseholder. She said the bedbugs were first discovered in February 2009, after she and her 11-year-old niece were bitten.

So far, Forney said she has disposed of bed linen and several mattresses and has spent hundreds of dollars on insecticides while waiting for Oakwood Shores' manage-



11-year-old Asia Forney shows bite marks she received from bed bugs discovered in her public housing unit at Oakwood Shores on October 14, 2009.

ment to send exterminators.

Forney said the exterminator who finally came out to her apartment for roach abatement discovered she in fact had bed bugs. Forney said she told management after listening to the exterminator, but no action was taken immediately.

"They let it get out of control after I told them. They acted like I didn't know what I was talking about," Forney said.

Forney added that another Oakwood Shores tenant raised the issue of bed bug infestation at a resident meeting in the winter of 2009.

RJ tried on several occasions to find out just how bad the bedbug infestation was at Oakwood Shores and what was being done about the problem but management officials declined to comment before press deadline.

A Bedbug Tale

Joy Braboy, a former Robert Taylor Homes resident now living in a federally subsidized building, said the night terrors were really severe in her apartment.

"They're real severe. It's so bad, it's in the walls," Braboy told RJ during a phone interview on Nov. 12, 2009.

Braboy has been living with her four kids for the past seven years at Parkway Gardens Apartments, located at

the intersection of the 6400 block of South King Drive and Calumet Street. She said she often sees swarms of bed bugs crawling out from cracks in her walls.

Braboy said an exterminator who came this past summer told her the apartment was infested with the blood-suckers. She said doctors at St. Bernard Hospital gave her some ointment to use on bitten areas. Braboy said she threw away her family's beds, and bagged up a lot of her family's clothing and other things at the instruction of the exterminator.

Now she wonders if her new beds will become infested. Braboy said when she complained to her building's management about the bedbugs, she learned from office workers that many tenants were complaining about the pests.

While waiting for management to abate the problem, Braboy, who works delivering pizza, said she spent a lot of money trying to solve the problem herself.

"I'm sacrificing. That money could go on a bill, on me, or some tissue. The bed bug spray is \$8 to 10 cans," Braboy said. "I had to throw beds away."

Facts about Bed Bugs

Braboy and Forney both theorized that the bed bugs are coming from the revitalization activities going on around the low-income housing complexes.

But according to officials at the Illinois Department of Public Health, bed bugs are carried into the house or apartment from clothes, luggage, furniture and bedding, or sometimes on people.

"People assume that bed bugs are present because of poor hygiene or poor sanitation. And really, there's no significant relationship between bed bugs and poor sanitary habits," said Linn Haramis, an entomologist at IDPH, told RJ during a phone interview Jan. 5.

"All they need to survive is a place to hide and people to feed on. They're not like a cockroach or an ant that feed on food items,"

Because of the association with poor sanitation,



Photo by MARY C. JOHNS

Robert Taylor Homes relocatee Mary Forney holds the insecticides she bought to tackle the bed bugs and other insects found in her Oakwood Shores public housing unit in November 2009.

Haramis said people were less likely to report infestations, which makes the problem spread.

Bed bugs are making a comeback in Illinois after a dramatic decline in the 1940s and 1950s, Haramis said.

He added that the pest can survive several months or even a year without feeding, and wait in a dormant apartment for the next family or person to feast on.

Bed bugs also can be spread through secondhand furniture bought, given by someone, or found discarded, particularly beds and couches.

Although bed bugs are known to carry pathogens in their bodies, including plague and hepatitis-B, they are not considered to be a health risk. Haramis said the bugs have not been linked to the transmission of any diseases.

There are some individuals, however, who are highly allergic to the bite of bed bugs and may experience anaphylactic shock, "much like a bee sting might in certain individuals," according to data at www.bed-bugs.org.

Haramis said people shouldn't just throw their infested things away and get new items if the apartment hasn't been effectively abated.

"Without effective treatment of the bed bugs, anything new that you're going to get will just be re-infested by bed bugs," Haramis said.

"So it's better to keep what you have until something can be done about the problem. Now if it's an issue where people are low-income and don't have a whole lot of money, this just makes situation a whole lot more difficult to deal with."

Haramis said controlling bed bugs is very difficult for a lay person, and did not recommend that pesticides be handled by individuals who aren't trained.

"This is really a job for a licensed pest control company or somebody who has training to do that," Haramis said. Bed bugs "could be present in other areas of the apartment."

The IDPH and other experts in the field have attributed the return of bed bugs across the country to more world-wide travel and changes in extermination techniques, particularly the ban on DDT. Today's insecticides, although safer for people, are less effective in killing these bugs.

Travelers should make sure to sleep with clean bed linens and wash laundry before going back home after their hotel stay.

BEDBUG MAYHEM
continues on Page 19

After Katrina, New Orleans Still Turbulent

These series of articles were produced with the assistance of a Grant from the Chicago Headline Club's Watchdog Fund made possible by the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation, which supports investigative and enterprise journalism throughout the Chicago region.

by Mary C. Johns

More than four years after Hurricane Katrina flooded New Orleans, this is what the *Residents' Journal* team found on our visit to the city: Many of the city's low-income, African American areas looked like ghost towns. Whole city blocks remained abandoned, still showing signs of storm damage. Moldy clothing, debris and other trash were piled up on the deserted streets. In the high grass next to some abandoned houses were rusty, broken boats, cars and trucks. Schools, grocery stores and malls were still closed. Even the major public hospital near the French Quarter tourist attraction was closed.

Many of the storm's low-income victims said they are still battling against displacement and gentrification. Some of those interviewed said that Hurricane Katrina also made matters worse because it highlighted the disparities between race and class in the city.

They said the racial tensions showed in the disaster response, cleanup, reconstruction and recovery efforts.

Over the course of a week in the Bayou State, *RJ*

We ain't doing any better. Our officials is not doing nothing for us. Nothing at all.

-Lois Gibson, a disabled New Orleans Iberville public housing resident

reporters interviewed residents at the last remaining public housing complex close to the French Quarter along with other low-income residents in the Lower Ninth Ward and their advocates. *RJ* also learned about the lack of rebuilding efforts in low-income areas since Katrina became the most destructive and costly natural disaster in U.S. history in August 2005.

The Iberville Development

If my life had improved, I wouldn't be here. I would be in a better place," said Tasha James, a 25-year-old mother of three.



Photo by MARY C. JOHNS

Charity Hospital, located in downtown New Orleans near the French Quarter, now has been closed since Hurricane Katrina.

James is a tenant of Iberville, a public housing site that reopened after Katrina because it suffered no significant damage. Iberville has 858 units but was only partially occupied when *RJ* visited.

"It's still the same over here. They didn't fix anything up. The windows are broken still the same," James said.

Like many other people *RJ* interviewed, James expressed concerns about the unavailability of jobs, the lack of affordable housing and crime. James, who suffers from seizures, said she has lived at Iberville since she was 4 years old.

James said she suffered through hurricanes in the past, but this time, she and others felt forgotten by their public officials. She said she was surprised that the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) increased her rent after she returned from shuffling around different shelters in Texas and Little Rock, Arkansas.

"Me and my sister had a house out in Arkansas," James said. "They [city officials] gave us a four-bedroom and FEMA (The Federal Emergency Management Agency) was paying our rent with a voucher for about a year. After that, you had to pay your own rent or move back to where you were."

"We used the money FEMA gave us to get a new car and came back here in a U-Haul rental. We still had a key so we just came back in."

James said her seizures keep her from working, but

her rent increased just as her benefits were cut.

"First, we were paying \$25 for rent. Then, after Katrina, they went up on the rent to \$50. My rent is \$50 because I don't get any income."

James added that crime there had drastically increased since Hurricane Katrina because of the relocation of residents from former public housing complexes. Many developments were demolished and turned into mixed-income communities or are in the redevelopment process.

"Since I got back here, it seems like there's more and more killing every day now. These are young children killing up each other back here," she said.

Erica Jones told a similar story to James'. A resident of New Orleans who uses a subsidized housing voucher, Jones is a 32-year-old married mother of five who was interviewed while she was visiting the Iberville public housing complex on April 6. Jones said she formerly lived in the Florida public housing complex, which was torn down before Katrina struck.

Jones, who is a Section 8 voucher leaseholder, said she was no better off than before Katrina as well. Jones said she received \$10,000 from FEMA in 2006 based on their assessment of her losses during the storm and on the number of children she had.

But the money didn't replace everything she lost. Jones said she used the money to buy food, clothes and shoes for her family, and to pay for furniture and a car to replace the



Photo by MARY C. JOHNS

New Orleans resident Tasha James and her children, in front of their rental unit at the Iberville public housing complex last April.

one she had prior to Katrina.

Jones was relocated to Texas after being evacuated from another city in Louisiana immediately after Katrina. She said she faced a lot of prejudice there, especially when she tried to find work.

"It was a lot of discrimination out there too," Jones said. "I couldn't find a job because it was this thing about New Orleans people and we were in Texas and they really didn't want us there."

Jones said she ended up back in New Orleans because her husband was scheduled for surgery there.

"In the process of him having surgery, I found a job. So I wound up staying," she said.

Her situation got worse because her belongings in Texas were stolen while she was getting situated in New Orleans. The thieves stole her remaining items, leaving her to begin building her life all over again.

"I went back to Texas to get my furniture. But they had kicked in my door and took everything," Jones said.

The cost of living in the city was of grave concern to Lois Gibson, a disabled resident of Iberville who has lived there for a quarter-century. Gibson, who lives alone, said it was harder for her to survive after Katrina.

"We ain't doing any better. Our officials is not doing nothing for us. Nothing at all. We came back to the city for this? It's badder than what it was before. It costs two times more now to live down here than before," she said.

Gibson said HANO officials increased rent and began charging the residents new fines and fees immediately following Katrina and Hurricane Gustav.

"We had a disaster hurricane, and then we had another hurricane with Gustav, right? Then they are going to tell you within a month or something that they are going to jack your rent up \$25 dollars or more," Gibson said.

Gibson was one of the thousands of people who was stranded at the Superdome for days after Katrina struck. Despite the difficulties in New Orleans, Gibson, who has protrusions visibly sticking out of her stomach, said it was better for her to deal with her ailment there, compared with remaining in Texas, where she had been evacuated after Katrina.

"I just couldn't take it in Texas. I could deal better here. There I don't know where I'm at."

"It's like two miles before you get to a store," she said.

AFTER KATRINA, NEW ORLEANS STILL TURBULENT
continues on Page 16

A Tale of Two Cities

by Crystal Medina

Two totally different worlds exist just blocks from each other in New Orleans.

The French Quarter is the oldest, most famous neighborhood in New Orleans, a national historic landmark known for its old Spanish architectural style. Colorful walls and shutters decorate the narrow streets, and many of the buildings have fancy iron balconies.

The French Quarter is known for its nightlife. The streets are lined with bars, clubs, restaurants, galleries and tourist shops.

The Iberville public housing development is located directly west of the French Quarter and just north of the Central Business District.

Hurricane Katrina forced many families out, and a lot of families have not returned because of the conditions in the development now.

Vacant units, drug deals and abuse, and violent crimes dominate the scene at Iberville these days.

Unlike much of New Orleans, neither the French Quarter nor the Iberville development were damaged by Hurricane Katrina. Eighty percent of New Orleans was flooded because the levee system failed, causing severe property damage with some areas as much as 15 feet underwater.

The French Quarter was not so devastated because it was built on dry land 5 feet above sea level. A few streets in the Quarter flooded but only a few feet, and just a few buildings experienced wind damage.

Most of the landmarks were only lightly affected.



After the storm, many Iberville residents had to move out of state to cities like Houston.

Justin Akers, a resident of the Iberville Homes who stands 6' 2", recalled how he walked out of the development and soon found himself in waist-high water.

"I got out of here. I drove out to Jackson, Mississippi," said Akers. "The French Quarter was dry. Just a couple of days later, there were big parties like it [Hurricane Katrina] never happened."

Akers was right.

The French Quarter was officially opened only a month after Katrina. Throughout the city, there wasn't any clean water or electricity.

There was no telephone or cellular phone service or Internet access. While the rest of the city was in shambles, it was business as usual in the Quarter.

Iberville residents said that historically, there is a strong relationship between Iberville and the French Quarter. Brian Diggs is a 12-year resident of the Iberville Homes.

During Katrina, Diggs said he drove to Maumelle, Ark.

He came back to New Orleans for work. Diggs complained that many public housing residents did not receive the money that was supposed to help rebuild their lives.

"A lot of people didn't return and a lot of those that



Photo by MARY C. JOHNS

These public housing residents in Iberville development were among the people who shared their personal tales about their living situation in New Orleans after surviving Hurricane Katrina.

dence that the levees were purposefully destroyed.

But Wilson and others point to a historic event to boost their case.

In January 1927, the Mississippi River broke out of the levee system in 145 places after months of heavy rainfall.

The flood caused \$400 million in damages and 246 lives were lost in Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Tennessee, Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas.

When the flood reached New Orleans, about 30 tons of dynamite were used to destroy the levee system. Exploding the levees steered the flood waters to the Lower Ninth Ward, which suffered a lot of damage as a result.

Later, it was found that the demolition was unnecessary because there were other levee breaks further down that made the flood less threatening to New Orleans.

Many residents of Iberville and other New Orleans neighborhoods wonder if this situation happened once, why couldn't it happen again?

One high-ranking congressman also voiced his opinion that the slow, widely criticized relief efforts after Katrina were designed to push poor black people out of the city.

US Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) was recorded in a 2007 video saying, "Doing nothing for New Orleans residents is an intentional strategy to make Louisiana richer, whiter and more Republican. It's not a huge secret."

One Republican congressman was overheard telling lobbyists that Katrina helped those who want to demolish public housing in New Orleans.

Former US Rep. Richard Baker (R-LA) was quoted by a mainstream newspaper as saying, "We finally cleaned up public housing in New Orleans. We couldn't do it, but God did."

Baker resigned from the US Congress in 2008, and neither Baker nor Frank responded to **RJ**'s efforts to get them to elaborate on their statements.

But in comparing the floods of 2005 and 1927, one fact is the same.

In both floods, the low-income neighborhoods were devastated and somehow the wealthier areas were spared.

While the deliberate destruction of the levees is only an urban legend, the facts are that Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans, the low-income residents were hit the hardest, the low income population received the least assistance, and many of the residents did not come back home.

Of those families who came back, many are being pushed out because of lack of affordable housing.

Whether relief efforts after Hurricane Katrina intentionally failed the low-income population or not, a lot of people are still not being helped and are living in horrible conditions.



Residents' Journal reporter Crystal Medina checks out an abandoned home in the poverty-stricken lower-ninth-ward of New Orleans in April 2009, that was ravaged by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005.

An Inside View

News and views from students of the South Shore School of Leadership and Ujima

Personal Hygiene by Chiquita Harris

OMG! What is that smell?

One of the biggest problems in school today is hygiene. There are a lot of students who have problems with body odor. The body sweats, which can lead to odor. One needs to wear deodorant in order to not stink. This means that students should bathe more often

and use a combination of items such as deodorant, cologne, perfume or other fragrances.

Personal hygiene plays an important part in your life, and it can protect us and others from germs. Washing hands and body is a start. Making sure you cover your coughs and sneezes. Use such things as hand sanitizer to kill germs from coughing and sneezing.

"I wash my hands every time I touch something and use hand sanitizer every time

I cough," said South Shore School of Leadership senior Daronica Ray.

So what can a person do if someone next to them had a body odor?

"I would pull the student to the side and tell them that people are talking about them, and they smell," Daronica said. "And if their breath stinks? I would offer them a piece of gum or I would just shout out and say 'Does anybody want some gum?'"

Germs

by Daronica Ray

Being in high school is a tough situation. Why? We have germs!

While in school students are exposed to many different types of germs, from people coughing and sneezing to hacking and wheezing, then not covering their mouths or even washing their hands afterwards.

Various diseases such as the flu and the common cold can be anywhere, on anything. It's unsafe, and what is a student to do?

One of the best ways to keep from getting sick is washing your hands. In school many students and teachers shake hands, and one never knows if they washed their hands that day.

"Just today a student tried to shake my hand, and I had just washed it, so I didn't," Mr. Harken said. "No offense to him, but my hands were clean, and who knows where he'd been."

"Another problem is kids coming to school who are sick," said senior Delisa Ellis.

"They should stay home. I got sent home for seven days last year, but I understood why."

This past year has seen a large increase in the use of hand sanitizer and actual hand sanitizer dispensers in schools. The H1N1 scare increased people's awareness of germs and the need for cleanliness.

Hand sanitizers are a good way to kill germs when washing hands isn't an option.

Carrying hand sanitizer is the best thing

to do when on the go. Traveling by bus or by train is germ central. It seems like people wait until they are in a crowded area to cough and sneeze all over the place, rarely covering their mouths.

The proper way to use hand sanitizer is to cover both sides of the hand, the fingers, and between the fingers. Only sanitizing one part of the hand won't do the trick.

"I was at a Walgreen's one day, and they ran out of hand sanitizer. I was waiting in line, and I overheard someone ask the pharmacist for hand sanitizer, and he said that they were all out, citywide," Mr. Harken said.

"I bought one bottle for my class, but the students used it like hand lotion, and I was out in two weeks. Now I have a secret hidden stash, for me. They can buy their own hand sanitizer."

embarrassed to show the stained shirt. It's high school, and students can be mean at times.

Finally, another reason why students wear their hoodies is because they might have bruises or cuts on their arms and don't want to call attention to this abuse.

They are going through enough abuse either at home, in the neighborhood, or from a boyfriend or girlfriend. They don't need to continue to relive it at school because of nosy classmates.

There are many reasons why students want to wear their jackets or hoodies in school. Yet the actions of a small minority have ruined it for all students.

These reasons above are legit reasons why they should try and rethink this rule.

Though the rule against hoodies is meant to prevent violence, it's possible it could also cause it when someone makes the wrong comment to the wrong student about a stain on their shirt or a mark on their arm.

A few bad apples have indeed spoiled the bunch, and a mustard stained, cold bunch at that. Looks like it's time to invest in long underwear.

ous styles of the Mohawk.

Color hawks are worn with all different colors; death hawks are Mohawks worn with the Gothic look; reverse hawks shave a center strip while leaving the sides alone; and there are many more.

It was just the other day when I saw a baby at Wal-Mart with a Mohawk. They are everywhere and worn by everyone: young and old, boy and girl, black and white.

Usually styles last for a certain time period, it's a new year and the Mohawk is still going strong as it was last year when Stefan's family had them.

Will this style ever die?



Publisher
Ethan Michaeli

Youth Instructors
Kari Lydersen
Nic Halverson
Claire Bushey

'Nuf Said Coordinator
Quintana Woodridge

UYIJP Participants

South Shore School of Leadership:
Chiquita Harris
Daronica Ray
Delisa Ellis
Reginald Branch
Rebecca Payton
Shavonna Bowdry
Tatiana Abercrombie
Michael Collins
Brittany McKenzie
Anthony Thompson

Ujima:
Victoria Hudson
Patricia Gurley
Elizabeth Jordan
Jasmine Hunt

People for Community Recovery:
Sharod Smith
Shoron Smith
Imani Johnson
Everett Johnson
Manquez Allen
Alisha Jacobs
Kiara Thomas
Destiny Coe

Imagine Englewood If:
Antonio Reed
Aleesha Graham
Angelica Evans
Victor Doss
Trevor Hill
Ebony Young

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Mohawks by Reginald Branch

Watch out! It's a plane! It's a bird! No ... It's a new haircut? Mohawks are taking South Shore School of Leadership by storm.

Stefan Robertson, a senior at South Shore School of Leadership, said he wears Mohawks because they are different. Stefan also said that other people in his family have worn this hairstyle.

His whole family rocked this style during the New Year's celebration last year.

When I asked what he thought about people who don't like the style he said "most

people who talk trash about it end up getting it anyway."

But Daryl Pinkston, another senior, thinks otherwise.

He said people who wear Mohawks look stupid and the only reason guys get the hairstyle is to impress girls.

When I asked Daryl would he ever get the hairstyle, he said he would consider it only if designs were incorporated into the haircut.

First worn by Native American tribes, then punk rockers in the 80's, this trendy hairstyle has been widely adopted.

According to Wikipedia there are vari-

Teen Pregnancy Hits Teens Hard by Rebecca Payton

Looking down at the plastic applicator, two pink lines were clearly visible. "Mom, I am pregnant." Those might be the worst words a parent could hear from their teen daughter.

According to the U.S Office of Public Health and Science, one in three girls in the United States is estimated to get pregnant before the age of 20.

"Getting pregnant at the age of 15 can really create an emotional crisis," said Victoria Jones, a Chicago Public High School student. "Most time some teens feel ashamed."

Teen pregnancy also can be hard on teen fathers. The pregnancy can strain their relationship with their girlfriend. "When I told my boyfriend that I was pregnant, we

immediately started fighting and a week later I never saw him or heard from him again," Victoria said, tears swelling up in her eyes.

Women, no matter what age, have options once they become pregnant.

Choosing the option that is best for the situation is hard to do. Women can decide to keep the child, give the child up for adoption or have an abortion. These choices are difficult.

Adoption is hard because a mother carries that child for nine months. Giving a child up to someone unknown may be the hardest thing for a pregnant woman to go through.

Especially for pregnant teens, the dilemma is not easy.

Victoria explained her situation: "I decided to keep my baby because I felt I had to take on the responsibility of my actions, even though I knew it was going to be so hard for me and my entire family."

I didn't have a job, my boyfriend left me and my mom was so angry she kicked me out of the house. I couldn't sleep at night because the worries of where I would find the money and support to raise my child were driving me crazy."

"I knew I couldn't give my baby up for adoption. I had grown so close to him over the months, and living with the fact that I chose to let my unborn child die would have haunted me for the rest of my life," Victoria told me.

The problem with teens that have babies, however, is that they tend to drop out of high school before they graduate, which makes their situation even more difficult. Receiving a high school diploma is necessary in today's society if one wants to get a job or go on to college.

"Before having my baby, I was lucky enough to move in with my grandma because she wanted me to finish high school. I know I am lucky because I have too many friends that didn't get that opportunity and are struggling to make it day to day," Victoria said.

Mayor Daley Visits South Shore High School

by Reginald Branch

"Stop the code of silence: Silence kills" was the message Mayor Richard M. Daley wanted to get out to the public Feb. 9, 2010.

South Shore High School library was jammed packed as news crew set up their cameras to document the mayor's press conference.

Everyone anticipated Daley's arrival, scheduled for 10 a.m., but 11 a.m. struck, and still no Daley.

At around 12:15 p.m. Daley arrived, along with Police Superintendent Jody Weis. Father Michael Pfleger, a Catholic priest and activist, arrived later along with some aldermen.

Daley's message was plain and simple: If you see a crime, report it.

"One of the most troubling parts of the violence against our young people is the code of silence in many neighborhoods that protects the gang bangers and drug dealers who are killing our children," he said.

One of the most troubling parts of the violence against our young people is the code of silence in many neighborhoods that protects the gang bangers and drug dealers who are killing our children."

-Mayor Richard M. Daley

"It must end."

After Daley spoke, religious leaders from all over Chicago discussed ways for citizens to speak out against gang violence.

A video was shown that depicted families who had

been victims of violence.

That's when emotions erupted; the families on the video were actually present in the room. One family's son had been shot to death after leaving his church choir rehearsal.

All sounds ceased except for snuffles from the noses of the parents who cried as the video stopped.

The mother of the child shot to death outside church approached the lectern.

She took a deep breath and began to tell about her son.

She said he had been involved in many activities and had been on his way to college. She couldn't finish her story because she started to cry, and she passed the mike to her husband.

"I thought my son was safe at church," he said, with tears streaming down his face.

Danger Zone by Shavonna Bowdry

Enrolling as a freshman at South Shore School of Leadership, my parents and I got quite worried.

One of the biggest fights I ever witnessed took place in one of my classrooms, with students slinging chairs, being thrown into tables and eventually destroying the entire classroom.

As a result of this horrible act, students and staff were hospitalized. Some students were handcuffed and sent straight to jail. Some had broken legs or busted heads.

Lately, many high school students have been hurt or killed due to teen violence in or around school areas. It really seems to be a struggle to stay focused in school

when constantly worrying about when the next fight will break out, either in class or during passing periods in the halls.

It concerns me that so many things are happening in and around schools. I don't know whether the next thing that happens will make a friend, or even me, the next victim.

The biggest concern in school should be forgetting to do homework or neglecting to study for a test, not a punch in the face or a riot after school.

High school is hard enough without the added worry of getting beat up or killed because of someone else's issues.

These issues range from emotionally unstable, jealousy, hearsay or being caught in the

wrong place at the wrong time.

High school students always complain about being treated like little kids, but in my opinion, many are acting like it.

It's time for many to grow up and quit making school harder than it already is, and then maybe we can finally learn something.

A Facebook Addiction by Tatiana Abercrombie

At 2:55 p.m. as the bell rings for dismissal, I hurry to my locker to get my things.

As I put my coat on, I only have one thing on my mind: Facebook.

Facebook addiction plays a major role in my life today.

"I hardly talk on the phone, and I rarely watch TV because of the amount of time I spend on Facebook," said South Shore School of Leadership senior Joseph Davis.

Facebook is just the latest incarnation of MySpace, which replaced Friendster, which replaced talking on the phone, which replaced actually talking to someone one-on-one.

With the ever-changing

With the ever-changing technologies and the ease with which you can stay in touch with someone while exerting little effort, social networking Web sites have become a dominant force for teens.

technologies and the ease with which you can stay in touch with someone while exerting little effort, social networking Web sites have become a dominant force for teens.

It allows for picture sharing, instant messaging, private mes-

sages, status updates and even the opportunity to leave a comment on what your friends write on their pages.

I interviewed several teenagers, and I discovered the main reason people create

accounts on Facebook and MySpace is because it's a source.

"If you want to know the latest drama with your peers, then create a Facebook account," said South Shore School of Leadership senior Reginald Branch.

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Rethinking Abortion

by Victoria Hudson

Editor's note: names in this story have been changed

Pregnancy can affect teen lives in several ways. The most common ways are dropping out of school, having to take care of the child alone or getting in terrible trouble by parents.

Although these are various outcomes for a pregnant teen, many teens opt to have an abortion. Abortions are very common these days and I think the reason they are is because teens lack proper sexual education.

Perhaps African American communities should find ways to reconsider how sex education is taught.

According to the Guttmacher Institute, different races have varying abortion rates. African American women have a higher abortion rate than white and Hispanic women. The African American rate is about 49 per 1,000 women. The Hispanic rate is 33 per 1,000 per women. The rate for non-Hispanic, white women is 13 per 1,000 women.

*Tiara Jacobs, 15, is an African American, teenage girl who had an abortion at an early age. She goes to a school in Bronzeville, where the baby's 16-year-old father also attends.

"The reason why I had the abortion," she said, "was because I was afraid to tell my mom. They didn't know I was having sex and plus the baby's father backed out."

She wanted to stay in school, so her older sister and her best friend gave her the money for an abortion.

"I don't regret having the abortion," Jacobs said, but she wished she wouldn't have had unprotected sex so she

wouldn't have been in that situation.

"He said he loved me and I had so many feelings for him. I let him take my virginity and he didn't claim the baby," Jacobs said.

This is what love can do to you. Her feelings were hurt very badly.

"I honestly thought that he was scared just like I was," recalled Jacobs. "He was only 15 at the time so he didn't know what to do. Boys can really be like that."

*Journee Watkins, 22, also used abortion as a choice—twice. She was a teenager when she got her first abortion. The second one was after she had her first child. Journee said that abortions weren't really her thing to do.

"The reason why I had my abortion at 17 was because I wanted to finish school and live my dream and a baby

When parents say things like: "If I find out you're having sex, I'm going to beat you seriously" — This prevents the teen from talking about issues with parents because they're scared of the consequences.

wouldn't allow me to do so at an early age," said Watkins.

Relationships are another reason why abortions happen often. The woman gets pregnant by the one she claims she loves. She tells him. He denies it. This was the type of the situation Journee Watkins experienced.

"The baby's father was just bogus. He said that he loved me but I guess he didn't. He accused me of cheating. How was I cheating when I'm with him 24/7? That just made me mad," Watkins said.

Watkins was very hurt by her decision of getting an

abortion because she wanted her babies, but they came at the wrong time.

"I wasn't about to take care of a baby by myself. It takes two to make the baby," she said.

She eventually wants a family and told herself that she's not getting pregnant again until she's married, so she wouldn't have to go through this all over again.

Teens around my age need advice before they make the same mistake Tiara and Journee did. Parents should talk to their children so they won't make that type of mistake.

When parents say things like: "If I find out you're having sex, I'm going to beat you seriously" or "You're not going to go anywhere if you're outside doing stuff you aren't suppose to"—these comments get teens scared because they don't want to get beat up and they don't want to be on lockdown.

This prevents the teen from talking about issues with parents because they're scared of the consequences.

Parents should just talk to their children and take them to the clinic if they need protection. This is a better way to stay close with your child—by communicating with them more.

Teens: if you are having sex, you should use protection. Yes, use condoms! That is one of the safest ways to keep from getting pregnant and all type of diseases.

Don't be scared to use them if you have them.

There are a lot of consequences that could happen and I don't want anyone to go through any of it. So please just stay safe and don't be scared to communicate.

What's Love Got to Do With It?

by Patricia Gurley

Being a teenager can be very stressful at times because you go through many struggles, such as making good grades and staying out of trouble. Teenagers also encounter many new phases like going through adulthood or growing up. On top of this, teens also explore romantic relationships. But how do these relationships affect teenagers—positively or negatively?

I feel as if love is a four-letter word with a lot of meaning. It expresses a deep feeling that anyone can feel at least once in life. Who gets affected most by love are teenagers the ages of 13-17. In my opinion, they can be most affected by love at a young age because teenagers have no experience with love. When it's their first love, it's especially difficult for teenagers to adapt to these new experiences.

To begin with, teenagers are portrayed as being young adults who love to go out in the world and have fun. For example, many teenagers like to party and go skating, but when you get into a relationship, teenagers think otherwise.

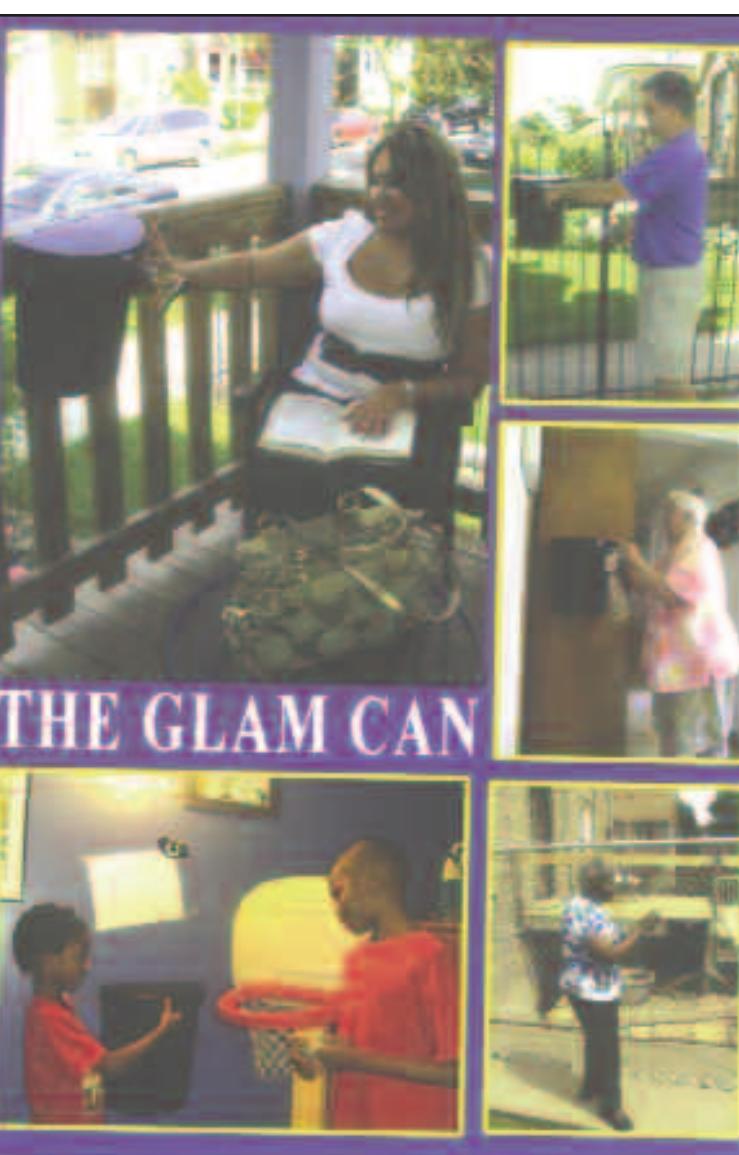
"When you're not in love with someone, you feel free like you have time for other things, but when you are in love you just want to be with that person. You feel as if you're sprung and you let go of all your plans just to be with him or her," said Elexis Ollie, 15.

I totally agree with her because when teenagers are new to the game of love, they don't know how to act right.

My personal experience with love was at the age of 14. My ex-

boyfriend and I started out as friends then formed a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship. As our relationship sparked, I was connected to him and him only. We always went out together, hung out at school, and even at each other's homes.

Why we are not together now is because our relationship got the best of me. It was hard trying to focus in school when I saw him each period. We were always together so it got real boring, plus our connection faded and I wasn't attracted to him any more.



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Putting Animal Cruelty In Perspective by Jasmine Hunt

A responsible pet owner is someone who provides food, water and shelter for their pet. This combined with attention, love and care can create a positive environment for years of long lasting companionship.

Unfortunately, some animals never get a chance to experience this situation.

Various types of animal cruelty can destroy and prevent some pets and animals from having a healthy and fulfilling life.

Most recently, dog fighting has gained the most attention from the public media. It's the most discussed form of animal cruelty.

The atmosphere of big crowds and gambling on such a vicious situation creates a certain shock value.

Dog fighting is a very dangerous situation. Cuts and tears to the dog's head, ears, chest and legs are the most prevalent injuries sustained during dog fights.

If left untreated, they can be life threatening in most cases.

The recent high profile conviction of Atlanta Falcons quarterback Michael Vick certainly brought animal cruelty and dog fighting into the public eye. However, even though dog fighting remains a high profile crime, it's not the most common form of animal cruelty.

"The most common type of trauma we see in animals is in the form of malnutrition and dehydration which

comes from neglect," said Elliot Serrano, Community Outreach Specialist of Chicago's Anti-Cruelty Society.

In fact, Serrano estimates that only twenty-five percent of the total amount of animals the organization impounds are involved with dog fighting or come from abuse. On average, the organization rescued about 15 animals per day to the Field Service and Humane Investigations Department.

The majority of animals that the Anti-Cruelty Society (ACS) has at its facility are owner turn-ins. Owner turn-ins are cases where responsible pet owners decide to give away pets to the ACS when they realize they are not able to take care of the animals.

Typically, these animals have a week stay.

"Since our adoption programs are so successful," said Serrano, "an animal will spend, on average, around a week in our facility before being adopted."

During the adoption process, ACS provides health

If a dogfight is in progress, one should go to a safe area and call 911 to report a felony crime taking place."

-Elliot Serrano, Chicago Anti-Cruelty Society

care and services.

"We spay and neuter all animals that are adopted or placed with other agencies," Serrano explained.

According to Serrano, doing so prevents pet overpopulation.

"The simple reality is that if the average pet owner

environments.

In our Parkway Gardens, there are hundreds of units there that have families living with nasty, uninvited guests and gang members. The government gives that site money for those units every month but they don't take the money and get rid of the infestation. They also don't use the money to get more security to stop the drug trafficking and all of the violence that occurs.

I, as a witness, have been over in that neighborhood and have seen the children have to play in the parking lots where cars are entering and exiting all day, every day. I've seen one security guard cover a four-block by two-block neighborhood. I've seen dope, crack and weed dealers standing in front of the buildings serving all ages.

would spay and neuter their pet, the problem of pet over population would simply disappear within the next generation," said Serrano.

Even though there are some pet owners who take this step to control the pet population, there are many who do not heed Serrano's advice.

"The unfortunate fact," he said, "is that there are still many pet owners who either breed their pets for profit or who neglect to sterilize their pets and end up having accidental litters."

There are many types of animal abuse, but Serrano has seen most animals being left outside without shelter, food or water.

"The most common is animal neglect that results from dogs and cats being left outdoors without access to proper shelter, food, or water," said Serrano, "resulting in bite, dehydration and starvation of the animal."

People can do many things if they witness animal cruelty, animal neglect or dog fighting.

"If a dogfight is in progress, one should go to a safe area and call 911 to report a felony crime taking place."

Information about dogfights being planned can be reported to the city non-emergency number (311) or the Anti-Cruelty Society," advised Serrano.

The public can raise more awareness about animal cruelty by reporting what they see. They can also invite local animal shelters or humane groups to speak to local schools and community groups.

"Be vigilant," said Serrano, "and speak up when you see animal cruelty, abuse, or neglect."

Stepping Up by Elizabeth Jordan

Why is it that not even two generations have passed since the civil rights movement and African Americans, as a race, have settled for just enough to get by? Martin Luther King Jr. fought for equal rights for Blacks to simply be able to use the same bathroom as whites, use the same entrances as whites, and for equal education.

Rosa Parks fought for us to be able to sit where we want on the bus. Generations before us fought for equal living and now that they helped get those rights for us, we have now settled. We have settled for rat-infested homes, roaches crawling in the living room and garbage-filled

environments. The elevators are death traps. They rarely work and when they do, you have to hope and pray that the elevator doesn't get stuck. If it does, you better be praying it doesn't get stuck between floors.

It's not just here. It was going on in the Ida B. Wells homes (R.I.P) before they were torn down. It's happening over in LeClaire Courts, the Altgeld-Murray Homes, and any place where there are high rises full of low-income housing and tenants.

This raises the question of why are we not using our legal rights to live in a better living environment? Why are we not protesting and stepping up to say, "I want to live better than this!"

UYIJP Youth Reporters Interview with former Englewood Residents



Photos by Kari Lydersen

On March 13, 2010, student journalists for We the People Media and Imagine Englewood If traveled to Palos Heights to interview Lee and Dennis King, who spent their childhoods in Englewood. The students interviewed the Kings about "Then and Now," and found they have more in common than they would have guessed.

Group, from left: Ebony Young , Trevor Hill, Aleesha Graham, Ms. Rankin, Angelica Evans, Jean Carter Hill, Lee King, Latanya McMurry, Tom King, Dennis King.

US Reps Issue New Call to Stop Demolitions

by Mary C. Johns

US Representatives Maxine Waters (D-CA) and Barney Frank (D-Mass.) recently issued a new call to stop demolition of public housing.

Waters and Frank initially sent a letter to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development calling for the moratorium on demolition in fall 2008. They sent a new letter to President Barack Obama's HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan on June 15 last year. The two congressional leaders urged Donovan to consider imposing a 1-year moratorium on demolition of public housing units because of the national housing crisis. Waters and Frank wrote that Housing Choice Vouchers are not a good replacement for hard public housing units and asked Donovan to re-install the rule for one-for-one replacement of demolished apartments.

"A further decline in the number of public housing units will only exacerbate the affordable housing needs of our most vulnerable populations and may force them into substandard or unsafe housing situations or homelessness," they wrote.

"Vouchers are not a substitute for the permanent replacement of hard public housing units, which represent a permanent commitment to providing affordable housing and services within a community."

"Until such time as housing authorities are required to replace demolished or disposed units on a one-for-one basis, we risk losing the crucial investment and significant asset these units represent."

Waters and Frank called for the moratorium to allow them to work with HUD as well as housing industry and tenant advocacy organizations "to develop the necessary tools and resources to preserve public housing and ensure that families in need continue to have access to decent, safe and affordable housing in their communities."

In the last 10 years, over 120,000 units of public housing have been demolished, with only a portion being replaced by hard units, Waters and Frank wrote.

Public housing serves low- to extremely low-income families nationwide, 43 percent of whom are elderly and disabled.

Donovan's Response

As reported in earlier issues of *Residents' Journal*, Frank and Waters wrote former HUD Secretary Steven Preston in August 2008 calling for the moratorium to halt public housing demolitions nationwide. At the time, they stated that the loss of public housing units had reached "epic proportions."

"The further loss of units must be averted immediately for the sake of the nation's low-income families."

RJ got the chance to interview new HUD Secretary Donovan on June 5, 2009, just 10 days before Waters and Frank sent him a new letter.

Asked whether he supported the congressional leaders' call for a moratorium to stop the demolition of public housing, Donovan didn't give a straight yes or no answer.

Instead, Donovan said demolition of public housing is necessary in some places and mentioned the CHA's Plan for Transformation as one example.

"I believe that it is our responsibility at the federal level to support innovative approaches like Chicago's," Donovan said.

"And in some cases, that may mean preserving existing public housing. But in other cases, it could mean that demolition and rebuilding is the right approach. We want to make sure that we're protecting residents as much as we can, giving them opportunities for the right places to live."

Frank and Waters' Update

RJ called Waters' and Frank's Washington DC offices to find out if Donovan ever responded to their letter.

Michael Levin, the communications director for Waters, told **RJ** during a phone interview on July 8 that the congresswoman was still waiting to hear from Donovan regarding the letter.



Photo by MARY C. JOHNS

HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan speaks to reporters during a press conference at the CHA Kenmore Senior Apartments in June 2009. CHA CEO Lewis Jordan stands in the background.

"We're waiting officially for a response to the letter," Levin said.

In a July 2 e-mail, Frank stated that the present Congress would ensure the federal government will have housing plans and programs for the needy.

"It's bad enough that the federal government has not built enough affordable rental housing, but it should not be destroying existing units before there is something to replace them," Frank wrote.

"It is important to improve the stock of affordable rental housing, but not by diminishing the overall number of units. In past years, people could argue that there were no plans to make better housing available. The present Congress will remedy that."

Turbulence After Katrina

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Gibson also said there were no hospitals or clinics near her home in Texas.

Inez Scott said life has become harder for low-income families in New Orleans after Katrina. Scott was relocated to Iberville in 2000 or 2001 from the St. Thomas public housing complex.

After Katrina struck, Scott said the nearby supermarket closed and has not re-opened. Now there is only a corner store which charges high prices.

"It was a whole lot better before," Scott said. "It's been over three years since the hurricane and Win-Dixie (supermarket) is not even open," she said.

A Poor Man's Tale

RJ could barely find anyone to talk to in the African-American poverty-stricken Lower 9th ward, which received a significant amount of flood damage during Katrina.

It was nearly deserted and resembled a ghost town. There were blocks of abandoned homes and vacant lots that seemed to stretch out for miles. Broken-down boats and abandoned cars were strewn near single-family one- and two-story houses.

Many of the houses still showed signs of the horrible damage done by Katrina. Torn-up, dirty clothes were lying around on the ground in and around some of the houses, as well as other forms of garbage. Weeds grew out of con-

trol.

RJ walked around for some time inspecting vacant houses until we found a lone construction worker removing debris from a dormant elementary school. The worker, who identified himself as Joseph, said he lived in a non-governmental, subsidized rental unit before Katrina struck. He said FEMA didn't provide him with any financial support after losing all his personal belongings in the storm, and life for him has become more difficult afterward.

Joseph said the area used to be lively and active with people, but only one of the three schools in the area had been repaired after Katrina and drug dealers are moving into the vacant areas.

"Look around. It's empty," said Joseph, gesturing around the money. "If they improved it, the same young kids wouldn't be on the corner. If they improved it, that school would be fixed."

"The parks are tore up. The only thing that got better is the drugs."

"It was bad. But it wasn't as bad as it is now," Joseph added.

After RJ's return from New Orleans, we received reports of more violence in the Iberville development, including the shooting death of a 16-year-old boy.

The Slow Recovery

In his final State of the City address in May 2009, outgoing New Orleans Mayor C. Ray Nagin said that the US Army Corps of Engineers has not

completed all of its work on the city's hurricane protection system since Katrina.

Nagin added, "Vulnerabilities in certain low-lying areas in New Orleans East, the Lower Ninth Ward and Algiers" still existed. The Army Corps of Engineers confirmed Nagin's statement in an August 2009 report.

For those trying to move New Orleans' recovery forward, the situation can be frustrating. In at least one case, New Orleans plans to get resources from Chicago to help deal with the problems that have arisen since Katrina.

During a phone interview in June 2009, Walter C. Flower III, president of the publicly chartered non-profit Industrial Development Board in New Orleans, told **RJ** that the whole city is faced with "terrible crime problems."

Crime wasn't too bad in the Lower Ninth Ward, Flower said, only because the population was so much lower than before Katrina. He said his organization would be working with the Chicago Cease Fire group to come up with some crime-stopping strategies for New Orleans.

New Orleans is also faced with terrible crime problems. And the Cease Fire group that's been working in Chicago that's been so successful in helping your crime rate has offered to come here.

"There is no really true safe haven in the city. It's mainly everywhere all over the city and it's mainly drug related. We are virtually the murder capital of America if you do it by population," Flower said.

AFTER KATRINA, NEW ORLEANS STILL TURBULENT
continues on Page 20

Budget Woes Nationwide

by Michael Ibrahim

The budget woes for the state of Illinois have dragged on for many months. The Civic Federation in Chicago recently published a report which called for Illinois state government to reduce pension benefits, cut \$2.5 billion from the budget, and increase taxes.

But what do the people think? protesters have also been urging the state to do something about its budget problems.

Last June 18, *Residents' Journal* interviewed some of the estimated 2,000 activists who rallied at the Thompson Center in downtown Chicago.

A wide coalition of groups targeted members of the Illinois state legislature, vowing to stay on the case until things get resolved satisfactorily, meaning that they agree on a plan everyone can live with.

The demonstrators demanded that state lawmakers get the money to do what is needed to fund important pro-



Maggio that a tax increase would set things right. Others disagreed. They argued that an increase in taxes will be a further hardship on the working poor.

One of the most passionate and creative groups at the protest was a contingent of teenagers who called themselves Youths Against Gang Violence. This group came out to support their agenda of staying in school and keeping away from gang violence. Confident and brave, the teens carried placards and signs, but also displayed a young man who convincingly lay in a coffin without moving. The youth in the coffin symbolized those young people who are victims of violence in low-income communities. To them, the stakes in this budget battle are life and death.

Many states, including Ohio and Pennsylvania and especially California, simply will not have the money to

The severity of the problems we are now confronted with have been billowing for decades"

- 4th ward Alderman Toni Preckwinkle

grams and pay employees. At the time, Gov. Pat Quinn said the state was short some \$9.2 billion and warned that social service agencies will be hit hard if a solution is not found.

Grassroots activist Eric Tellez was one of those who came out to add his voice to the crowd of concerned citizens present that day. Tellez was convinced that an increase in personal as well as corporate income tax rates would go a long way to resolving the state's budget problems.

"Increase income tax rates and also the current Earned Income Tax Credits for those who have jobs but can hardly make ends meet," said Tellez.

One sign-carrying protestor commented that he would gladly take a bit more out of his pay check to keep many needed social service programs going. Nicholas Maggio said, "I would be all for making such a sacrifice. I am fully aware how important many of these public programs are."

Maggio was carrying a stack of literature from a group called Voter Voice. The fliers enticed people to "TAKE ACTION EVERY DAY!...by calling your state legislators frequently, to support community efforts to keep these important programs going."

Many people at the rally agreed with Tellez and

pay their bills if more money is not found. One out of every eight Americans live in California, and any solution for a state budget that serves so many people will require a huge effort.

Ask the Legislators

Alderman Toni Preckwinkle (4), who recently won the Democratic nomination for Cook County Board President, observed that Illinois' budget problems have been with us a long time.

"The severity of the problems we are now confronted with have been billowing for decades," Preckwinkle said in an interview.

"All the way back to Gov. Thompson, to (George) Ryan and (Rod) Blagojevich."

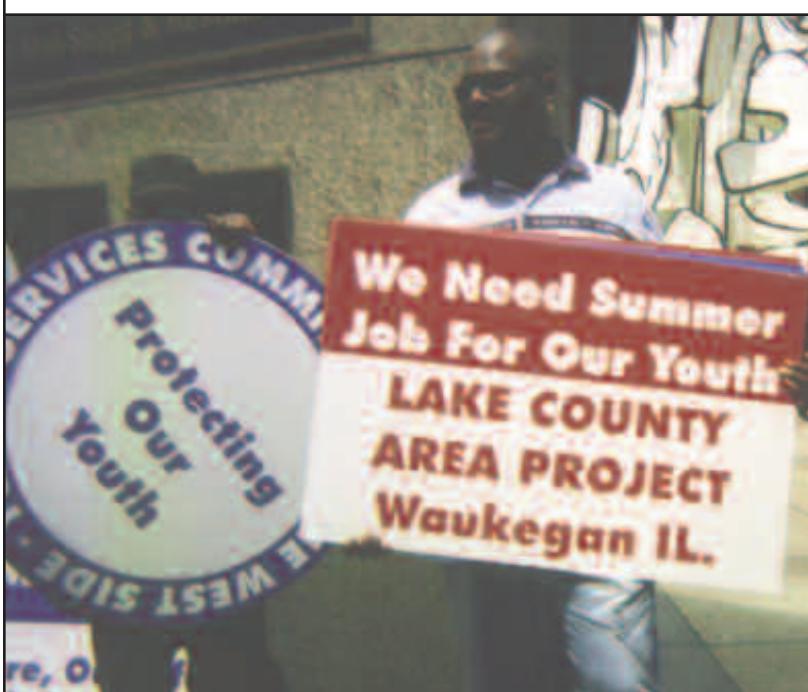
Preckwinkle added that legislators tackled our budget problems mostly by "borrowing from Peter to pay Paul," taking money from state retirement funds and elsewhere and then allocating them to some other place.

If she wins her bid for the County Board presidency, Preckwinkle has promised to repeal an unpopular tax installed by current Cook County Board President Todd Stroger. Preckwinkle said she will make cuts to the County budget to make up for the reduced tax income.

Putting together a financial budget that will work is not as simple a project as some might think. Illinois' fiscal year begins every July 1, like many other states in America. Ted Fetter, an aide to state Rep. Barbara Flynn Currie (D-Chicago), a leader of the Democratic majority in the Illinois House of Representatives, explained why different people often use widely different figures when they refer to the current budget deficit.

"It is a matter of how the numbers are crunched and how many public service and social service agencies along with their needs are factored in," Fetter said. "Many of the quotes you will hear include some agencies while others will leave some out."

"What usually happens is that a state will make budget proposals based on how much it expects to collect in taxes from sales, income



These concerned citizens rallied for more jobs for the youths of Waukegan, IL., outside the James Thompson Center in downtown Chicago last June, in protest of the State of Illinois budget cuts.



Photo by JACQUELINE THOMPSON

These parents were among many demonstrating outside City Hall in downtown Chicago in June 2009, about the State of Illinois budget cuts to child care and other issues of concern.

tax, state fees gathered from doing business with city assistance, and other means the states have to forecast their incomes. Then, based on the state's needs, a budget proposal is put together and plans are made."

However, many things can happen to mess up the plans of state legislators. For example, the global economic downturn we are experiencing currently is lowering the amounts of money states are bringing in, just as it is increasing the need for state services.

Fetter blamed the Blagojevich administration for initiating programs impossible without funding them. As one example, Fetter cited the efforts to provide "free rides for seniors and the handicapped" on the Chicago Transit Authority.

We who take the CTA regularly do see seniors in affluent neighborhoods dressed in "ermine and pearls," like the song says, riding the busses and trains. Could these passengers afford to pay for their rides, at least at the discounted rate for seniors? Would that be enough to close Illinois' budget gap?



Urban League Sues for School Equity

by Quintana Woodridge

Black and Latino students are more likely to attend an under-funded school than whites because of the ways schools in Illinois are funded, according to a lawsuit filed by the Chicago Urban League against the State of Illinois.

The Urban League originally filed suit in August 2008, asserting that the State of Illinois is violating the Illinois Civil Rights Act by discriminating against families based on race and has deprived African American, Latino and other minority children of a high quality education.

In the lawsuit the Chicago Urban League claims that poor academic performances are a direct result of the lack of funds in low-income school districts.

This is not an African American or a Latino issue, but an issue for the entire state to be concerned about and engaged in.

- **Chicago Urban League statement in their lawsuit against the State of Illinois**

The suit states that classrooms are overcrowded, school facilities are dilapidated, and the technology is outdated.

The lack of funding has caused many sports, arts, music and education programs to be cut.

"These disparities are well known and despite the evidence, the state has failed to act," the lawsuit alleges.

The Urban League cited Section 1 of the Illinois Civil Rights Act 2003 Education Article to back up their case:

"The state has the primary responsibility for financing public schools and is obligated to provide for the establishment of schools that deliver a 'high quality' education to the over 2 million students enrolled in elementary and secondary public school in the state of Illinois."

On April 15, 2009, Judge Martin Agran declared the Urban League's case has merit and should be heard in court. On April 16, Cheryle Jackson, president of the Chicago Urban League, said at a press conference "It wasn't a victory for the Urban League but for the children of Illinois."

Jackson went on leave shortly after that press conference to wage an unsuccessful campaign for the US Senate. Urban League Vice President Herman Brewer has been serving as acting president.

In the meantime, the Urban League's case still hasn't been resolved.

In a May 2009 telephone interview, Roderick



Hawkins, director of communications for the Urban League, stated that the lawsuit challenges the state's method for raising and distributing educational funds to local school districts.

The state's funding scheme generates the nation's second largest school funding gap between low- and high-income schools.

Also, the state's public schools funding scheme disproportionately impacts racial and ethnic minority students who attend school in districts with as high a concentration of minority students by distributing an unequal level of funding to those school districts.

According to information stated in the lawsuit found on the Urban League's website, Illinois has ranked 49th in state contributions to school funding since 2003.

The state's share of revenue for public schools has decreased steadily, from 48 percent in 1976 to 33 percent in 2004, 31.8 percent in 2005 and 29.6 percent in 2006.

In 2007, the state contribution fell to a new low, 27.8 percent.

The lawsuit states that local property taxpayers bear the brunt of the cost for funding the schools.

For 10 years, the state has enforced and implemented a funding scheme that requires over 60 percent of the funds to be raised through non-state taxes.

The suit states that communities where property wealth has been negatively impacted by residential segregation have no capacity to raise the funds that would close the funding gap.

Compared to other states, Illinois property taxpayers contribute the third-highest share of education costs at 62 percent and pay the 10th highest dollar amount toward school funding.

"This is not an African American or a Latino issue, but an issue for the entire state to be concerned about and engaged in," the Urban League stated in their lawsuit.

Faith Leaders Call for Schools Funding Reform

by Gail Dameron

Legislatators and faith leaders gathered last year to push for a change in the way the State of Illinois funds schools.

"Our children deserve us to fight in the streets for justice," said Rep. David E. Miller (D-Chicago). Miller recently received the Democratic nomination to run for state Comptroller. "The children need hope and love. The children have been short changed on education. It's a shame that education is based on something as simple as a child's zip code," Miller added.

Miller spoke during "Faith in Action Day" last May 12, when over 100 individuals from all sections of the state traveled to Springfield to press for education funding

Greene said, "We are the fifth richest state in this country...our children need twice as much money to build them up so they can grow strong.

"If we are going to have an income tax increase in our state, it is essential that we raise enough revenue to finally address the under-funding of our schools. We are only going to get one shot at this."

Citing data released by the Chicago Reporter, Catalyst Chicago and the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability, the group stated that inadequate state funding harms not only Chicago Public Schools students



funding of approximately \$7,300 per student. But currently, the state provides less than \$6,000, the group reported.

The week of May 18, the Senate Education committee approved SB0750. SB0750, which has 21 co-sponsors, was brought before the Illinois General Assembly at the end of May, and was passed by the Senate before the legislative session closed, Meeks' Press Secretary T. Harrison told RJ in a phone interview the following month.

But Alex Wiesendanger, a member of CRS said the bill was "still in limbo," because it hadn't been called in the House.

As of February 2010, both bills remained in limbo.

Emmitt Till: Not Forgotten



Photo by MARY C. JOHNS

Simeon Wright, 66, cousin of Emmitt Lewis Till, thanking the Smithsonian National Museum for agreeing to preserve Till's casket during the anniversary service of Till's death on August 28, 2009, at the Roberts Temple Church in Chicago.

In one of the most notorious race crimes of the 20th Century, 14-year-old Till was allegedly murdered by Roy Bryant and his half-brother J. W. Milam for allegedly whistling at Bryant's wife Carolyn in Money, Mississippi in 1955. A native of Chicago, Till was visiting his great-uncle Moses Wright at the time he was murdered. Simeon Wright was in the room with Emmitt when the youth was kidnapped from the house.

reform. The assembled group stood in support of SB0750, sponsored by Sen. James Meeks (D-Chicago), which would ensure that all children in Illinois have the opportunity for a quality education, and HB855, sponsored by Rep. Miller, which will include enough additional revenue to fund schools while providing property tax relief and tax credits for low-to-moderate income families.

The Rev. Alice Greene, pastor of Irving Park Baptist Church and a leader with the Community Renewal Society (CRS), said that for decades, the state has failed to live up to its obligations to provide an adequate education for every child in Illinois, regardless of their race, income or where they live.

Greene added that the attendees' job that day was "to give the legislators some backbone for school funding," and to "make it right."

but many downstate rural districts as well.

The Rev. Alexander Sharp, executive director of Protestants for the Common Good, said during the rally that the disparities in funding of the education system weren't just a Chicago or Illinois problem, but also a moral problem.

"This is a moral problem and people of faith from all across the state are calling for us to meet our obligation to fund adequate education for every child in our state," he said.

Sharp told Residents' Journal the following day that the group delivered petitions to the governor and other state legislators signed by close to 700 faith leaders and congregation members from over 80 percent of the 118 representative districts in Illinois.

The state's education funding advisory board has stated that the state should provide a foundation level of

Bronzeville Memorialized

by Jacqueline Thompson

In the fall of 2009, two marble obelisks were placed at 35th and South State streets to commemorate the African American migrants who gave an identity to Bronzeville and attract tourists to the area.

The obelisks will give people information concerning the rich heritage of the Black Americans who migrated to Chicago from the South in 1900 and the following years. The first waves of migrants were instrumental in creating a viable, welcoming community for the thousands of others who relocated from the South to Chicago's South Side during what came to be called the Great Migration.

The first two obelisks were strategically placed to mark one area called the Gateway, which was the entry point into the part of the city known alternately as the Black Belt and Bronzeville. The boundaries were Federal Street on the west, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive on the east, 29th Street to the north and 39th Street on the south.

On this occasion, the Bronzeville Merchants Association placed into concrete the first of 10 monuments known as the Obelisk Project. The project was founded in 2001 by William and Esther Barnett, members of the association.

It was funded by a \$100,000 state grant sponsored by two deceased state legislators, Sen. Margaret Smith and Rep. Lovana "Lou" Jones. The Bronzeville Merchants Association was founded in 1976 and was once known as the 35th Street Business Organization. They changed their name to the Bronzeville Merchants Association in 1999.



Photo by JACQUELINE THOMPSON

This is one of the marble obelisks placed at 35th and South State streets to commemorate the African American migrant business owners in the Bronzeville community.

The obelisks describe those who created the city within a city, the inventors, professionals, doctors, lawyers, nurses, clergymen, teachers, musicians, singers, comedians, club owners and even the bell hops, shop keepers and publishers.

"Everything happened within the walls of the Black Belt because it could not happen for us anywhere else," said Esther Barnett.

"The knowledge of this time and the Obelisk Project is something our youth need to know about their ancestry and heritage, because these people lived through the Great Depression and they not only sacrificed, but also used their skills and education and abilities so that we have a community and can live like we do today."

"The project is not finished," she continued. "However, we are working hard to secure the needed funding so that it can all come together."

What They Brought

THE GREAT MIGRATION ... And What They Brought With Them" was the title of an opening exhibit in 2009 at the Hotel Florence, 11111 S. Cottage Grove Ave. on the Pullman State Historic Site. This historical exhibition shed light on hidden facts about the African American community. In recent years, there has been little effort to gauge the full impact the Great Migration had on Northern cities. The artifacts and household utensils provided an interesting view on how these things got here to Chicago.

Potbelly stoves, hand-cranked ice cream freezers, hand-made quilts, filigreed glass dishes and hand-made clay cookie jars were all on display as well as an old rocking chair like the one grandpop sat in and told stories from. Other authentic, life-supporting items on display took me back to visits to grandmother's house and Sunday dinner.

A most important part of the exhibit was a hand-made quilt with images that are based on photos of many ex-slaves who traveled north. The quilt was made by one of their descendants and is on loan to the museum. Copies of documents at the exhibit showed just how difficult the conditions must have been for the migrants.

One of the highlights of the day took place in the assembly room as we listened to noted historian Christopher Reed spell out a vast array of information on topics not generally known. Who knew that the former slaves and their families had cash money to bring with them? This astonishing bit of history has been on the down-low.

Reed also revealed some of the reasons why former slaves and families came north. Millions of African Americans decided that their hopes for full citizenship lay in the Northern cities, Reed said. Traditionally, they sought freedom from white control through land ownership, moving anywhere that whites did not restrict their actions and rights.

However, African American farmers who were at the mercy of white-owned banks and businesses were already on the edge of subsistence and found it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. Many were forced to sell their farms at discounted prices in order to pay their

cases weekly.

Wash in either hot water or machine dry at medium or high heat, use fitted sheets on the mattress, or tuck sheets under the mattress, and use light-colored sheets and check for discolored spots when removing them from the bed.

When traveling, look for signs of bed bugs along the seams of the mattresses and keep bags and luggage off the floor and bed. Inspect all used furniture carefully for bed bugs before bringing it into a home.

If there is a bed bug infestation, Haramis said people should vacuum infested areas, including mattresses and box springs, dispose of the contents in a sealed garbage bag or trash container, remove the pillows, sheets, blankets, mattress and box springs, and wash sheets and blan-



Photo by JACQUELINE THOMPSON

This homemade quilt showing pictures of former slaves who came to Chicago during the Great Migration was part of the exhibition at the Hotel Florence in May 2009.

debts. This is where some of their money came from.

"And even then, many travelers who had cash money on them when they traveled by train were robbed by whites right at the train stations," Reed said.

It happened so often, he added, that those who would travel with a lot of money started to get on the trains after they left the stations or before they arrived at the station in order to avoid being robbed.

It was soon after Reconstruction ended that whites created their own segregated social order determined by a strict set of racial protocols based on the subservience of African Americans to whites at all times. If one over-stepped social boundaries, they often faced a violent backlash. Whites used lynching to "punish" African Americans, a practice which made millions leave the South, according to Reed.

Despite all of the above, the migrants brought with them BINGA, an African term that means 'go-getters,' people with the spirit of getting the job done. They also brought a desire to reconnect with relatives who were already here. Church members re-connected with other migrants in Northern churches, and they formed many generational links in developing businesses and statehood clubs to welcome and greet new arrivals. Many of the clubs are still in existence today.

The Great Migration brought with it blues, jazz, art, crafts and Binga. The Northern radio gave national access to the migrants' music, making a huge impact on American culture.

At the end of the session, historian Patricia Beardon described the individuals in the images on the one-of-a-kind Black Migration Heritage Quilt. Reed and Bearden were joined by Sherry Williams of the Black Chicago Historical Society.

Reed stirred up images of the Great Migration as it happened, from the horrors of robbery and lynching to the beauty of Binga, jazz, blues, art and reconnected families. The whole event left their guests feeling that the opening had gone well and that everyone had taken part in a piece of the historical action.

kets. Dry blankets, sheets and pillows at medium or high heat.

Haramis added that building owners and managers have to work together with occupants and pest control professionals in order to complete an effective abatement.

IDPH warns that items that cannot be completely inspected and treated should be thrown out, and they strongly warn against applying pesticides to mattresses, bedding or furniture unless the pesticide's label specifically allows use on these items, and only then on those items which people will not touch.

Treatments such as "fogging" and "bug bombs" are ineffective against well-hidden bed bugs and may drive them into other rooms or apartments and spread the infestation.

Bedbugs

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Bed bugs are fast-moving, small, usually reddish-brown flat insects and can quickly spread from one unit to the next in multi-unit apartment buildings, Haramis said.

To prevent getting a bed bug infestation, keep all beds pulled slightly away from walls, furniture and curtains.

Other IDPH prevention tips include making sure bed clothes don't touch the floor. Wrap carpet tape or duct tape - sticky side out - around bed legs, or use traps to prevent bed bugs from climbing onto beds. Keep the floor under and around beds free of clutter. Change sheets and pillow

An Addiction to Self-Discovery

by Mia Dunlap

Greetings everyone, my name is Mia Dunlap and I am addicted to self-discovery and to the quality welfare of under-represented youth.

I have grappled with this addiction for a number of years before acknowledging it. In August 2006, when I made up my mind to attend Spelman College, I confirmed my addiction to self discovery. I was taking a risk that I had not seen taken before—going to another state, with no tuition, expecting to not only be formerly educated but also to immerse myself in a community of Black women who are not afraid to challenge the status quo. These women are unapologetic free thinkers, and unashamedly break the barriers that have hindered Black women for decades. I went in search of self and have discovered more about who I am than I expected.

It has always been my dream to empower children who feel like the world has given up on them. I have to be honest with my readers - this addiction expands at liberty. I feel a deep calling to aid children in prisons, orphanages, foster homes, detention centers, impoverished communities and anywhere else where the circumstances are emotionally paralyzing and mentally tormenting.

At times, my addiction to this work is so overwhelming that I break down and cry. I cry because I cannot help but think about the adversities that young people have to tread through at the expense of their youth. This addiction, that I later came to know as a passion, sometimes wakes me from my sleep and inspires me to journal about stories that are not my own. Most often, though, I have daydreams of rescuing young people from the agony of their circumstances. I daydream about what I can do to fight the injustices that smother the cries of the young people who are falling through the cracks and wailing to be rescued.

My daydreams help me realize my life's calling is to help provide sensitive, supportive and safe environments where children can openly expose their wounds and begin to heal. But suddenly, I am snapped back into reality and reminded that I am one of "them." I can imagine that my name is written somewhere in a book called "at-risk youth from Chicago housing projects." Even that reality check will not keep me from adhering to my calling, however.

My addictions to self insight and to the service of

children cause me to take risks that are sometimes scary and uncertain. I start to believe that I can accomplish things that seem unreasonable and impossible. The adrenalin rush I get from these dreams is still fueling my journey to Spelman College.

I faced naysayers who did not believe in my ability and loved ones who thought it absurd that I did not attend a less expensive institution. Despite the naysayers, there were a few gathered in my "Amen Corner" rooting for me all the way, especially my dad, mother and grandmother. They wanted it for me just as much as I wanted it for my community and me. Now, here I am, a rising senior, averaging above a 3.0 each semester since my sophomore year. I know that I had some folks praying for me through this journey because I certainly could not have done it on my own strength.

The risks I have taken to satisfy my addiction to helping "inner city" youth were well worth it as I have travelled to spaces and had experiences that I had never imagined. In January 2009, I had the amazing opportunity to travel to Washington, DC, with about 20 other Spelman Sister's Chapel affiliates to witness the inauguration of the first African American president of the United States.

For the past two summers, I have been blessed to earn internships through the Daughters of the Covenant Program at Spelman's Chapel. Through this program, I was placed at Black-owned faith-based non-profit organizations.

This past summer, I interned in Atlanta, Georgia, at Foreverfamily, an organization for children of imprisoned parents led by national president Sandra Barnhill. The organization is creating a space for children to have an extended family as well as visits to their parents in prison once or twice a month. As an intern, I led prison visits and sat at the table with lawyers, business women, accountants and others, helping to make important decisions for the organization.

During the summer of 2008, I interned in Washington, DC, with the Children's Defense Fund, where Marian Wright Edelman is the founder and president. I worked closely with other interns to form ideas and questions to pose to legislators and other government officials who make decisions that govern health care, education and poverty for children across this country.

In the summer of 2007, I interned in East Palo Alto,



California, with Bayshore Christian Ministries as a teacher, where I taught predominately Latino and Black 3rd -5th graders whose reading comprehension and math skills increased by an average of 75 percent of a grade level.

The work I have been doing has been beneficial for the youths, but it has also been a tremendous growth experience for me. I have worked long hours developing lesson plans, planning a youth conference, and watching the glow on the faces of children reuniting with loved ones. I am learning the true value of service through urgent and necessary work on behalf of youth.

I am aware that opportunities like mine may not present themselves every day to young people, especially in communities where I grew up in Chicago, places like Robert Taylor Homes, Altgeld Gardens and Washington Park Homes. My goal is to be sure that youths from communities like mine are aware that there are positive escapes routes from the 'hood and with the help of the village—elders, teachers, community activists and self-effort - it is possible. It was the village that helped to guide me and assure me there were so much God had invested in me, especially my New Calvary church family, the Office of Special Programs and my Earth Angel. They zeroed in on me and unlocked my promise. To them, I am forever grateful. I plan to help create that same kind of village for other young people.

As an English major, I have a heart for learning. Upon graduation, I plan to become a teacher in a very non-traditional form. I will teach in juvenile detention centers and climb the ladder to become a superintendent in order to reform the way youths, specifically Black girls and boys, are being educated and rehabilitated for re-entry. Because education disparity is so prevalent in "inner city" communities, I plan to spend much of my time investing in the potential of students in those areas. It is not only my calling but it is also my obligation, as so many people have helped me.

Truthfully, I cannot say that I have avoided all potholes and hazards of my environment. There were several occasions when my life didn't feel so promising or my potential so great. However, through the mercies of my higher power, I have been given many second chances to find my life's mission.

I do not intend to abort my mission or control my addiction, for this substance ignites a flame of enthusiasm, ambition and passion in me that I cannot always coherently articulate but I know lives deep within me. I have made a promise to myself that no matter where my life road takes me, I will never forget to reach back to children from environments like mine.

Greetings everyone, my name is Mia Dunlap and I am addicted to self-discovery and giving youth second chances to be children.

the homeless are single individuals, 7 percent are living in a two-person household, 5 percent are living in a three-person household and 8 percent are living in households of four persons or more. Citing a HUD Resident Characteristics Report, the Unity for Greater New Orleans report states that 1,750 public housing units were occupied as of September 2009.

Judge: Levee Breaches Caused by Negligence

On Nov. 18, 2009, a New Orleans federal judge decided that neglect by the US Army Corps of Engineers caused the severe flooding after Hurricane Katrina, especially in the Lower Ninth Ward and the nearby St. Bernard Parish.

In a 156-page decision of Robinson v. U.S., U.S. District Judge Stanwood R. Duval Jr. awarded the six plaintiffs thousands of dollars for their damaged homes. Duval said the Army Corps of Engineers' "gross negligence" of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet caused the levees to breach. Duval wrote that in August 1966, the Corps reviewed its elevations of the levees with lessons learned from the recent Hurricane Betsy. By September 1968, the Corps determined that the levies should be raised, but the work wasn't completed by the time Hurricane Katrina hit nearly 50 years later.

The judge said "It was clear from its inception that because of its location, degradation of the area would result unless proper, prophylactic measures were taken."

"Some measures were included in the Corps' plans; they simply were not implemented in time to prevent immense environmental destruction."

Turbulence After Katrina

continued from Page 16

Flower said the economic recession is blocking money that could be used for New Orleans' recovery. Flower said that more than \$700 million in Gulf Opportunity Zone "GO Zone" bonds remain untapped because of the nation's economic plight.

The GO Zone Bond program was created by Congress in the aftermath of the 2005 hurricanes, but developers have been unable to take advantage of the program.

"The problem has been that a lot of developers have not had the financial strength to be able to borrow money which they have to have in order to use these bonds," Flowers said.

Federal Rebuilding Efforts

In his remarks at the town hall meeting at the University of New Orleans on October 15, 2009, President Barack Obama admitted how much work was still needed to be done in the City and in the other Gulf Coasts areas affected in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

"It has now been just over four years since that terrible storm struck your shores," Obama said. "Whether you're driving through New Orleans, Biloxi or the southwestern part of Louisiana, it's clear how far we have to go before we can call this recovery a success. There are sewers and roads still to repair. There are houses and hospitals still vacant. There are schools and neighborhoods still waiting to thrive once

more. And so I promise you this – whether it's me coming down here or my Cabinet or other members of my administration – we will never forget about New Orleans. We will never forget about the Gulf Coast. Together, we will rebuild this region and we will build it stronger than before."

Obama said his administration is working to release \$1.5 billion in recovery and rebuilding assistance "that had been tangled up in red tape for years."

On the housing front, Obama said his administration is also tackling the "corruption and inefficiency that plagued the New Orleans Housing Authority for years."

A few reports from think tanks in New Orleans and around the country lay out just how much Katrina has disrupted life in New Orleans. A November 2009 report by the Greater New Orleans Community Data Center and the Brookings Institute states that housing remains unaffordable for many people in the region and the city's recovery was stalled by the national recession.

According to the 2008 American Community Survey, fewer families with children have returned to New Orleans since Hurricane Katrina and more singles and childless couples have made New Orleans home.

A January 2009 point-in-time survey by Unity for Greater New Orleans estimates the number of homeless in New Orleans at 11,500.26, which is roughly twice the number of homeless people before Katrina. About 80 percent of

Are Illinois' Drug Laws Racially Biased?

by Mary C. Johns

Why are African Americans in Illinois nine times more likely to be incarcerated than whites?

A new state commission is trying to find the answers to this question and devise some solutions.

The Illinois Disproportionate Justice Impact Study Commission held the first of several public hearings in February in response to a 2007 Sentencing Project study showing Illinois was the 14th worst state in the nation when it came to the odds of African Americans going to prison.

The Crisis of Recidivism

On Feb. 22 at the James Thompson Center, co-chairs Illinois Sen. Mattie Hunter (D-Chicago) and state Rep. Arthur Turner (D-Chicago) and other commissioners listened to the testimony of business people, government officials, university researchers, attorneys and former offenders about the consequences of mass incarcerations.

National surveys consistently show that African Americans, whites and Hispanics are about equally likely to use drugs but the consequences for drug-related crime fall particularly on young African American men from poor, urban communities, according to the commission.

The commissioners were particularly interested in the different ways drugs are sold in urban versus suburban neighborhoods.

Urban sales generally take place on the street, near schools, churches and other drug-free zones.

Data provided by the commission shows that in Illinois in 2005, African Americans made up 15 percent of

the population but 61 percent of the prison population. From 1990 to 2000, the number of African Americans admitted to prison in Illinois for drug offenses grew six-fold.

From 1994 to 2003, the drug arrest rate in Cook County increased 26 percent and the drug arrest rate outside of Cook County more than doubled, according to the Center for Health and Justice's report, "No Entry: Improving Public Safety through Cost-Effective Alternatives to Incarceration in Illinois."

In their written report provided to Residents' Journal that day, the commission stated, "Disenfranchising certain segments of society lead to undemocratic outcomes that affect all of society....The expense of disproportionate incarceration affects every taxpayer in the country."

Hunter told **Residents' Journal** during a break from the hearing that she was aiming to repeal some laws affecting African Americans and Latinos.

"First, you need to raise the issues, address the issues then see what they can do to resolve them," Hunter said. "There's a large budget that's dedicated to the criminal justice system as it is, and we just simply need to figure out what can we do to relieve the overcrowding in the jails, the high arrest rates of African Americans and Hispanics, because most of the arrests are felony convictions."

"We do know what has come out of this hearing today is that the existing laws that are on the books have a lot to do with the arrests around churches and schools. Because of the density of urban America, we have a lot of churches and we have a lot of schools. Like churches, you may have three churches on one block in the Black community or in a Hispanic community."

"These people are selling drugs where they live, in their neighborhoods. They aren't going to the North Side or downtown."

"So, we've got some state laws and also federal laws that we've got to deal with."

Potential Solutions

One criminal justice reform advocate said the focus should be on a stronger police presence in low-income communities versus increasing prison sentences.

"Evidence to indicate a disproportionate application of the criminal justice system against communities of color is readily available by looking at the racial composition of both Cook County Jail and the Illinois Department of Corrections," according to Tracy Siska, executive director of the Chicago Justice Project.

Testifying before the commission, Siska said that while a lot of data proves that a disproportionate racial impact does exist, researchers lack access to data that would allow them to understand the role that race plays at every level.

"Using Chicago and Cook County as an example,



Photo by MARY C. JOHNS

State Commissioner Marian Perkins discusses proposed changes to current drug laws while state Rep. Art Turner (D-Chicago) and Sen. Mattie Hunter (D-Chicago) look on.

we currently have no way of examining as a whole why detectives within the Chicago Police Department and prosecutors within the Cook County State's Attorney's office decide to pursue or drop a case.

Both have very wide discretion and to my knowledge, their decisions are not recorded in a manner that would allow an analysis to be conducted to look for any disproportionate impact."

Siska "strongly" advised the commissioners to partner with criminal justice agencies in Illinois and craft legislation to ensure that every agency in the criminal justice system examines where discretion plays a role.

"The reality is that without this information, we are always going to be wondering why things are happening without ever being able to produce a social science-based study to tell us why," he said.

Jerry I. Siegel, president of Midway Moving & Storage, hires ex-offenders. Siegel said his "crews have assisted Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) residents coping with bursting water pipes in the middle of the night."

He added that more businesses should provide training to ex-offenders and hire more of them like he does to curb the recidivism rate.

Siegel's moving company is located on the city's West Side in a disadvantaged neighborhood. Almost 50 percent of his workforce is made up of ex-offenders.

Siegel cautioned the commissioners that without well-funded training programs and jobs for ex-offenders, there would be little chance of reducing the recidivism rates.

Siegel added that ex-offenders should get public transportation stipends for them to get to and from work, and that funding should go to non-profits that assist ex-offenders with issues that affect employment, such as housing, IDs, counseling and obtaining their General Education Diplomas (GED).

The programs also should have money for incidentals like work uniforms and meals to help ex-offenders find a job and keep them there.

Siegel said that when they first start working, many ex-offenders use their whole paycheck to pay for their uniforms.

Ex-offenders should also be assigned cell phones or companies like Midway should get funds to provide ex-offenders with a phone so they can be reached for emergencies or last-minute job assignments. Siegel also urged the use of tax credits for companies that hire ex-offenders.

"If companies are given enough incentives in form of stipends, allowances, tax benefits and support, they will be willing to give new opportunities to ex-offenders who are leaving the correction system," Siegel stated.

Antoine Day, an ex-felon whose 1990 conviction was overturned, is an outreach coordinator at the Howard Area Community and Employment Resource Center.

Noting that three of his children are currently enrolled in college, he told the commission to consider the positive things many ex-offenders are doing to help one another through positive mentoring programs.

"People are focused on the drugs, and not the solutions," Day said. "It took an ex-offender to help me straighten up. Our parks are closed. Youth facilities closed."

But youth on the corners and liquor stores are everywhere. Once they come out of the County Jail, they are messed up. I know what it's like. I helped destroy it. But now I'm trying to help fix it."

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Dealing With the Digital Television Transition

by Quintana Woodridge

I don't have a TV. I use my internet to get information on what's going on around the world. But for most people, the television is still their major source of information, and many of them are paying more for their TV lately.

"My cable bill is \$50 a month with taxes. It was recently disconnected due to prorated expenses that were too much," said Ebone Young.

Young is a resident of the South Shore community on the Southeast side of Chicago. She is one among millions of low-income citizens not only in Chicago but across the United States that do not have access to television programming due to the Digital TV conversion.

The switch to a digital signal means those with older TV sets can no longer receive free TV. These citizens either can't afford a digital-ready television or the cost of cable.

For many people, the DTV switch has ended their ability to watch TV.

Stephanie G, a Spanish-speaking resident in the West Englewood community, said her mother can't enjoy her programs, because their television no longer picks up Spanish language channels and the family can't afford a converter box.

Many low-income people are stretching their budgets to afford cable, however.

Since the DTV switch in June 2009, the enrollment list and revenues of cable companies have grown.

On August 6, 2009, Comcast announced a 4.5 percent revenue growth in its second quarter.

A spokesperson for the RCN Cable Company said

they had also seen a growth in the number of subscribers:

"We have added more customers since the digital switch over in all the states where our services are."

The RCN spokesperson added that the most popular services chosen among the cable companies are bundle packages that consist of phone service, cable TV and Internet access.

"I have DirecTV and the bill is high," said Brian Rogers of the Bronzeville area. Rogers said he spends \$99 a month for a bundle package.

One activist said the era of free TV may be over.

"All people may have to pay to watch TV in the next couple of years," said Mitchell Szczepanczyk, a Polish- and English-speaking resident affiliated with Chicago Media Action.

Before the DTV switch, Szczepanczyk and the CMA published a letter in 60 newspapers around the country expressing their concerns and recommending several ways to make the switch easier.

Since the switch, Szczepanczyk has been fol-

lowing the effects of the DTV switch on low-income, fixed income, and non-English-speaking people.

"Many of the non-English-speaking families rely on television for information," said Szczepanczyk.

Szczepanczyk explained that the most of the public airwaves were auctioned off in 2000 and are now owned large media companies such as AT&T and Verizon Wireless.

Many of these channels should be used for public broadcasting, Szczepanczyk said. He suggested that the Obama Administration look at other digital broadcasting systems around the world then create a system that will accommodate everyone and allow access to public broadcasting for useful information.

"The media has an important impact on our life."

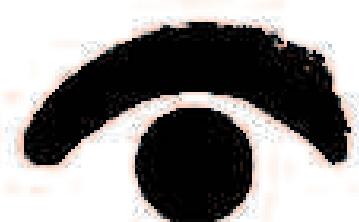


Photo by MARY C. JOHNS

Many low-income people didn't benefit from this free government issued coupon to help with the cost of buying a converter box before the Digital Television switch in June 2009. Some didn't have the money to go along with the coupon, while others can't afford a cable TV subscription.

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Ickes Update

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He shared some of his thoughts with **RJ**: "I grew up down here," Reed said. "I figured they should have rehabbed Ickes like they did Hilliard Homes, Archer Courts and Dearborn Homes. They could have done this to Ickes Homes. During my life in Ickes, I have seen some good and bad things but what I'll miss is the good times. We had laundry rooms in our basements. For us kids, there were drill teams and the Twigs program.

"I remember good neighbors. If you needed anything, you could get it.

"I'm very sad about it all because my memories keep coming from age 10 on through, baseball in the back, sprinklers on the side, giant slides and merry-go-rounds in the front.

"Sometimes we could go out and help the janitors.

"Life in the Ickes is going to be missed. My friends and neighbors are going their separate ways. People are so scattered over west, south and southeast. I have so many memories. I hope they don't dissolve when the buildings are torn gone.

"My mother moved into a senior building and one day, before she died, I brought her down here to reminisce and she thoroughly enjoyed going up and down on her motorized chair from 22nd to 25th and back. When she had seen enough, she went home satisfied.

"I plan to relocate to Dearborn Homes or get reinstated in the Housing Choice Voucher program and move to Evanston where my sister lives. Maybe I won't feel so bad. It seems like they are tearing down everybody's memories," Reed said.

Some residents were concerned with what would happen to the free CHA-related resident programs that supported the children during the summer months, such as the breakfast and lunch programs.

One resident asked, "Are those services part of the

new neighborhood?"

Amid the many lamentations on the subject of relocating and staying in Ickes, Mrs. W. said, "Since I haven't moved yet, it's no wonder there's a sadness flavoring every conversation."

New Park Proposed for Ickes Residents Opens Soon

A new park located near the Harold Ickes public housing site opened Sept. 28, despite the fact that the majority of the families at Ickes had moved out and most of the buildings had been demolished by that time.

The park dates back to Sept. 2, 2003, when leaseholders at Ickes were invited by former Ald. Dorothy Tillman to attend a public meeting to discuss with city Department of Planning and Development and the Chicago Park District.

The majority of residents who attended the September 2003 meeting have relocated to other areas of the city. Hopefully, the few remaining residents and their families will have plenty of fun and recreation on the new sports field and play lot before they too have to face the dreaded relocation orders.

Ickes Students' Trip to Springfield

Fulfilling a promise she made to Ickes residents, State Sen. Mattie Hunter (D-Chicago) hosted a trip to Springfield for the National Teachers Academy's (NTA) outstanding football team and their coaches, along with the girls winter basketball team who won the Area 9 regional championship tournament on May 20, 2009.

The fun began with the sun. Warm weather, good spirits and everyone being on time for the bus got the day started on the good side. However, the best was yet to come.

Hunter provided the best of services for the 3-hour trip to Springfield. A huge interstate coach bus arrived on time for pick-up with the name of the company SPIRIT emblazoned in giant lettering on side, as if they knew the students' own spirit of sportsmanship had earned them this trip.

The good behavior exhibited by the students was commendable and the bus driver was expert. However, the ride was long. We were all grateful when we pulled in to a buffet for lunch and had a chance to stretch our legs. The food was delicious and we came away satisfied, eager to be on our way.

We headed straight to the state capital and were directed to one of the assembly rooms where we found Hunter, who greeted her guests with open arms. The excited students then climbed into the chairman's bench area for an official photo shoot. From there, they roamed the halls and galleries of the capital looking at oil paintings of past governors and huge statues of past outstanding senators. Lo and behold, there was a statue of Mayor Richard J. Daley, father of our present Mayor Richard M. Daley.

Soon we left the building to visit the Illinois State Historical Museum founded in 1877, and ran into our own state representative, Ken Dunkin, who was visibly sur-



Photo by JACQUELINE THOMPSON

CHA Harold Ickes Homes public housing students of the National Teachers Association pose outside the Illinois State Capitol building during their visit there in May.

prised to recognize the children and coaches from NTA in Springfield.

Dunkin insisted that the whole group return to the capital and take an official photo with him before we left. "You give me energy and hope to see you here," said Dunkin

"Write to us and give us ideas. I am so happy to see you. I would like to have an opportunity to explain taxes to you. Get all As and Bs in high school. Don't follow a fool. Do your own work." Deiandre Strickland, one of the NTA students on the trip, said, "I'm having a good time learning something I did not know. I thought the Democrats and Republicans met in separate rooms to have their discussions. I did not know that there were two groups, the Senate and the House," she said.

James Dorsett told me that, "It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience and I would like to come here again."

Dakeya Perkins said, "I'm enjoying myself and learning a lot."

Ariel Jones, smiling brightly, said, "It's FUN, FUN and we're learning, learning!"

The TRIP to Springfield was a huge success. Satisfied coaches and happy students all relished the day.



Photo by JACQUELINE THOMPSON

Alumni of the Harold Ickes Homes, dating back as far as the 1950s to the present, take time out from having fun, during a reunion party held by the Local Advisory Council on December 19, 2009.

R E S I D E N T S '

J o u r n a l

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CONTRIBUTORS: John Woodson, Madeline Haithcock,
Midwest Security Agency, Inc., and Bronzeville Visitor Info.
Ctr. Ernest A. Griffin Family



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