

R E S I D E N T S '

# Journal

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**HOPE FOR THE FUTURE**

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# Our Mission

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

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

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

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

# Our Readership

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

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

\* *Residents' Journal* 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).

\* *Residents' Journal*'s readers are active citizens. 84 percent of the

respondents voted in the last election while 67 percent attend religious services regularly.

\* *Residents' Journal*'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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# Transforming CHA Madden/Wells Redevelopment Update

by Michael Ibrahim

The first phase of reconstruction of family public housing developments Ida B. Wells, Madden Park and Darrow Homes is underway, with construction scheduled to begin by the end of the year, and tenant leadership recently weighed in on the role of opportunities and challenges for residents of the properties during their redevelopment.

"I look at the Plan for Transformation as an opportunity for our families to now begin to get some services that were not there previously, under the initial [Chicago] Housing Authority," said Ida B. Wells Local Advisory Council President Sandra Young. The Plan for Transformation is the CHA's 10-year, \$1.6 billion bid to rehabilitate or replace most of Chicago's public housing stock. Young said the housing authority's track record with residents was one challenge to the success of the plan.

"The concern that I have with it is people not understanding this Plan for Transformation because of the years of promises, the years of neglect to the prop-



**Michael Ibrahim**

transformation requires [of] residents is tremendous, and trying to keep them involved in the planning process and aware of the impacts of CHA policy on them is quite a job," Preckwinkle said.

Wells LAC President Young said that, while heads of households might be informed about details, all residents must be in the know.

"Not just the heads of households need to understand but everyone in that household needs to understand the changes about to take place," Young said.

But Preckwinkle said not everyone was being reached.

"We've tried hard to do that," Preckwinkle said. "It is understandable that we've not always reached everybody."

Ald. Preckwinkle added that resident input via participation by resi-

dent leadership was a key to success of the plan.

"I think their [the residents'] input is of tremendous value," Preckwinkle said. "If we did not have the strong participation of CHA leaders in this process, we would not have made any progress at all."

Square said tenant leadership and social service providers also played a role in getting information out to family members.

"They are using the system or the services as a way to help them tell their families, 'This is what is going to take place,'" Square said. "The One Strike policy is a good example of this."

"One Strike" is a policy that the federal department of Housing and Urban Development set up guidelines for in 1996. The rule states that any drug-related criminal conviction by any member of a leaseholding family is grounds for eviction of the entire family. While public housing advocates have sharply criticized the policy, it has been upheld in court.

"As we went out to do building, block and area meetings, we were encouraging the building and block presidents to have not just the lease holders but everyone living in each specific household come out," explained Young. "The idea was we wanted your son, Johnny, or your son Leroy, for example, to know these are the changes."

"At which point we would let Johnny or Leroy know that, were they to engage or become involve in some unhealthy activities, you are going to cause your mother who is the lease holder or your father who is the lease holder some very real problems, which would eventually affect every member of the household."

Employment during redevelopment is one opportunity available to some residents. Joe Williams, president of Target Group, one of several developers and social service providers that were awarded redevelopment of the site by the city, praised Young and Square, along with Madden Park Local Advisory President Eunice Crosby, for their efforts to employ residents.

"[Resident leadership has] been more of a leader than anybody else in securing jobs for the residents at Madden/Wells," Williams said. "I don't have the numbers, I don't know how those numbers get reported... but my point here is, they have been aggressive and determined to make sure that the residents' interests



**Ida B. Wells Local Advisory Council President Sandra Young.**

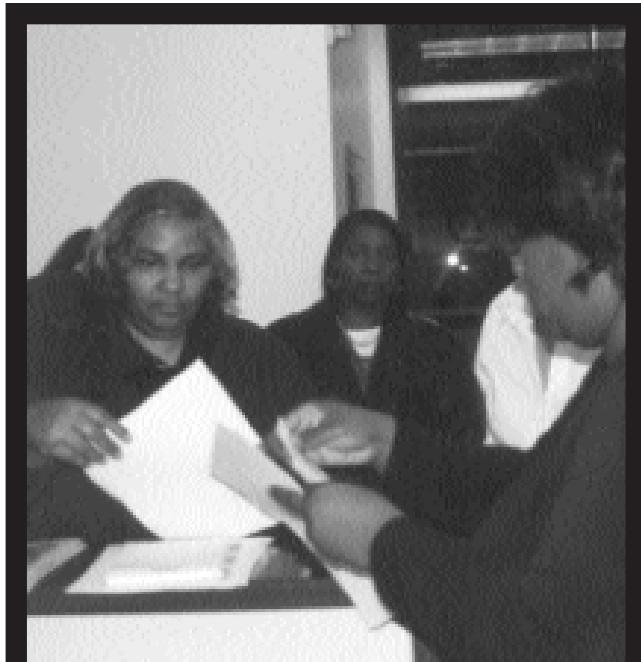
**Photo by Michael Ibrahim**

and needs are being served."

Williams said that construction will begin at the intersection of 39th Street and Cottage Grove Avenue and was scheduled to begin "sometime before the end of the year." Young tied resident input into redevelopment to political activity, noting that large voter turnout will increase the influence of resident leadership.

"We educate residents on how important it is to vote, and try to explain to them that people look at the numbers," Young said. "We tell them that when people look at the fact that Ida B. Wells has 1200 families and only a hundred came out to vote, that says a lot; that you don't want anything, so we're not going to put anything there."

"Its twofold for [LAC leaders]," Young added, "from the stand-point that we want everyone to understand the Plan (for Transformation) and all other issues pertaining to the residents, because we understand them."



**Housing Coalition Rejects Return Policies**

Cabrini Green LAC President Carol Steele presents letters of concerns and recommendations to CHA official M. Alicia Newsome regarding the site criteria for public housing residents returning to mixed-income communities.

**Photo by Beauty Turner**

**The concern that I have with it is people not understanding this Plan for Transformation because of the years of promises, the years of neglect to the property.**

-Sandra Young, Ida B. Wells Local Advisory Council President

erty," said Young. "So now, in order to get people to buy into the Plan for Transformation, you have to reassure them that there are people working to bring about this Plan for Transformation and everyone, through this process will be held accountable."



**Madden/Wells Service Connector Ujima's Executive Director Leroy Square.**

**Photo by Michael Ibrahim**

Leroy Square, executive director of Ujima, the city-selected social service and referral provider for the developments, agreed.

"Probably from years of hearing about promises being made to us by CHA, people got to the point [of thinking that] things are not going to change," said Square. "People will now have to start to see things happening to even buy into it."

Fourth Ward Ald. Toni Preckwinkle, in whose North Kenwood-Oakland ward the public housing sites sit, said the demands the Plan places on residents is another challenge.

"I think the magnitude of the changes that CHA

# Transforming CHA

## News Briefs

### Service Connectors gain \$6.5M

The social service referral program that replaced Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) social services will get a \$6.5 million boost next year, as CHA heads recently voted to approve a \$13.6 million budget for 2004.

"We've taken a long, hard look at what needs to be done," said CHA Managing Director of Resident Services Meghan Harte in a statement. "These additional funds will provide more money, counselors and services for CHA families that [the Service Connector program has] ever had before." The CHA Board of Commissioners approved the measure during its October meeting.

In the past, residents and public housing advocates have vocally criticized the program's slim budget. Confirmation of this criticism came earlier this year in a report commissioned by the CHA when their handpicked monitor, former U.S. Attorney Thomas P. Sullivan, described the program as "woefully inadequate" and "grossly underfunded." CHA officials replied that they would take his criticism into consideration.

### Bridgeport Homes facelift begins

A 60-year-old public housing development in the neighborhood that gave birth to Mayor Richard M. Daley and his famous father is in the first phase of what CHA officials are calling "extensive rehabilitation."

Built in 1943, Bridgeport Homes, located near 35th and Halsted Streets, consists of 137 units. As part of the rehab, seven units will be made to comply with the Americans With Disabilities Act.

"We're excited to see this work begin," said Local Advisory Council President Sherri Guzman in a statement. "All the residents here are looking forward to the improvements."

### ABLA residents document history

Residents at the ABLA public housing development are producing a documentary to record the history of the residents of the development.

"This project will help preserve the history of the area and also help overcome some of the stereotypes that may exist about the people from this community," said Local Advisory Council President Deverra Beverly in a statement.

The project is based on an eight-week program with instruction on video equipment operation and research and interview techniques. The Duncan YMCA Chernin Center for the Arts and SepiaTone Entertainment were funded to run the program.

### Hilliard Homes to Reopen in January

Rehab of one of the four buildings making up the Raymond Hilliard Homes is complete, according to city officials and the developer for the site.

Open for leasing this December and occupancy in January, 2004, the building is designated for seniors only and contains 175 one-bedroom units, which will rent for roughly \$675 per month, according to a press release from the Chicago Housing Authority and Holsten Real Estate Development Corporation, the developer of the site.

Holsten Development is headed by Peter Holsten, a regular campaign contributor to U.S. Rep. Jan Shakowsky (D-IL) who has also given money to U.S. Rep. Danny K. Davis and state Sen. Barack Obama (D-IL).

# Residents Decry New Leases

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

Many Chicago public housing residents are upset about the new rules and regulations in the proposed leases they must sign to return to the mixed-income communities that will replace their public housing developments. Critics say these rules also mean few public housing residents will be qualified to occupy the units after redevelopment.

The changes will include a credit history and criminal background checks that will go back as far as 10 years, drug testing, home visits by the landlord to evaluate housekeeping skills prior to admission, and an evaluation of a resident's employment history.

### Robert Taylor Residents' Objections

Residents of the Robert Taylor Homes made their objections about certain specific requirements of the Taylor return site criteria known during a recent public meeting to comment on the draft requirements.

A number of residents were boiling hot mad as they lit in on the CHA officials in attendance in a crowded room at an October meeting at the Charles A. Hayes Family Investment Center.

One third of the units in the mixed-income communities will be set aside as public housing. Of those units, half will be for families with annual incomes of not more than 30 percent of the area median income and



Mary C. Johns

vacant city owned lots east of the Robert Taylor Homes, under the first phase of redevelopment. The site will be located in an area bounded by State Street on the west, 41st Street on the north,

Prairie Avenue on the east and 43rd Street on the south. There will be 54 replacement public housing units, 44 affordable tax credit units and 12 unrestricted market rate units, according to a briefing sheet of the Robert Taylor Homes prepared by CHA.

**T**he fact is that these tests are intrusive, that they are invasive in some ways and really sort of degrade individuals.

**Ed Yohnka, director of communications for the American Civil Liberties Union**



**A leaseholder at the Robert Taylor Homes complains to CHA officials about some of the return criteria rules during a recent public comment meeting.**

photo by Mary C. Johns

half for families making between 31 and 80 percent of the area median income level. Another third will be affordable housing units for families with incomes between 80 and 120 percent of the median income level. The rest are market rate housing units.

110 units are projected for the Robert Taylor Homes off-site, on

Two CHA sites were undergoing the public comment periods for the draft return criteria in October, the Henry Horner Phase II and the Robert Taylor Homes.

### Drug Testing

**R**esidents Journal tested the Robert Taylor residents' concerns with one of the city's top civil rights legal advocacy groups.

One of the major concerns the residents had with the new rules and regulations was pertaining to the drug tests that are proposed for public housing residents in the mix-income communities.

Ed Yohnka, director of communications for the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), said during an interview in October that requiring public housing residents to undergo drug testing to get housing puts "undue burdens" on them and raises questions about their constitutional rights.

"We are concerned that these suspicionless searches that are conducted on individuals as a condition of housing raise fundamental questions about Fourth Amendment protections," Yohnka said.

"The fact is that these tests are intrusive, that they are invasive in some ways and really sort of degrade individuals. And to compel someone to do that simply on the basis of their economic status and not

because of any legitimate suspicion or evidence that they've been involved in any criminal activity, really is in our view an infringement on the Fourth Amendment and something about which we are very concerned," Yohnka said.

Yohnka said ACLU also had concerns about a landlord requesting some of their tenants to undergo drug testing and not all of them.

"That's another issue that raises real concern for us and something that we've been attempting to monitor as this process is going forward," he said.

"There doesn't seem to be any rationale for testing only one group of people... we know—given, for example, the pervasiveness of drug use across our society—that that use is often similar in all social economic classes.

"And so to just test one...as a policy matter seems to fail because it ignores individuals who may be using drugs as well, but

also puts an undue burden on people in lower social economic classes and again raises real fundamental concerns," Yohnka said.

As to whether it was lawful for a landlord to require drug testing for some tenants and not all tenants, Yohnka said many different factors go into determining its constitutionality.

"I wouldn't say that for certain. I think that it's in question. I think the problem is that in many ways until one is engaged in the full-fledged investigation and really is looking at these questions with the kind of detail that they want to sometimes, that question is impossible to answer," he said.

Also, Yohnka was vague in his answer as to whether or not these requirements are grounds for a lawsuit.

"The notion that people are being compelled to do a drug test in order to get housing and the notion that other people that are getting the same housing but under different conditions aren't being compelled to take those tests is a grounds for great concern, and is something that I think our organization and other organizations like it will monitor and look at—and raises a prospect of real problems," he said.

### Criminal Background Checks

**A**nother concern the residents of Robert Taylor Homes raised at the meeting was regarding the length of time the owners wanted to go back into public housing residents' criminal history. The draft of the return criteria states as far back as 10 years.

Yohnka said how far back the criminal background check would go is not really at issue.

# Transforming CHA Work for Ex-Offenders

by Beauty Turner  
Assistant Editor

Ex-offenders are keeping CHA's feet to the fire, trying to ensure that they get a piece of the redevelopment pie being passed out in Chicago. And while they've been seen all over the city raising awareness of their concerns, some of their greatest visibility has been in public housing developments.

Recently, for example, sources report that public housing development Rockwell Gardens



**Beauty Turner**

"One of the buildings is being torn down in Rockwell Gardens, 340 South Western Avenue," Davis said. "A group of young men from V.O.T.E. came over demanding jobs."

"Chicago

hours a day."

"They are there to protect the workers and the equipment," explained Hill.

Hill praised the officers.

"We pay the Chicago Police Department less than we paid our own police department, and they do a far better job," Hill said.

"American Demolition also has Security guards present," he added.

"CHA is strictly biased when it comes to the residents," said V.O.T.E. spokesperson Joseph Watkins. "Racism is their bigger violation. The CHA administrators are only puppets. Their only job is to make the residents vacate."

"This is a form of genocide, what they are doing to the poor people," Watkins said. "We will continue to demand jobs."

LAC President Mary Baldwin of Rockwell Gardens could not be reached by press time.

## Helping the Poor

I hear all these politicians speak about God bless America. Why is it God only blesses certain people," said Voice of The Ex-Offenders spokesperson and public housing resident Joseph Watkins. "When



**Voices of The Ex-Offenders spokesperson Joseph Watkins speaks to CHA chief Terry Peterson about jobs after the announcement of St. Edmund Corp.'s housing renovations in September, as other members of the group listen in on the discussion.**

photo by Beauty Turner

# St Edmund Meadows Renovations

by Beauty Turner  
Assistant Editor

The redevelopment of a strip of vacant row houses that has been sitting idle for many years now on Michigan Avenue in Washington Park is underway. The St. Edmund Meadows housing renovation began with a recent kickoff meeting at 60th Street and Michigan Avenue.

The former public housing units are being redeveloped by the St. Edmund Redevelopment Corporation—a church-based community group run by Rev. Richard Tolliver who recently

received \$9 million from City Hall to take over seven Chicago Housing Authority buildings deemed blighted to turn them into mixed-income housing.

For some it may be a dream come true, but many former CHA residents who moved into the units with Housing Choice Vouchers (formerly Section 8 vouchers) on 60th and Michigan are wondering whether the grass will be greener for them when the newly renovated homes are fixed up by St. Edmund's Church.

Many residents are wondering where they fit in concerning housing and jobs.

"When these places are rehabbed, what are they going to do about residents like me? Will we be included? I'm a foster mother of three; I feel that I'm entitled to the new housing," Lola Smith a relocated resident from Robert Taylor-B, said.

"I received a letter today about this renovation kickoff meeting," Smith continued. "Where was the committee that started this project long before now concerning the community? Why weren't we involved?"

"I hear that they're going to renovate 57 units and already they say 42 are due to be occupied by non-CHA residents," Smith complained.

Standing right beside her was her daughter whose voice seems to be drowned out by the sea of politicians and community developers and architects and news reporters that were at the meeting.

Many people spoke, including prominent people such as Rev.

Tolliver, Ald. Arenda Troutman (20th), CEO of CHA Terry Peterson, State Representative Ken Dunkin, Congressman Bobby Rush and Joe Galvan from the federal department of Housing and Urban Development. Chicago Housing Department head Jack Markowski spoke of the city's role in this project. LISC/Chicago Senior Program Director Andrew Mooney spoke about the importance of non-profit sector in the replacement of public housing with mixed-income developments.

"What about me? I have one child. I have a Section 8 voucher," asked former Robert Taylor resident Anika Collins.

"All this money coming into the community, and there's no accountability, or no mechanism set in place to monitor the people who are in charge of it," resident Melvin Bailey said. "We need accountability because too many times the funds get misappropriated and end up in somebody else's pocket."

"Nobody is holding the people accountable concerning the Section 3 [community involvement provision of certain HUD grants], and in the long run the people who live in the communities end up with a lack of opportunities," Bailey added.

Many community leaders and residents are still wondering whether the green grass of St. Edmund's Meadows will leave a lane open for former residents leading to housing and jobs.

With residents complaining that they have more questions than answers when it comes to the St. Edmund redevelopment, *Residents' Journal* will get to the bottom of resident opportunity during—and after—redevelopment.



**These former CHA units located at the corner of 61st Street and Wabash Avenue are part of the St. Edmund Meadows Redevelopment Corp.'s housing renovations that are currently underway.**

photo by Mary C. Johns



## Award Winner

**Longtime Residents' Journal photographer John Brooks poses with his Chicago Association of Black Journalists 2003 award for a photograph which appeared on the front cover of the November/December 2002 issue of Residents' Journal.**

Photo by Mary C. Johns

# Transforming CHA

## Community Service Demands: Forced Labor?

by Mary C. Johns  
Editor-in-Chief

The U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's mandate that all non-working public housing residents nationally perform eight hours of community service to live in their apartments went into effect in early October 2003. But the Chicago Housing Authority wants their residents to work more hours of free labor to remain in their subsidized apartments.

### CHA Explains Increase in Hours for Work Requirements

The recently enforced bill, known as "The Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998," states that adult residents of public housing contribute no less than 8 hours of work per month within the community in which the adult resides, or participate on an ongoing basis in an economic self-sufficiency or job-training program, to live in public housing. The rule excludes the elderly, the disabled and those providing home care needs to the disabled, or those attending school or any vocational training.

However, CHA is in the process of demanding that their public housing resi-

social services to assist residents during and after the relocation process.

Peterson said by helping people who are living in public housing today to become self-sufficient, they can move on and free up units for some of the 30,000 people on the CHA waiting list.

"Just because you're living in a unit and you're paying us whatever you pay a month doesn't mean that there are not other expectations of things that we feel that you could be doing to help move towards self-sufficiency," Peterson explained.

"Public housing was not built to be permanent housing. It was built to be a place where if you were going through challenges in your life, it provided a place for you to live during that time. "But it's our hope that eventually we can move you to the affordable unit. And then hopefully help you to move into homeownership," he said.

The public housing residents returning into the mixed-income communities will also be required to perform the community service hours. But Peterson said that the private market rate owners that will live in the mixed-income communities currently underway at several CHA sites will not be required to perform the community service hours. This despite the fact that the public housing residents and private market owners will share the same

**J**ust because you're living in a unit and you're paying us whatever you pay a month doesn't mean there are not other expectations of things that we feel that you could be doing to help move toward self-sufficiency.

-CHA CEO Terry Peterson

dents that fall under this rule perform at least 40 hours a month of community service, according to a recent proposal to amend the current lease agreement between the tenants and the public housing agency.

CHA CEO Terry Peterson said, after an October Tenant Services meeting, that the extra 32 hours of community service performance will be so that CHA can help residents move towards self-sufficiency and out of public housing altogether.

"What HUD did was to set a floor. They said that was the minimum. And we are saying fine, that's just the minimum. But we want to work with our residents to engage in other activities," he said.

"It's not about you're just going to do forty hours of community service and we're not going to work with you. There will be a whole host of things that we want our residents to engage in, activities that can help them to move towards self-sufficiency as the Plan for Transformation moves forward," Peterson said.

CHA is in the process of redeveloping its housing stock and is paying city-picked agencies, known as the Service Connectors, millions of dollars to provide

management company.

"[The private market owners] are not federally subsidized," he said.

"The homeowners have jobs. The landlord doesn't get their rent subsidized. We subsidize and pay in most cases the rent of the public housing residents. A homeowner has to pay their own mortgage."

The mandate goes into effect in January 2004, according to Jennifer Chhantlani from CHA's public affairs.

Chhantlani also said in a phone message later that the public housing authority is in the process of determining, between the property managers and the Service Connectors, who will be in charge of tracking whether or not the residents are performing the community services.

### Voucher Holders Exemptions Not Explained

Middle-class people looking to purchase a home through with federal subsidy, people receiving housing subsidies from HUD, using housing vouchers to rent a place live or who are in the process of purchasing a



### Principal For a Day

**R**esidents' Journal Editor-in-Chief Mary C. Johns shares a moment of laughter with primary grade students from Betsy Ross Elementary School, where she volunteered some of her time as Principal For a Day in October. Some of her children attended the school before they were relocated from a CHA high-rise building in the area that was imploded in 1998.

home using the housing vouchers are not required to perform the community service hours either.

CHA stated in a document to *Residents' Journal* that the reason why their housing voucher tenants are not required to perform the community services is because "HUD does not currently require Section 8 housing voucher holders to fulfill a service requirement."

Donna White, the head press person for the Washington, D.C.-based HUD office said during an October interview that she didn't know why the Section 8 residents aren't required to perform community service.

"I don't know why. You can say that the originators of the law didn't include Section 8 residents to perform the service," she said.

### Infringement of Residents Rights?

CHA residents are questioning if this community service demand was an infringement of their constitutional rights.

Ed Yohnka, director of communications for the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), said in October that the community service requirements for public housing residents was not really a matter that ACLU has policy on or could speak to.

"Community service requirements are

a question that we haven't taken a position on," Yohnka said.

"But I would say this, I think there is something that's a little incongruous about the notion of coerced volunteerism. I don't know whether a court would find that to be an infringement upon their rights or not. I think as a policy matter, there are some questions about its real effectiveness," he said.

### A Resident's View

Tamara Williams, a former Robert Taylor resident who relocated out of the public housing complex in November 2000, didn't like the prospect of having to perform community service against her will.

She told *Residents' Journal* in mid-October that she felt as though residents are being treated like prisoners who are being punished for a crime they didn't commit.

"I think that's ridiculous because why should a person have to do community service just to live in the property?" Williams said.

"If they're lease compliant, that should be enough. Community service, I relate that to people that's been in prison. Whatever happened to the tenants' rights regardless if we're poor or rich?"

"Of course we want to do better," declared Williams.

## Corrections

The caption for the right photo that appeared on page 7 of the July/August 03 issue of *Residents' Journal* was listed as being the Shore Shore High School Drill Team. The correct name of the group is the South Shore Drill Team & Performing Arts Ensemble and has no association with South Shore High School.

# Utilities Charged with Fraud

by Mary C. Johns  
Editor-in-Chief

Chicago residents who pay for their own heat, hot water and/or cooking gas—including many public housing residents in scattered site and Section 8 apartments—may soon get a refund.

Consumers, advocates and the City of Chicago are calling into question the integrity of Peoples Gas Company and its affiliate utility company Peoples Energy Services.

Consumer advocates are charging Peoples Energy with misrepresenting a payment program. Peoples Gas, meanwhile, has been accused of overcharging its consumers for gas during the winter of 2000-2001.

**P**eoples Energy is using sales tactics usually associated with fly-by-night companies...This type of behavior is not just dishonest, it's illegal and the ICC should put a stop to it immediately.

**-CUB Executive Director Martin Cohen**

## Fly-By-Night Sales Tactics?

Pat Clark, a spokesperson for the consumer watchdog group the Citizens Utility Board (CUB), said that in late October, state regulators ruled there is evidence that Peoples Energy misrepresented a payment plan to customers.

CUB has asked the Illinois Commerce Commission to fine Peoples Energy \$100 for every time it sold the payment plan to customers, up to \$1 million. In early October, CUB filed a complaint with the commerce commission against Peoples Energy—a company affiliated with Peoples Gas but which is not the same corporation—over the payment plan. CUB charged Peoples Energy with violating the Consumer Fraud Act. The ICC will rule on CUB's complaint in coming months.

CUB, which was created by the Illinois legislature to represent the interests of residential and small-business utility consumers, alleged that Peoples Energy Services is misleading consumers into signing up for a plan that offers a "fixed price" for natural gas until 2005, even though the price isn't a fixed one.

The two-year contract for natural gas services lasts until 2005 but contains an escape clause that allows the company to cancel the contract or raise the price for services at any time.

PEOPLES ENERGY	
CAR-RT SORT **C062	
PEOPLES ENERGY CHICAGO IL 60687-0001	
Please Pay By 09/04/2003 Please write your account number on your check.	
Amount Due	Amount Enclosed
Yes, I would like to pledge one dollar per month to the Peoples Energy Share the Warmth fund which helps low-income customers pay energy bills. I have added one dollar to my payment. Check this box -> <input type="checkbox"/>	
Please do not write or stamp below this line.	
4415000283141090000300000000216200000	

A copy of a People's Energy gas bill. Highlighted in grey is the "Share the Warmth" donation request.

Under state law, the ICC has authority to ensure that the marketing materials of alternative gas suppliers like Peoples Energy Services "adequately disclose the prices, terms and conditions" of the products or services being offered.

CUB's complaint states that Peoples Energy Services' materials violate this mandate, which in turn constitutes a violation of the Consumer Fraud Act.

CUB wants ICC to order the gas company to stop the marketing of the offer, honor the advertised price and allow customers who have already signed up to cancel the contract without a penalty.

"It's up to the commerce commission," CUB's Clark said.

"And if the commerce commission orders (Peoples Energy), then they will have to make the refunds."

But Elizabeth Castro, spokesperson for Peoples Gas Corporation and Peoples Energy Services, said that Peoples Energy Services did nothing underhanded in their offering of the service plan to its customers. And they plan to continue offering the service plan.

"We're offering what we think is a good deal and customers should investigate whether they think it is the right plan for them," said Castro.

Castro says the rules are different for Peoples Energy.

Peoples Energy Services is an unregulated utility company whose rates and offerings are not overseen by the commission. "They are an unregulated utility," she said.

"They are one of the corporation's [Peoples Gas] business units, but they operate as a separate company and they are not a public utility. So the rules are different for them."

## Another Charge

In August, CUB and the City of Chicago administered a complaint that Peoples Gas charged its customers with "inordinately high costs" for gas during the 2000 and 2001 heating season. The city proposed that the utility company pay \$230 million in reimbursements to its customers.

CUB recommended that the ICC order Peoples Gas to refund people for allegedly overcharging them for gas services during the winter of 2000-2001.

Peoples Gas spokesperson Castro said that the company currently has no plans to refund its customers.

"We have no plans to reimburse anybody right now, because we believe that

# Residents Decry New Leases continued

(Continued on page 8)  
(Continued from page 5)

"I think what's a concern in that case is the fact that such checks really aren't effective. The fact [is] that some small misdemeanor in which someone is caught up in is not something that really makes a significant amount of difference in terms of what kind of a neighbor they're going to be currently," Yohnka explained.

## Other Resident Concerns

The Robert Taylor residents were also concerned about the utility bills that they would be required to pay and maintain in their new

replacement units.

None of the public housing residents living in the mid-rise and high-rise buildings in CHA family complexes had to pay their own gas bills for cooking and heating, because of their income status.

"When you're on a fixed income, how are you supposed to stay there?" one woman asked during the public comment period on the return criteria for the mixed-income community for the public housing site.

Ben Levi Sha-Shak, a male leaseholder currently living at the site, was concerned about the non-public housing residents in the working groups that are part of the decision making for the return criteria—developers, aldermen and com-

munity residents, for example.

"They are not living in public housing. But they are making grave decisions about what is going to happen to public housing residents," he declared.

"We have come a mighty long way to be treated like slaves," shouted another woman as the meeting progressed.

"They should not be allowed to have that kind of authority over us. We don't want to start a riot, so can y'all just leave us alone?" she said.

One woman asked for a copy of the meeting minutes in the event residents wanted to take CHA to court.

"Y'all setting us up to one day become homeless. And y'all setting us up for failure," she said.

Mattie McCoy, the Local Advisory Council president for Robert Taylor-A, said she was always against the idea of residents being required to take drug tests.

And Mildred Dennis, the Local Advisory Council president for Robert Taylor-B, scolded the CHA officials



A rendering of the planned replacement units for the Robert Taylor Homes.

hosting the meeting for not making it clear to the residents that the drug testing requirements would not be required of the homeowners that will occupy a portion of the units at the redevelopment sites.

There were also concerns about the school policy regarding student grades.

"This is an invasion of privacy," said Shaw, a relocatee from the public housing site.

"You all want God to live in there. But you are dealing with human beings,"

Happy holidays from your friends at **Residents' Journal**. May you and yours have a safe, healthy and peaceful holiday season!

# **Blair Hull** **U.S. SENATE 2004**

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# Stop The Violence

by Cenabeth Cross

Expungement advocates report that the plan to help felons get their criminal records erased has been a long fight for themselves and other people who are interested in giving a brother, or a sister (many more women are being incarcerated in the past), another chance to straighten up their past mistakes. They report that is hard to get a job for the average young Black and Latino person; if you have a record, it is almost impossible.

There are many organizations helping with the social services these people need to help them return to their families and society and make it work. Advocates say that, while some of the people really want to help, others are just fronts to get the money the government and other agencies are handing out to accomplish this very hard task.

I was jumping channels on Sunday,



Cenabeth Cross

regarding the labeling – such as “slow learner” – of African American males in schools. This is one of the reasons a lot of children drop out, left with no self-esteem, Collins

said. Collins said her primary concern currently is computer literacy, because in the future 80% of the jobs will require the use of same.

Howard's primary concern these days is “a second chance and the AIDS problem.” She explained African Americans have been blamed by some

he had yet to hear from the delivery company.

Davis is the author of the Public Safety Ex-Offenders Self-Sufficiency Act, introduced last May to the House of Representatives. The bill has something to do with taxation, but mainly about the funds needed to provide living quarters for the homeless. Ex-offenders “got to have work to take care of family,” Davis said.

Davis was joined by the Republican Mark Souder (IN-03), Barbara Lee (D-CA), Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX), and Jack Kemp, former Secretary of the federal department of Housing and Urban Development, to announce the introduction of the act at a press conference and national forum. They were joined by more than 60 local, national and faith-based organizations. In addition, the legislation was supported locally by Illinois governor Rod Blagojevich and the mayor, Richard M. Daley.

“Unless we develop and implement strategies for the hundreds of thousands of returning offenders,” observed Davis, “ultimately - and statistics show - they will be back on the streets yelling ‘crack and blow’ and ‘thrills and pills.’”

“One of the greatest barriers to the successful transition of inmates back to the community is housing,” Pat Nolan, President of the Justice Fellowship, said. “This bill will give the private sector an incentive to provide ex-offenders with a roof over their heads, an important first step in their transition to becoming productive members of society.”

Davis and Howard have been fighting for this cause for a long time, as documented in Residents' Journal. Davis' district, the 7th, covers most of the West Side. The West Side of Chicago is believed by some to be one of the worst areas for crime and it has a disproportionate number of ex-offenders that return there after release. His office is about 10 blocks from my apartment at Ogden Courts. The district covers Oak Park, Berkley, Chinatown, Greek Town, Soulville and parts of the downtown area.

According to a member of Davis' office, United Parcel Service has job openings – “mostly in the suburbs” – for ex-offenders. Though some report that many ex-offenders have looked to U.P.S. for employment, one ex-offender said that, although he had applied months ago,

The Justice Department reported that 62% of the ex-offenders released usually return.

The Act of

2003 will

address the cost

of crime to vic-

tims, public

safety and recidivism. Davis' Ex-Offenders Task Force, people from local and national organizations who collaborated with ex-offenders to find solutions, had several meetings that were the foundation for the legislation, according to a representative from the group.

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) has announced financial assistance will be available for the year 2003 Mentoring Children of Prisoners Program. This program will link the children of the prisoners with qualified mentors and develop a plan for the whole family. Legislation will subsidize housing for released offenders.

The first time I covered the story on expungement must have been more than 4 years ago. I went to the Fernwood United Methodist Church one Wednesday evening, as a flyer had instructed. It read “Don't let past mistakes destroy your future. Operation Clean Slate can help to erase your record.” It further instructed one to attend meetings held on Wednesday evenings at 10057 S. Wallace Street.

The phone number that was listed has since been disconnected. It also listed the number for MAD DADS, the Chicago chapter (Men Against Destruction- Defending Against Drugs and Social-Disorder).

At this number, nobody answers the phone.

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Fighting to Save Hope VI

Robert Taylor Homes resident Barbara Moore (second from left) speaks at a recent forum on Hope VI, a federal program that provides funds to redevelop public housing and is at risk of being cut.

Photo by Beauty Turner

# Living Like Night and Day

by Beauty Turner  
Assistant Editor

I was investigating a story of alleged police brutality at public housing development Rockwell Gardens recently and had brought an intern with me. As we walked up seven flights of the development's sticky, dirty, yellow, urine-stained stairs, she said something that stuck with me like crazy glue. No matter how hard I tried to shake it, it wouldn't go away.

"Four blocks away," the intern, Anglea Caputo, said, "and we are living like night and day."

Maybe it stuck with me because I'm a former resident of public housing Robert Taylor Homes high-rises and I know what it is to live in these types of conditions.

The young intern was speaking about her place of residency, which was four blocks down the street from Rockwell Gardens, where the population is 90 percent Black.

"We are living like night and day; I live right off Grand and Western in an old warehouse that has been converted into a condo," Caputo said.

On the first floor we had just encountered two janitors with mops and

buckets, waiting patiently on a elevator that seem slower than molasses.

"I don't understand it, these young women are my age and I'm a young mother and I got a loan to obtain my condo and I didn't have much of a work record," Caputo said. "Why can't they do the same?"

"How are you living?" I asked.

She described her living conditions as being like night and day, the complete opposite of what we saw in the development.

"The people in my building would not stand for this," Caputo said. "The policymakers would be doing every

continued.

Caputo's experience sheds light on how society treats middle-class people—mainly white, though some Blacks and

oppressive conditions and the rich white people live good or better in luxury surroundings.

But in this case neither one of the

I live on a peaceful block. You could never believe (referring to the people in Rockwell) that we live four blocks away from each other.

-Chicago Reporter intern Angela Caputo

Latinos as well—as opposed to how most Blacks and Latinos and poor people are treated.

In her area she saw people walking their dogs, pushing their babies in

people was rich—white or black—but the living still was like night and day.

I'm not knocking Caputo for where she lives or how. I am asking complicated questions that have yet to be addressed by policymakers.

How could one population of people live like animals in stressed-out conditions four blocks away from where people live like human beings?

How could living conditions have gotten to the point that they are now in public housing without any policymakers addressing those conditions all these years? Why can't young black girls with babies just like Caputo and who don't have much of work record obtain a loan to live in a condo?

Living like night and day. That's just the black and white of it in America. Should it be?

## Commentary

thing in their power to remedy this type of situation if it was in my building."

"I do believe I live differently," Caputo concluded, "because I'm white."

"Policymakers would say I live in a diverse community because in my building there are two Spanish and one Black person, but the rest is totally white."

"I live on a peaceful block. You could never believe (referring to the people in Rockwell) that we live four blocks away from each other," Caputo

strollers, clean fresh cut grass—what most public housing residents would call living the American dream.

But just a few blocks away living in the dark, dirty, smelly, dilapidated development, she saw babies unsupervised, graffiti cascading across the walls and police in the area due to alleged gang activities.

A scene kept rewinding back in my mind like an old slave movie where the black field hands live in the field in

# Positive People

by Crystal Medina  
Editorial Assistant

### Rev. Otis Prince

Reverend Otis Prince is not only a resident of the Robert Taylor Homes but a building Council President as well. He takes pride in educating his residents about lease compliance so they can come back after they have been relocated to other homes due to the Plan for Transformation.

"I talk to them about keeping their rent up to date, their light bills up to date, to make sure they have good housekeeping and no drugs," says Reverend Prince. He holds Building Council meetings.

He says his job is to give and be what the residents want as a community leader. He attends meetings held by CHA officials and comes back and lets the residents know what is going on.

"I am a positive community leader and I don't want to be shut out of any-

thing," says Prince.

Prince says, "CHA says some of the residents are not coming back. We will fight back."

Reverend Prince is also a part of the Asthma Coalition. He is an asthma health educator. He has about 10 appointments a day doing surveys and educating residents on how to control their asthma.

"It will never go away so you have to manage your condition," says the reverend.

He has served over 300 residents in CHA by talking with them about asthma and making sure they take their medicines. He does workshops, seminars and one-on-one presentations.

Reverend Prince describes himself as a positive person, positive thinker, positive doer and positive fighter.

He says, "Be positive, believe in what you want to do and put you trust in God."

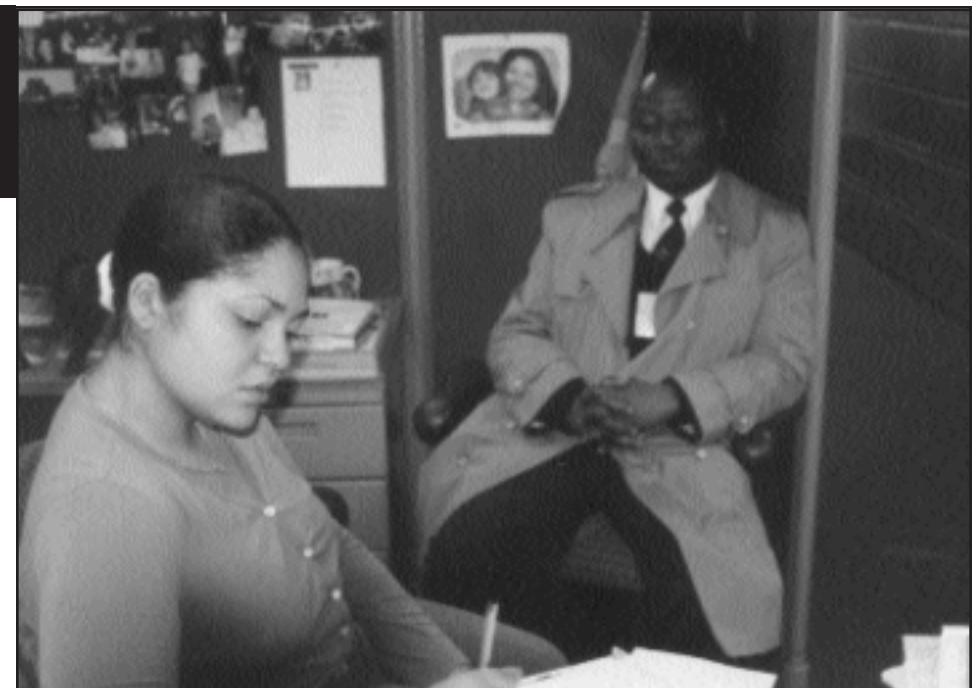
### Kareem Lewis

Kareem Lewis, 21, has been a resident of the East Side Scattered Sites for three years. He is a graduate from DuSable High School and is trying to get into Harold Washington College. He wants his first major to be in music and his second



Kareem Lewis

photo by Crystal Medina



Residents' Journal Editorial Assistant Crystal Medina interviews Robert Taylor Homes public housing resident the Rev. Otis Prince at the publication's office in November.

Photo by Mary C. Johns

major to be computer science.

A former participant in the Urban Youth International Journalism Program, he currently is volunteering as an assistant teacher for a telecommunications class at the Charles A. Hayes Family Investment Center. He's always had an interest in technology.

"When I was younger I used to watch my brother fix radios, televisions and V.C.R.'s. We would take everything apart and put it back together," Kareem explains when asked where his fascination with technology started. "Technology itself is wonderful. Just to see how things work."

He has a dream of maybe even owning his own computer repair shop one day.

This young man also has other passions, such as music. He wants to experience the music business and is starting by working on his own music. He has worked with other people, and now he is going solo. He loves to make music and write music. He describes what he raps about as being "more positive and more inspirational."

"Music keeps me doing something productive and I love it," Kareem says. "Along with school and family," he adds.



## Interview with the Author

### by Jovan Gathings

Chicago, a city with a great past, present and upcoming future. Some of the greatest moments in history have happened here in Chicago. There are many reasons why Chicago is a great city, a few of which I am going to write about. I found some interesting events that were really important to the city's history.

On the date of August 12, 1833, a small group of people incorporated the city of Chicago. The town started with a population of 350 people. The law was passed and it became a legal city. It's amazing when you think about the small population when it started and the great population now.

Some people think the word "Chicago" means strong or great. However, the word "Chicago" originated from a Native American language and means "skunk" or "stinking onion."

In 1871, the greatest catastrophe ever in Chicago's history took place, the "Great Chicago Fire." At the story goes, the city of Chicago was quickly growing, and was on its way to being the big city that it is now. Then, a farmer who was running a milk business was working at night. She left her lantern behind the barn by the cows. What came next shouldn't be a surprise; the cow kicked over the lantern and caused the fire that spread through the whole city! This theory also states that it was a very dry summer, perfect weather to help spread a fire. The fire made its mark on the city and was a set back but the it couldn't stop this city from becoming great. The population kept growing and the fire became the start of Chicago's history. "The Great Chicago Fire" was one of the greatest moments in city history.

I interviewed famous historian and accomplished professor Timuel Black about the history of Chicago and some of his opinions and experiences. Chicago has been his home for 84 years. And how does he feel about Chicago; in his words, "I love my city!" He talked to me about the Great Chicago Fire.

**RJ:** "What do you think about when someone says 'The Great Chicago Fire' and present day Chicago, after the city burned and was built up again?"

**TB:** "When the fire occurred in 1871, it burned a whole lot of Chicago which was smaller then, but it was rebuilt and became one of the great cities of the world."

The spark plug of the South Side of Chicago was the

## Emmett Till by Tiera Brown

On September 9, I went to a play about a boy named Emmett Louis Till who got killed by some white men at the age of 14 in Mississippi in the 1960s. I went to the play at Truman College, put on by the Pegasus Players. The play and the acting were good.

Emmett Till liked to play and have fun like all other children, and he also respected his elders. The only problem was that Emmett had always had a stutter and to get through his words his mother taught him to breathe in and out. One day Emmett wanted to go up to a town in Mississippi with his family to visit relatives that he hadn't seen in years. Emmett's mother doubted whether to let him go, but she made up her mind to let him go. Before he left she was telling him about the rules up in Mississippi, because they were different there than in Chicago where Emmett lived. She told him when he sees white people coming to put down his head and don't look at them, and whenever he is talking to them always say, "yes ma'am" and "yes sir." And he promised her to obey these rules.

A few days later in Mississippi he and his cousins were

# Young Philosophers

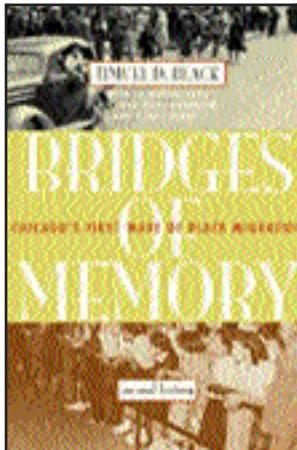
"Jazz Mecca" on 47th Street in the 1920's. Many great jazz musicians started taverns here, after they were booted out of New Orleans because the bars were closed down. That's how our city became "the biggest jazz district of the world."

**RJ:** "Could you explain the Black Jazz Mecca in Chicago?"

**TB:** "Jazz was created mostly in New Orleans, Louisiana. Joe King Oliver came to Chicago with his band from New Orleans and started playing in a club on the 31st block of State, and he knew a very talented young man named Louis Armstrong. He came to Chicago and helped to make a new form of music called jazz. Jazz became very popular in Chicago, all over the United States and then all over the world.

"I grew up on the South Side of Chicago during the period when jazz was becoming popular. I continued to love jazz and all of its various forms."

Harold Washington served as the first Black mayor of the city of Chicago, born April 15, 1922 in Chicago, IL.



**History Maker**  
**This edition of the UYIJP pages features an interview with historian Timuel Black, who recently published this series of oral histories (left) of people who have been witness to important moments in American history.**

When Washington was younger he went Felsenthal Elementary. Washington and his family lived on the South Side of town. He attended DuSable High School. He was also an athlete, playing baseball for the neighborhood team.

When Washington was older, he joined the Civilians Conservation Corps. Starting in 1939, he served in the army for three years. Afterwards he married. After graduating from Roosevelt University and Northwestern University Law School he became a city prosecutor. Then he got into Illinois politics and was elected as a Democrat for the Illinois State House of Representative. He stayed there for some time. While in the House, he made several accomplishments like winning the right to make Martin Luther King Jr's birthday a statewide holiday.

at church, and they thought it was boring so they went to the town. Emmett was showing his cousins his pictures of white friends back in Chicago and then a white lady walked past and his cousin dared him to go up and talk to her. So he went up to her and asked her for two cents worth of candy, and then he began to stutter and she thought he was trying to whistle at her. So she ran and told her husband.

At three o'clock that morning as Emmett and his family were sleeping, two men came to their house and began to look for Emmett. They found him and grabbed him. Then they took him and shot and beat him to death. Later on that evening someone gave his mother a phone call saying that her son was missing. Emmett's mother began to cry until she could not cry anymore. Then she began making phone calls around. She found out his body had been found in a river. Then finally she was willing to get a lawyer and started going to court for her son's death. As the trial was going she began to lose because he was a black boy. As the days went by she kept going to court for her son. Finally as the results came back the two men who murdered Emmett were found not guilty. To this day, the men who murdered him have never been punished for his death. Their names are Roy Bryant, who died from cancer in 1991, and J.S. Millton who died from spinal problems in the 1980s.

Emmett's mother was a strong black woman trying to

In 1983, Washington won his mayoral election to become the first black mayor of Chicago. Washington was to serve four years in office, but he didn't complete his first term. Harold Washington should be remembered in the city for all the great accomplishments he did.

Timuel Black told me about Chicago's first Black mayor.

**RJ:** "How did Chicagoans respond to a Black mayor?"

**TB:** "When Harold Washington first ran for mayor, it was 1977. He was not well known, therefore, he lost heavily, but he carried five Black wards. In 1983, after a huge voting registration drive in the Black and Hispanic communities, he became mayor but a very small margin, but because he was to good as a mayor to everyone, people began to love him. Despite opposition, he was successful. His death hurt us all."

In Chicago, another part of the city's history is sports. Most Chicagoans would agree that Michael Jordan of the Bulls is the greatest of them all. Jordan entered the NBA in 1984. In the basketball season of 1990-1991, he lead the team in their game against the L.A. Lakers for the Bulls first championship. And led the way to two more victories in 1992 and 1993. Jordan retired in 1993, but returned in 1995 to win three more championships. Jordan and his teammates will always be remembered.

I wanted to get Timuel Black opinions on the city.

**RJ:** "What if an outsider from another state asks, 'What makes Chicago such a great city?' what would you say?"

**TB:** "I would say, the thing that makes it a great city is because of the different races, religions, and nationalities. This gives everyone a chance to see different people and learn about those people and become friends with some of those people."

**RJ:** "Do you have any last remarks?"

**TB:** "Well, I am so glad to have the opportunity to share with Jovan some of my memories of the past. I hope he will share some of those memories with his comrades and that they will ask some of their older relatives about their memories of growing up in Chicago."

In closing, Chicago is a great city past and present. It was an honor to work with Professor Timuel Black, a person who knows so much about the city of Chicago.

## Urban Youth International Journalism Program

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## Harry Potter by Roberto De Toro

When I first heard of the Harry Potter book series two years ago I didn't really like it. But one day when I went to the library and all the good books were taken, the only one left was Harry Potter. I started to read it and I liked it. Harry Potter gets in trouble and sneaks out of his school while I never get in trouble. I wish I was like Harry Potter because he knows magic and if I knew magic I would be able to finish my homework faster. I wish I could fly on a broom like Harry Potter so I would be able to go anywhere I want faster than a car.

J.K. Rowling, the author of the five Harry Potter books, is the second richest woman in England. The book is published by Scholastic Press and is translated into different languages and sold all over the world. About 80 million copies have been sold. They get a lot of attention all over the world. The first book is called "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone," the second one is "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets," the third one is "Harry Potter and Prisoner of Azkaban," the fourth one is "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire" and the last one is "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix."

## Big, Beautiful and Confident by Sheena Rhodes

Yeah, that's right. I'm a full-figured young woman. What about it?

Actually I'm really proud of who I am. No matter how you look, what color you are or whatever the case may be, you should still love yourself no matter what. You can't judge a book by its cover and you

can't define a person by what he or she is wearing. You must look deeper within. I am very happy with myself because I'm only human.

Everyone is beautiful inside and out.

Sharlene Davis, 34, said, "I am very happy with who I am although I am full-figured. The bigger the better. I was always taught to have confidence in myself no matter what people think or even say.

"I look better than half the petite women I see," Davis continued. "I think all people are beautiful, but I also know that I am one of a kind. I have always been a full-figured woman for as long as I can remember. At first I wasn't too happy with myself because I didn't have enough self-confi-

I interviewed a couple of people and here is what they said.

Julia Schaschway, 23, said that she does like the Harry Potter books because she thinks it is fun to read them.

"I like the characters," she said.

She said she read all the books except the last one, "I'm in the middle of it," she said. She has waited and waited for the fifth book for one year. She liked the third one best.

"I like the information about Harry's father," she said. "I was unsure if I would like Harry Potter because I thought it would be silly."

Her favorite character is Ron Weasley—"he acts like I do and he is funny," she said.

Lona Popovic said she likes Harry Potter because she "enjoys the fantasy aspect of the stories."

"I read the first three books," she said. "I have not read the fifth one. I have not been waiting for the fifth one—I am out of the phase of reading Harry Potter but maybe now that you mention it I will," she said. "I honestly can't remember which book is my favorite. I can say Harry is my favorite character."

She was surprised that she liked Harry Potter, "because when I first heard of Harry Potter I thought it was going to be something for young kids," she said.

dence, but as I grew older I saw that beauty is in everyone."

Henrieta James, 27, said, "I am a petite woman and I know that I am beautiful and everything but I think if I was larger I would look better. I think full-figured people are beautiful. I don't think it can get any more beautiful. But I love all people no matter what they look like because I'm a loving type of person."

Frances Pitts, 20, said, "I am a full-figured woman and I'm not so very happy with myself. I feel that I'm ugly, and I don't like myself too well. But I think every other full-figured woman is very beautiful inside and out."

Kate Brooks, 26, said, "I think all people are beautiful no matter if they are medium, small, short or tall. It's all within the person. Beauty comes from inside, and the personality makes the person."

Johnathan, 28, who didn't want his last name used, said, "I think all full-figured women are beautiful. I love them to death. All

women are beautiful but I especially like full-figured women. Women are powerful in all ways, that's what I love about them." Mike Wallace, 16, said, "My mother is a full-figured woman and she is very beautiful. I love my mother very much and I wouldn't want her any other way. My mother is the most prettiest woman I have known in all my life."

He added that "a portion of guys think women are better when they are petite, but [in the same way] females like males with weight on them and large muscles."

Judging from my own experiences and

Liz, 23, said, "I do like the Harry Potter books, for the most part. I think that they are very interesting and the plot is incredibly complex. I like the aspects of imagination and creativity that the author has written into the stories. The characters are quite realistic too."

She did not like some of the things that

"I

**read the first one in one day -  
I was so interested in it, I stayed up  
until three in the morning!"**

-Liz, 23

happened in the fourth and fifth books.

"I wish that there were more female characters," Liz said. "But overall, I think the Harry Potter books are fun."

She said she read all the books. "There were parts of the fifth book I didn't like so much, mostly the stupid way Harry acts," she said.

In the fifth book, the characters Hermoine and Ron don't tell Harry what's going on so he gets mad and starts yelling at them.

"If they'd just all be honest with each other, imagine how many problems that would solve!" Liz said.

She really didn't want to read the fifth book, explained Liz, but then her friend asked her if she wanted to borrow it and

a lot of interviews, a lot of full-figured women are very confident. It's not easy to be confident. If you have low self-esteem, one thing to do is keep yourself occupied.

Sharon Ross, 23, agreed.

"Doing things that you enjoy" is one good way to keep up your self-esteem, she said. "When I'm depressed I go shopping and that makes me happier. I also go to the movies and watch comedies to get me a good laugh."

### A Sickness

Some people are full figured because of a sickness that causes them to be that way. I

she read it.

"I think that I was most impressed with the third one, because that's when you start seeing just how intricate and complex the plot is," she said. "Rowling begins bringing in things we read in books one and two as well as introducing even more things that we'll read about in later books. I can't imagine how much time she spent mapping out all the plots! I also really like the character of Sirius. And I think that he comes in book three."

She didn't read the Harry Potter books until the fourth one came out.

"I figured I should give them a try since I like to work with kids and if kids are reading the books then I should know what's in them," she said. "I read the first one in one day—I was so interested in it I stayed up until three in the morning!"

Hermione is her favorite character.

"I like her because she stands up for herself and isn't afraid to be smart," she said. "She works really hard and doesn't let other people change her beliefs. I don't like that she helps Harry and Ron cheat, but I do like that she is such a good and loyal friend to them when they're real jerks to her sometimes. Hermione is a strong, intelligent character with a lot of personality."

Ever since I finished the fifth book I have been waiting for the next one to come out. I hope the sixth book comes out soon so I can read it. I think people all

have a sickness that causes me to be full-figured. Before I got sick I was a beautiful woman and I had a shape to live for but now I just have a shape. I can say that I am happy to a certain point, but when I think about how I used to be it makes me really uncomfortable with myself.

Other times, I am just the happiest person in the world.

Everyone has the right of being happy, confident and filled with joy.

### Being Full Figured Is Great

"Being any other way is just downright boring," said Tasha, 27. "Petite people are

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# **Everyone Needs A Father Figure**

## **by Sheena Rhodes**

**G**rowing up as a child I had a father figure in my life, and so far I turned out pretty successful. I believe that whether there are two parents in a home can have a very big impact on every child's life. There are known facts indicating that if a child is fatherless, it can affect them mentally and emotionally.

Children who grow up in a home without the father often drop out of school, join gangs or hang around with the wrong crowds. On the other hand, it makes some children stronger and makes them want to become a better person and become a better parent to their own children.

My mother, Francine Neal, 43, said, "I grew up knowing my father but living in separate homes. I was very happy knowing that I had a father to care for me even though he was not at home with me. I think if I didn't have a father figure in my life that would have changed the type of person I am today because I have always been very educated in all areas and I knew the right direction to go in."

She said there is a possible chance for children to grow up to become successful even if they don't have a father figure.

"They know they have to be a good example for their children, nieces and nephews," she said. "On the other hand, some children have low self-esteem and feel they need to join gangs to protect themselves and have a group of people to love them. Once they join gangs, they feel the need to drop out of school. Children

become violent and obnoxious without knowing it because they feel that is the right thing to do.

"Some of the fathers decide to leave home because they feel that they're not ready to become a father and they are not responsible enough to know what to do. A father who leaves home has to feel some kind of pain in his heart every day and has to think about how his children are going to be as they grow up and become teenagers and adults."

During an interview at a South Side laundromat, Tyrone Sanchez, 18, said that, "Growing up as a child I've never known my father. The only thing I know about him is his name. I was very lonely living at home with my mother because I was the only guy and I didn't have any brothers and I didn't have any uncles. I came from a family of women. I began to do drugs, drink alcohol and I even joined the gang because I felt like they were my friends and they would be a role model, probably not a good male role model, but they were there for me."

He said it's important for kids to have a good role model in life.

"I think that if my father was in my life I would have been a better person and I actually feel bad for myself and I am going to counseling," he said. "I don't feel like I'm successful in any kind of way, I feel worthless. I would like to be a counselor for fatherless children when I get myself together to prevent them from going down the same road I took."

He said that if his father came back into his life today, "I wouldn't blame him for what he did and I would accept him in my life."

New Year's Eve, Mary woke to find that her little girl was gone. On Dec. 31, 1998 Mary's sister woke her up and asked what was that on her baby's nose. She jumped up and swatted it off her nose. It was blood that had been setting there overnight; it looked like baby food but she knew it was blood because she had seen the trace around it. She picked her up and went into her auntie's room and told her she was not breathing or moving. She then ran down the stairs, laid her baby on the counter listening to instructions from the 911 operator while the ambulance was on the way. If she was paying attention she would have noticed that the baby was stiff and kind of bluish purple. The ambulance came and when they got to the hospital five minutes later they told Mary the baby didn't make it. It's like her life was over. All she could do was cry. Her little bundle of joy was gone, not coming back, and there was nothing she could do about it.

She died in her arms that morning at 8:45. It was shocking. She couldn't understand what went wrong, did she do anything to hurt her while they were asleep? But she just knew deep down in her heart that she didn't do anything. Then the autopsy report came back and said she died from SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). SIDS is something that you can't prevent or predict. Mary felt lost, hurt and pain; there was nothing

Another woman interviewed at the laundromat who gave her name only as Candy said, "I am currently living at home with my mother and my father and I am the saddest person I know for the simple fact that my father beat me and raped me and I am basically being abused in all areas. I still think that I will become very successful in life after my father is dead and gone because I can't do anything while he's still alive. From my father treating me the way that he did makes me not want to have a relationship with any other male. At times I feel like I can beat the world, and hurt a lot of people because I am angry. I really don't know why my father does ter-

leave me because having a son is the greatest thing that ever happened to me."

Lashonda Trice, 23, said, "I never knew my mother or my father because I was given up for adoption when I was a baby. I moved from orphanage to orphanage and it started to become hard for me to adjust to all of the different people. Every time I got close to even one person they would relocate me again. I wish I could have known my parents because that's one thing I'm missing in my life and that's a big part."

"I only know one person out of my biological family," Lashonda continued, "and that's my auntie and she doesn't have any children and she's an older woman in her 70s, and she can't remember well because she has Alzheimer's disease."

"I can't remember the last time when I was happy or even smiled, when I look in the mirror all I see is a hopeless person. I went to school and I met a couple of friends that I'm still in touch with and they tell me that they love me and they're there for me if I ever need them. I really appreciate that, because that's the only thing that keeps me living."

Nadia Abdelkoui, 19, a student at DePaul University, said, "Growing up without a father is equivalent to growing up without a mother. If you don't have a father your mother is forced to play both a maternal and paternal role, and the natural essence of being a mother is often lost. Playing the nurturer and disciplinarian is often a difficult split personality to not only carry out but also have your children respect. Fatherless children often develop an acute attitude towards the male species and develop somewhat of a bipolar outlook on life. Fatherless children sometimes also use their position as an advantage or an excuse for failure. Either way, fatherless children are left in vulnerable and unpredictable positions in such a ruthless society."

**C**hildren who grow up in a home without the father often drop out of school, join gangs or hang around with the wrong crowds. On the other hand, it makes some children stronger...

## **Mary's Story**

### **by Anonymous**

Note: The name in this story has been changed.

**I**t was September 25, 1998 and Mary, 13, had just given birth to a 6 pound, 15 ounce baby girl. She stayed with her auntie because her mother was on drugs. She was trying to prevent the pregnancy from happening but yet and still it happened. She was very strict. All they did was go from work, school, home and church. Her auntie was so angry, so hurt, she really loved her and she had big plans for her.

She was so hurt that her first thought was shame that she made her stay in the house away from the world so no one could see her. Mary was also hurt, afraid, disappointed with herself. She also had plans for her own future. She never in her life experienced anything like it. Mary was having the baby and never in a million years did she think she would lose the baby. Although she was young she knew she had a responsibility, and no matter what she had to do, she was going to live up to that responsibility. No matter what her family thought or what the world thought she was going to take care of her baby. But tragedy hit.

On this cold day of Dec. 31, 1998,

ribble things to me but I think he was abused as a child and he can't really control himself."

Danny B., 29, who didn't want his last name used, said, "I grew up in a home without a father figure. I was actually happy because I didn't have three people to tell me what to do, because I had my mother and my grandmother already tracking my every move. I am very successful, I graduated high school and went to college and got my bachelor's degree. Everyone thought I would never amount to anything but now I showed them differently. Knowing that I didn't have a father growing up makes me a better father to my son and we have a bond out of this world. I don't see how my father could

you could do to make it feel better.

She didn't want to live anymore, she wanted her baby and that's all. Life didn't even matter. Mary felt empty and confused because to her it felt like everybody in her life was leaving, her mom was not there, her older sister was gone, she felt alone. At the funeral people would say stupid things like, "Now you can get on with your life" or "You can start all over again." It hurt.

Everything happens for a reason, that's the way she had to look at it. She wanted to learn more about SIDS, so Mary started to look up things about it

on the internet and read books. She found out a lot about SIDS, which is defined as the sudden death of an infant under one year old which remains unexplained after a thorough investigation, including a complete autopsy. According to the NCHS, each year from 1983 to 1991 the number of SIDS deaths reported in the U.S. ranged from 5,000 to 6,000. During the 1990s deaths declined. In 1999 there were 2,648 deaths due to SIDS compared to 5,349 in 1991. So after knowing what Mary went through, it's good to see that things are changing and hopefully they will find a cure.

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# Harassment, Discrimination and Control in the World Today

by Sheena Rhodes

**H**arassment today has just become outrageously bad in society. There is no reason to harass someone who's minding his or her own business, enjoying himself or herself and causing absolutely no disturbance. To harass someone is to annoy or disturb them persistently, often because of their race, gender, sexual orientation or economic status. I was always taught you should do unto others as you would have done unto you.

But growing up as a child, my family and I were harassed by a couple of neighbors constantly.

The reason we were harassed so much was that some of the neighbors wanted the low-income apartments that we were living in in Rogers Park to be torn down. The neighbors would write complaints to the landlord almost every day, and they would almost all be lies. My family and I began to get very stressed out by this.

My brother Antonio Neal, an electrician, described how he felt about this situation.

"I had friends visit very seldom, but when I did the neighbor across the alley would call the police for no particular reason," he said. "He was just trying to get at me and to get my family kicked out of the apartment. The apartments we were in were low income, but he felt that if you weren't upper or middle class you had no business being in the area."

He said his uncle was also harassed by a police officer in Rogers Park.

"They pulled him over for no reason whatsoever and said he met the descrip-

tion of someone who had committed a crime," he said. "When he arrived at the station the chief said the real criminal had a totally different look."

He thinks this is an issue of racism and civil rights.

"I don't approve of harassment because this is the new millennium and so many of our ancestors worked so hard so that we wouldn't have to go through this," he said. "I think harassment is mostly the economy's fault, and because we didn't continue to protest after some of our great leaders made a change."

Despite this treatment, Neal has a positive attitude.

"I would feel comfortable raising children in this society because it would only take one person—which is myself—to raise them right and show them the right way," he said. "Harassment just continues to exist because there are so many people who overlook the situation. I believe there are many things that can be done to stop it. You just have to be dedicated to fighting against it."

Like my family experienced, people are harassed for all different reasons. There are several different types of harassment that affect our everyday lives. We have harassment against gays and lesbians, we have police harassment, sexual harassment and racial harassment.

Harassment has become so bad that teenagers can't enjoy their lives the way they should be able to.

Tatiana Neal, 15, who is a ninth-grader at Independence High School in Holly Springs, Mississippi, said, "Harassment in Mississippi is worse than harassment in Chicago race-wise."

"The colored people are only

**A** person who is being harassed feels mad and sad inside. No one should be hounded for any reason.

-Kiona, 11

allowed to

go to certain places or you will be arrested," she said. "When you are driving in a white neighborhood, and the police see you, you are automatically pulled over for being colored."

Kiona, an 11-year-old who attends Dixon Elementary School in Chicago, said, "I don't approve of harassment because it is the wrong way to treat a person no matter what kind of harassment it is."

"I think it is just simply wrong," she said. "A person who is being harassed feels mad and sad inside. No one should be hounded for any reason. When I lived in Minnesota I was harassed because I was the only colored person in my class. I felt the teachers were treating me differently than everyone else. I was younger then and I didn't have any control over it and I didn't say anything because I thought that I would get in trouble, but now I know differently."

She said there was a boy in her class who was also harassed because students thought he was gay.

"People would always talk about him," she said.

She said her mother has helped her feel more confident and makes it easier for her to stand up to harassment.

"I feel comfortable in this society because I know that I have a mother who

will protect me and I am watched over at all times by God," she said. "But I think harassment continues to exist because there aren't enough people to talk and fight against it. I believe that if there was more organized protest against harassment it would stop and the world would be a better place."

Jerry Cathey, 35, a printer operator in Holly Spring, Mississippi, said he doesn't approve of harassment.

"It's ignorant and it's wrong," he said. "You should want to get along with everybody no matter what their race or culture. It makes you feel cheap and lowers your self-esteem. I personally was sexually harassed by an older woman when I was 17. She got me drunk and seduced me. It almost stopped me from going to school and continuing everyday life. I looked at older women in a totally different way."

He thinks the media has a lot to do with harassment and the way people treat each other.

"It has been embedded in our homes and communities through TV," he said.

Chicago cab driver Calvin Rhodes said, "I do not approve of harassment because people are harassed on an everyday basis. It makes no sense at all and it is basically pointless. Harassment makes me feel uncomfortable living in this world today. There are so many different kinds of stereotypes."

He said he was harassed by a police officer for no reason.

"I was driving my cab and they followed me for a while then pulled me over and proceeded to take me to jail," he said. "I do not feel comfortable raising my children in this society because there is absolutely nothing being done to stop these terrible disputes between people. Politicians aren't doing anything, they are just half-stepping on their jobs, doing enough to get by. The only thing that can be done to stop harassment is for people to come together as one."

In conclusion, harassment would at least come to a standstill if we as people come together in unity. If we at least agree on some positive things and try to treat each other better, that will be a start.



## New Connections

(Above) RJ's Urban Youth International Journalism Program student Twanda White talks to a curious passer-by about the publication and youth program during the fifth annual New California Media Expo in San Francisco in November. (Below) Violinist "Mordi" chats with students of KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program) Elementary School, one of four schools housed in the Williams Multiplex School, located adjacent to the Dearborn Homes.

Top photo by Mary C. Johns  
Bottom photo by Beauty Turner



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# Ogdon Courts

by Cenabeth Cross

**C**oncerns about the quality of maintenance in the Ogden Courts Development continue, according to residents of the development.

In the last 2 months, one resident reported that she had been forced to routinely clean up her living room and kitchen because

ments and had barbecue. The sun was really hot that day.

One of the young girls in the dance group died after that party of unknown causes. One young lady had been hit by a car because she was playing in the street. The rules forbid them to play on the galleries and the drug dealers forbid them to play on the grounds. One dealer locks one of the fences to keep customers in check. They gamble in the halls daily and residents have repeatedly complained that

**T**he janitor who arrived listened to the woman, picked up two dead mice in the apartment, had her sign some papers and hasn't contacted her since.

her ceiling had been leaking. Janitors cleaned up the water in the apartment above hers after each report she made to the management office, she said, but they have never repaired the damage in her apartment from the flooding. The water is brown and stained the floors so bad, she reports, that the staining is permanent. The apartment that is the source of the flooding is vacant. It is the apartment where a three-year-old child fell to his death last year. This was the result of a broken window that had not been repaired by management, though tenants say it had been reported to them many times.

According to the woman, the CHA had planned an inspection of her unit on September 8, but no one showed up until days later. The janitor who arrived listened to the woman, picked up two dead mice in the apartment, had her sign some papers and hasn't contacted her since, she said.

While adult residents report incidents like this often, they say the children are the ones who really suffer. The rules and regulations they have to adhere to, per notice sent around on July 21, 2003, are considered by many to be ridiculous. Jumping rope, bike riding, dancing, loud music, ball playing, water fights, furniture, hanging clothes, b. b. guns and bean poppers, speakers and card playing have been prohibited on the galleries.

As summer ended last year the young girls were on the gallery learning a dance for the block party that was given on August 2. This year there was no block party. It didn't hurt the children too much. Last year the children had 'choke' sandwiches—which consist of a thick piece of bologna on dry bread—brought in by trucks, the same as the breakfast and lunches they get every day, while the grown-ups stayed inside the apart-

They point to photos of damage in the building published in recent back issues of *Residents' Journal* and other photos tenants use to document mildew and mold in their apartments.

There have been more than six managers in the last two years. This is the way all the people on the top get away with forgetting the people at the bottom, the residents say.

Residents say there are few people they can rely on. The present manager claims she doesn't know anything, they said. Residents point to an apparent cycle in which problems are no one's responsibility, where CHA officials and private developers just pass the buck, or change the management again.

Many residents say the struggles with employees of management and other difficulties lead to medical problems, including stress and depression. This coupled with despair and just plain loneliness lead to many residents saying they find it hard to cope. Many of the children are on prescription drugs. Residents complain that when the school says that your child needs medication,

you have to let the doctors whip it on them. You don't have a choice, they say. Your child gets scarred for life.

A public comment meeting to take remarks on issues related to the Plan for Transformation took place on Tuesday Sept. 30, 2003 at

6 p.m. at the Harold Washington Library Auditorium, 400 S. State St.

I attended this meeting to get answers for the residents at Ogden Court. We have to look out for each other.



**Hand in Hand**

**Residents of the Ida B. Wells family public housing development create a human chain across the development in October, as a show of unity as part of the annual "Hands across Wells."**

Photo by Beauty Turner

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**Your hear loud angry voices.**

**Glass breaking.**

**Children crying.**

**The voices get louder.**

**You hear a sharp slap,**  
**and a few seconds later, what sounds like a body**

**hitting the floor.**

# **What Would You Do... What if it was you??**

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# Harold Ickes News

by Jacqueline Thompson

## Lake Ickes Subdued

**A**t long last the five-block bed of water that has held residents of the public housing development Harold Ickes Homes at bay for 15 years following any type of rain spell, be it shower, storm or steady drizzle, has been conquered.

For eight weeks this summer, the sewage system outlining the easternmost fire lane was dug up, realigned and put back into its proper working condition to satisfy the need for healthier living for the residents and the community.

The standing pools of left over rain water—fertile ground for mosquitoes and disease—will no longer be a threat. The risk of mosquitoes overpopulating the area has been diminished.

However, smaller pockets of water still exist here and there. It is unclear what should be done about it.

Will the workers who were willing to eradicate the large problem return or will the hue and cry have to be resumed?

## Operation Clean

**F**riday, September 19, 2003, was yet another city hall-mandated meeting on the grounds of Harold Ickes Homes.

Residents were invited to join coordinated city service departments such as the 1st District police, public housing section police, the Third Ward, the city's building department, the Department of Streets and Sanitation, the Chicago Department of Transportation, Water Management and other city agencies for an Operation Clean gathering.

Commander Lorenzo Davis has taken over the head of public housing policing section, formally held by Commander Charles Williams.

Operation Clean, according to litera-



Jacqueline Thompson

ture distributed by the city, delivers a massive amount of coordinated city services to high crime areas in an effort to tackle neighborhood conditions that breed crime, such as abandoned vehicles, vacant lots, garbage, broken street lights and graffiti.

The cleanup is part of a plan that is to begin next spring to continue the rehabilitation of Harold Ickes as

it continues to be a relocation site for public housing residents being moved out of developments that are being emptied and then either rehabbed or demolished as part of the city's 10-year, \$1.6 billion Plan for Transformation.

According to the Moving to Work (MTW) Draft Annual Plan for Transformation FY2004—which details proposed demolition, construction and rehabilitation activity for year five of the planned September 15, 2003, future development plans for Ickes have not been determined.

So residents, keep your eyes open and attend public meetings related to redevelopment. You deserve to take part in the plan for your housing future.

## Birth of a New Community Activity

**O**ne of the best ideas for community recreation that has come about in a great many years began its initial run on Saturday, September 20, 2003. This new activity will be able to be open to young children and adults in a peaceful new competitive way. The gates of the basketball arena in our

**T**he cleanup is part of a plan that is to begin next spring to continue the rehabilitation of Harold Ickes as it continues to be a relocation site for public housing residents being moved out of developments that are being emptied...as part of the city's 10-year, \$1.6 billion Plan for Transformation.

soccer team sponsor Chris Curtis put their heads together and brought about this exciting new community activity. So far, all the logistics have not been worked out, but the day—Saturday—and the time—early afternoon for very young people and the late evening for older youth and adults—have been spoken for and the residents are looking forward to participating.

The founding group is in need of some assistance from the Chicago community at large. It would be beneficial to all concerned, if roller rink skates of all sizes could be acquired so that no child would be left behind who wanted to skate. Anyone who would care to donate such items to the cause could call the local LAC office and leave the information for Ray Sanders and friends, 312-791-8747.

The senior citizens population also has the opportunity to enjoy the sports scene.

Our new Chicago Park District has a daily early morning swimming program especially designed for those persons who want to enjoy the sport. Mr. Poulos, head of the physical education department complex of the National Teachers Academy (N.T.A.), encourages the seniors to come out and enjoy a rejuvenating sport from 8:45 a.m. to 9:45 a.m. Great exercise, friendly fellowship and healthy habits can uplift one's routine for life.

## Residents' Journal at the National Teachers Academy

**O**n the October day this reporter visited the students and the teachers to bring each one a newspaper of their own, everyone seemed excited and encouraged. The students took the papers and



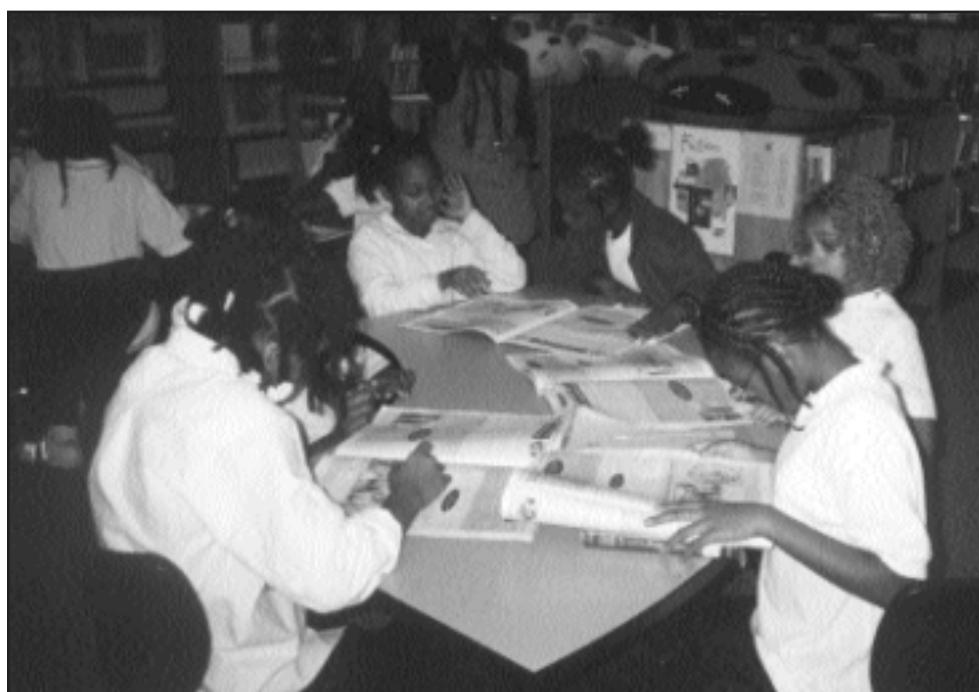
**The left side of State Street's fire lane no longer develops into a full-sized "lake" of water after the rain. City construction workers fixed the fifteen-year-old problem this past summer.**

Photo by Jacqueline Thompson

midst has been opened to roller rink skating, music and other activity. Hooray!

Ray Sanders, a longtime Ickes resident and community program promoter, along with his nephew Terrance and little league

actually began to read and discuss articles, pictures and heading. I look forward to the growth and development of students through reading, learning to write and producing a similar, smaller, edition of this



**Fifth grade students at the National Teachers Academy located near the Harold Ickes Homes CHA complex eagerly explore the Residents' Journal publication as part of their new school curriculum in October.**

Photo by Jacqueline Thompson

kind of publication. Teacher Lorna Holliday said she shared a interest in using the *Residents' Journal* with her fifth-grade students.

The *Residents' Journal* has significant meaning for the children because it tells the story of their community. Just scanning through it, one little boy found the story of his cousin who was killed by a gunman and recognized the picture of the memorial put together for him with love from members of the community. Others became more interested because of the discovery of news so close to themselves.

Another child outside of the classroom saw her sister's name in the list of graduates in a prior issue of *Residents' Journal*.

Many of the adults eagerly look forward to each edition. They had no idea that such an interesting and extensive news media was part of this particular community. For some of the teachers and staff members, it is an exercise in community participation. Principal Linda Ford said she reads and enjoys *Residents' Journal*. Thank you.

The new school year and President George W. Bush's school choice law named No Child Left Behind has allowed scores of families to change the schools of their children. At the National Teachers Academy, one of the recipient schools has been able to grow its student body from 650 to 715, and still daily enrollment moved in the third week of September, 2003. We wish the best educational experiences for all Chicago Public School students and families. Parents, go for it!

Join the parent-teacher association. Volunteer at your children's schools. Let's make a difference for all your children.

# Chicago's Artists Reach out to Youth

by Jacqueline Thompson

The Merit School of Music is celebrating 25 years of existence in the Chicago area this year, according to Duffie Adelson, executive director of the school. They are celebrating, specifically, the "activity of teaching children and adults to make music and thereby building lives," Adelson said.

On the same day, the doors of the conservatory were open to prospective students who had come to audition—tuition free—for instrument training.

This was a day for Adelson to make clear the reasons that make Merit School of Music a "centerpiece of the arts community and a magnet for young, inspiring musician."

"The conservatory here at 47 West Polk Street has become a musical haven for children from all over," Adelson said. "There's tremendous socio-economic and racial diversity among the students and they get to associate with the best peer groups. All of the students work hard and accomplish a great deal of mastery over their chosen instruments."

In 1991, Windows of Opportunity, a non-profit partner of the Chicago Housing Authority, launched an outreach program for public housing tenants with the Merit School. One of the long standing programs is housed at ABLA where, in an after school program, teachers from Merit have established a choir, a guitar training program and percussion classes. Historically, many of the outreach programs have taken place in Chicago Public Schools, but have nevertheless benefited public housing residents families.

Doolittle West on East 35th Street receives students from Ida B. Wells and other nearby public housing units into the music program. Medill School, located at 1301 West 14th Street, also has a music program and also receives students from public housing.

"But since the music programs are funded programs, like many of the other arts and arts training programs, they are in jeopardy of losing the program," Adelson said.

Adelson expressed concern for the program's future and spoke of some of the students from the community that participated in music programs and became stars—singer Chameka Bush, for example.

The beauty of the outreach program is that the students start out in music instruction in the community outreach program, work hard and "graduate" to the main school at 47 West Polk, Adelson said.

According to Adelson, one of her proudest moments was when Mollison School at 44th Street and King Drive played for the world renowned cellist YoYo Ma, who paid a special visit just to hear how well the school string orchestra played.

Unfortunately, though, Mollison lost funding for both band and string orchestras this semester.

But this didn't keep Adelson from proudly introducing Briana Benoit, a 14-year-old who studied with Merit Music for five years, playing the piano, saxophone and voice.

She is in the ninth grade at Lincoln Park High School.

R.J. "Briana, what can you tell me about your experience through your associa-

tion with Merit School of Music?"

B.B. "It has been a wonderful experience. Music has helped me improve my grades and got me into a better school."

R.J. "How will all of these good things affect your future?"

B.B. "I look forward to a career in teaching music, all three instruments, including voice. However my main goal is to become an opera star."

What an inspiration! Not only did Briana speak eloquently, she volunteered at the school to help with the auditions for the new students. She agreed to select an aspiring student to take pictures with to encourage and welcome him.

The Merit School of Music office is open to the public and applications are available.

The long arm of the Chicago arts community also has a superior dance school whose outreach program has touched the lives of many inner-city youth through their Dancing Off The Street program. The DOTS program is geared to provide participants with top flight instruction in ballet, jazz, tap, Latin and hip-hop.

Homer Bryant is the founder and artistic director of Chicago Multi Cultural Dance Center (CMDC) has its offices and dance studios in the same building as Merit School of Music, and Bryant's feeling for inner-city youth through outreach programming is just as strong and faithful to the community as his neighbor's.

One of the most valuable lessons the attending dance students learn is how dance and its technical training can build a strong foundation for self control, both mentally and physically, Bryant said.

The school's motto, "The Fun is in the discipline, and the discipline is in the fun," is a catchy phrase. However, it rings true for the children, participants say, and they come away self-disciplined and having had fun.

R.J. "What kind of results can your parents expect from their children experiences at the school and in the DOTS outreach program?"

H.B. "They develop an insight into what they want to do with their future and how to prepare for it. They also develop a determination to become the best they can be."

R.J. "Why do you have all the large posters on attitude decorating the walls of the studio?"

H.B. "The studios are designed to keep positive attitudes foremost in their minds."

These are the messages being imbedded in the minds of the students: harmony, high expectations, self confidence, brain stimulation, creativity, courage and commitment. And to top these supercharged messages, let's sample the five B's for more mental stimulation and growth: Be ready, be real smart, be humble, behave, be true.

Our children can use these encouraging words in every area of their lives.

Because the terms dance and dance school are mostly a girl thing, Bryant has developed a special dance curriculum that is part of DOTS, called "Boys in Ballet". These classes train growing males to work together with spirit and harmony as well as teaching them body awareness by strengthening certain muscle groups, Bryant said. It also teaches them how to respect the young ladies around them, he added.

Bryant observed that the program lends itself to the athleticism during tactical movements in the sports arena and aides the stabili-

lization of muscles that will enable them to become coordinated, more aligned and less injury prone. He said it also aids in flexibility, which greatly reduces sports injuries.

Professional athletes such as Rashed Griffin have taken training at CMDC on a one on one basis with Bryant. And boys, don't be surprised, professional basketball players are some of the males who seek to improve their game through these particular training exercises. World class skaters Melissa Gregory and Denis Penuche are regular students.

Persons with disabilities are not exempt from the enjoyment and stimulation of real dance studio experiences. Alana Wallace, founder of "Dance Detour," has joined Bryant and his professional ballet groups many times on stage in performance with her wheel chair. Others with disabilities are also welcome.

This year Chicago DOTS will reach out to the public schools system and teach dance to students in different neighborhood schools; Skinner, Farley and Farren are just three of the fortunate schools to have top flight arts training through the outreach programming. To the students and parents of these schools: The advantages of



**Lincoln Park High School student Brianna Benoit welcomes Patrick Rogers to the annual audition for fall openings at the Merit School of Music.**

Photo by Jacqueline Thompson

participation have been stated above. It would be to your advantage to join the program. The main school of dance, the Chicago Multi Cultural Dance Center is located at 806 South Plymouth Court, in the old Dearborn Street station. It's about community.

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# Manos Extendidas a la Juventud

por Jacqueline Thompson

**L**a Merit School of Music está festejando sus 25 años de actividades en el área de Chicago este año, afirma Duffie Adelson, la directora ejecutiva de la escuela. Concretamente están celebrando "la actividad de enseñar a niños y adultos cómo hacer música y construir vidas a través de esas aptitudes", señaló Adelson.

La Merit School ofreció hace poco una jornada de puertas abiertas para celebrar su aniversario. En efecto, las puertas del conservatorio se abrieron ese día para que quienes aspiran a estudiar en ella tuviesen la oportunidad de realizar una audición, sin costo alguno, con vistas a recibir formación musical en la ejecución de algún instrumento.

Fue el día en el que Adelson pudo explicar las razones que hacen de la Merit School of Music el "centro de la comunidad artística y un polo de atracción para los jóvenes inspirados por la música".

"El conservatorio que tenemos aquí en 47 West Polk Street se ha convertido en un refugio musical para los niños de todos los alrededores", aseguró Adelson. "Existe una formidable diversidad socio-económica y racial entre los alumnos, quienes tienen la

oportunidad de relacionarse con los mejores grupos de personas para sus respectivas edades. Todos los alumnos trabajan arduamente para adquirir un alto grado de destreza en los instrumentos que han seleccionado."

En 1991, *Windows of Opportunity*, una organización sin fines de lucro de la Chicago Housing Authority, inició un programa de beneficios comunitarios para los inquilinos de viviendas públicas en colaboración con la Merit School. Una de las iniciativas que se han mantenido en marcha por largo tiempo tiene su sede en los complejos de viviendas ABLA, donde, en un programa que se lleva a cabo fuera del horario escolar, los maestros de la Merit School han formado un coro y ofrecen un programa de enseñanza de guitarra y clases de percusión.

Desde el punto de vista histórico, muchos de los programas de beneficios comunitarios se han realizado en las escuelas públicas de Chicago, aunque han beneficiado de todos modos a las familias que residen en viviendas públicas. En su programa de formación musical, Doolittle West, una escuela situada en la East 35th Street, acepta alumnos del complejo Ida B. Wells y de otros complejos de viviendas públicas cercanos. La Medill School está ubicada en la 1301 West 14th Street y también ofrece un programa de formación musical y,

además, acoge alumnos que viven en viviendas públicas.

"Sin embargo, puesto que los programas de formación musical son financiados con fondos públicos, al igual que ocurre con muchos otros programas de formación y actividades artísticas, los niños corren el peligro de perder el programa", advirtió la directora de la escuela.

Adelson expresó su preocupación por el futuro del programa y destacó a algunos de los alumnos de la comunidad que han participado en los programas de formación musical y han llegado a ser estrellas como, por ejemplo, la cantante Chameka Bush.

Lo bonito del programa de beneficios comunitarios es que los alumnos inician su formación musical en ese programa, trabajan arduamente y se 'gradúan' pasando a la escuela principal ubicada en 47 West Polk Street, señaló Adelson.

Según ella, una de las fechas que más la ha llenado de orgullo fue el día en el que la Mollison School situada en 44<sup>th</sup> Street and King Drive tocó para YoYo Ma, el violonchelista de fama mundial, quien efectuó una visita a la Mollison School para escuchar a la orquesta de cuerdas de esta escuela.

No obstante, por desgracia, la escuela Mollison perdió la ayuda de los fondos públicos tanto para su banda como para su orquesta de cuer-

das este semestre.

Pese a esta adversidad, Adelson presentó con orgullo a Briana Benoit, una joven de 14 años quien estudió en la Merit School of Music durante cinco años y tocó el piano y el saxofón y cantó en esa presentación.

Briana cursa el noveno año en la Lincoln Park High School.

**R.J.** "Briana, ¿qué me puedes contar acerca de las experiencias que has tenido a través de tu asociación con la Merit School of Music?"

**B.B.** "Han sido maravillosas. La música me ha ayudado a superarme en mis notas escolares y también me ha permitido estudiar en una escuela mejor."

**R.J.** "¿En qué forma todas estas cosas positivas afectarán tu futuro?"

**B.B.** "Anhelo sacar adelante una carrera como profesora de música, en todos estos tres instrumentos, incluyendo la voz. No obstante, mi meta principal es llegar a ser una estrella de ópera."

¡Qué inspiración! Briana no sólo se expresó con palabras elocuentes, sino que también acudió a la escuela en estos días para ayudar con las audiciones a los aspirantes a estudiar en ella. Incluso estuvo de acuerdo en seleccionar a un alumno para retratarse con él, como una forma de infundirle ánimos y darle la bienvenida.

## CHINESE TRANSLATION

**KOREAN TRANSLATION**

**RUSSIAN TRANSLATION**

# Letters to the Editor

## Landlord weighs in on Section 8

by Joseph Dusek  
Chicago Landlord

Housing Choice Voucher Programs (HCV) offer public housing residents a unique opportunity. Leaving Chicago's rundown, failed, high-rise housing experiment for a small apartment building, two flat, or even a single family home has never been closer to reality. With this prospective change, however, some residents experience the fear of the unknown. This article will deal with the unfamiliar experience of dealing with a landlord other than the Chicago Housing Authority.

You've got your voucher—great—now what? First, stop referring to the program that granted your voucher as "Section 8." It will be a hard habit to break since that term has been around for many years. However, the accurate terminology is "housing choice voucher program." Any good landlord already knows this. If it's easier, feel free to abbreviate that term to "housing voucher." Most landlords use that phrase instead of the more awkward HCV. Any landlord would be more inclined to rent to someone who impresses them in some fashion. Show them you're on top of things by using the correct jargon.

Let's assume that you've already identified a few potential apartments that you'd like to view to consider for your new home. You've checked the local papers and visited CHAC's resource room at 1000 S. Wabash in Chicago. For those of you with web access you may have visited [www.chacinc.com](http://www.chacinc.com). If you don't have web access, remember that your local library branch probably has Internet service—feel free to ask the reference librarian for assistance.

The landlord, who is sometimes called a lessor (as in, one who grants a lease), will probably ask you a few preliminary questions. What is the value of your voucher? Make sure you know the answer. Just as important, make sure you don't bother calling for an apartment with a rental amount that exceeds your voucher by any great amount.

If it's just yourself and a child, don't call for a four bedroom

single family home. If there is to be a tenant's share of the rent, the lessor will undoubtedly ask where you work. Be sure to have the answer ready for him. Offer a phone number and a name as a point of contact—even if he doesn't ask for it—that shows initiative. He will then most likely ask how many people will live with you. If that number includes yourself, two children and a special someone that may not be covered by the voucher—be honest. Inform the lessor that your voucher covers three people, yourself and two children, and a friend.

Acknowledge the fact that the voucher does not cover your friend, but you're willing to discuss paying extra for that person to live there. Covering up the fact that someone else will live there does you no good. The landlord will eventually find out, and if he reports that fact to the CHAC it could lead to the revocation of your voucher. Here's a tip, though. If you wind up liking the

ment may resemble a job application. It will ask you for your employer's information, past addresses, past landlord's name and phone number, that sort of information. It will also ask for your social security number and date of birth. Thorough landlords will run a credit check and criminal history background check on potential tenants. The credit check will reveal if you've ever declared bankruptcy, if you have any outstanding judgments against you, if you've ever been sued or are currently in litigation. The criminal check will reveal any previous arrests or convictions on your record as well as their disposition.

Do not be afraid of this last one. Answer all questions truthfully and honestly. If you don't, it will eventually be found out. Most lessors will overlook past indiscretions with the law if it appears that you're financially stable, more or less, and not currently in any trouble.

Also, if you like the apartment, ask for a copy of the CHAC's inspection letter. There's no point in going any further if you don't have evidence that the apartment has passed inspection. If the landlord hesitates or refuses to give you a copy of this document—find another apartment to look at.

The landlord will get back to you, probably within a week regarding the results of these checks. He may even request a fee, usually \$100.00, to run the checks. This amount covers his cost for the investigation into your credit and criminal history, if any. If he agrees and offers you the apartment, you will be asked to sign a lease and provide an indemnification deposit. This is sometimes called a security deposit, but most modern landlords don't use that term anymore. Either way, it usually will equal one or two month's rent. You are responsible for coming up with that money, not the CHAC.

All of this may sound like a lot but remember, a landlord agrees to let someone who is almost a total stranger to live in a property that they own and have probably spent a lot of time and money repairing or even renovating. Above all other things, treat finding an apartment like a business deal—be smart, courteous and professional—because that's what it is.

be lucky if I could find a grouchy tech sitting to find an X-ray and give it to me. But half of the time, the X-rays were missing in transit or lost and unlocatable, so I had to visit there again.

Thank you,

A.G.

(The author wishes to remain anonymous)

## Cook County Woes

Dear Editor:

I wanted to point out a mistake in your recent article about the new Cook County Hospital.

In the old hospital, the article says the X-rays used to be

delivered to the doctors. As a doctor who worked there, I want to say this is untrue. As with patient services, the hospital services to the doctors were really bad. I had to run down each time to the X-ray department to a window where I would

## Crystal Clear Views

Dear Crystal:

I am 17 years old, a junior in high school and pregnant. I'm scared because I know that I am not ready to have a baby. I had plans to go to college, have a career and make a name for myself in the field of broadcast journalism. I had big dreams for myself like to at least get out of the projects. I don't want to be just another statistic. What do you think I should do? This mistake would be a lot easier to fix if I believed in abortion. I feel that having this baby will just ruin my life!

-Fallen Star

Dear Star:

You must remember as a young lady the key to your success is to believe that you will always be a star no matter what cloud comes your way. Clouds cover the stars but then they pass.

Just because you've made a mistake doesn't mean it can't be "fixed" to the best of your abilities. I am pleased to hear that abortion is not an option for you, not because I agree or disagree with it but because you are not compromising

your beliefs just because you're in a tough situation. At your age, that shows a lot of maturity and the kind of determination that will get you far in life.

You have two options once you have the baby: you can keep it or you can give it up for adoption. If you keep the baby it will be harder for you to achieve your goals and it will take you longer. Aside from going to class and doing homework, you are going to have to find childcare and keep up with the baby's appointments. Instead of spending money on the things you want for yourself, you'll have to buy diapers, formula and other necessities for the baby. You probably qualify for some assistance from different agencies to help with some of the costs since you will be a young mom. It is difficult to have a child, especially when you're not ready and the child was not planned, but, like in any other situation, there is an up side. You may find that this child will bring you love, joy and happiness that you never imagined. If you choose to keep this baby, when the time comes for you walk across the stage to get your diploma, your baby will be the little face in the crowd cheering you on the loudest! It's going to be a lot of work as a mom and student, but, if you want your dreams to come true you're going to have to work harder for the

things that you want out of life because now you're going to be working for two people.

If you decide to give the baby up for adoption, there are a lot of people in the world that can't have children of their own but would love to take good care of someone else's child as their own. You would be able to pick the best family for your baby, and while it will not be easy to hand over your child to a stranger, you'll have to remember that this family will give your baby the life that you probably wouldn't be able to. This decision will let you pursue your dreams without anything holding you back.

As for you trying to get out of the projects, if that's really what you want to do then put your mind to it and do it. If you decide to keep your baby, remember, it's not where you live, it's the type of home you make for yourself and your child.



Crystal Medina

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

# The Road To Hell...

The city officials who are implementing the Chicago Housing Authority's Plan for Transformation are contradicting the good intentions behind that plan. With the support of the general public, the CHA officials are acting on the belief that closing public housing high-rises is a cause for celebration, the first step in creating mixed-income communities. But as I witnessed during the recent closure of 4037 S. Federal St., CHA officials are often committing cruel acts to make their grand ambitions a reality.

As the child of two survivors

moved in to clear out the few remaining residents in the building. Vehicles from the Chicago Police Department, Animal Care and Control Department, Department of Human Services and even a Salvation Army Disaster Relief van were all parked outside the building. Ironically, many of those services steered clear of 4037 when people were living there.

Just a few of the remaining residents in 4037 S. Federal St. were on Chicago Housing Authority leases. Most fall into a category that we commonly refer to as "squatters," though that term doesn't really describe the people

those amazing residents are legal; many so-called squatters have well maintained, totally established households.

The fact that the so-called squatters had nowhere to go did not change by the end of the day. In years past, Chicago Housing Authority officials didn't ask too many questions of those who were left in the buildings they would close. On the lease or off, the agency tried to accommodate all of those who were left in a building. After all, the agency considered its mission housing the very poorest of our society; putting poor people in the street seemed to run counter to what the

And that's why I am oddly grateful to those CHA officials. Because without them, I would have never been able to understand how human beings can suspend their compassion and perform deeds that are truly reprehensible.

I don't mean to exaggerate. No soldiers are shooting the squatters at the edge of town. No one is shipping those squatters to death camps. I am also certain that in their hearts, the CHA officials truly believe they are making things better.

But life on the streets of Chicago, particularly during the winter, is certainly precarious.

And banishing those squatters to the streets will definitely be a death sentence to some.

I am also grateful—sad but grateful—that

I learned what it was like to stand by and watch those horrors take place. I had to stand by and watch them evict the last few tenants of 4037, of course. It's taken for granted that these buildings should be closed, and if I had suddenly jumped in front of the city officials and demanded that they stop, I would have been locked up in jail or a mental institution. But it was certainly frustrating to stand there silently while such terrible things were

own media outlet. Just minutes after I drove away from 4037, I hosted the first session of a dynamic new training program we have launched in collaboration with the Ford Foundation. The residents who participate in this program will emerge better equipped to change the misguided policies which led to the building closures in the first place.

I am confident that we are making a difference with Residents' Journal and our other efforts. My dedication, however, has been redoubled. I am determined to help stop the CHA and other entities from committing those horrors. For I know that unchecked cruelty tends to lead to greater cruelty. The Nazis might have started their campaign with the Jews but they soon demonstrated that they were willing to destroy the whole world, and even themselves, in their suicidal rampage.

There is an old adage out there which indicates that "the road to hell is paved with good intentions." The CHA's Plan for Transformation may have started with a sincere desire to make things better for our city's low-

of the Holocaust, I grew up with distinct questions about human nature. As young Jews in Budapest during the Second World War, my parents were hunted by the Nazis. My father, who was 16 when German soldiers occupied his city, had numerous close calls and hair-raising escapes from death. My mother and grandmother were captured, and endured 8 months in concentration camps before they were liberated at the end of the war. Both of my parents lost relatives, friends and neighbors to the Nazi terror. Whole communities disappeared.

Since the first time I heard my parents' accounts of their Holocaust experiences, I had a number of soul-searching questions: How could the Nazis do such awful things while speaking such silken words? How could they look so sharp, speak so logically and scientifically, yet murder, rape and rob with such meanness, such disregard for the sanctity of human life? How could they murder so many innocent men, women and children?

I also wondered how so many people could stand by and watch the Nazis commit their crimes? My parents had Christian neighbors who never said a word while Jewish families were being rounded up. No one protested. No one marched for their rights. How could they just let it happen?

I found some of the answers to those questions on Oct. 31 of this year, the day Chicago Housing Authority officials closed 4037. On that morning, while children were in school fantasizing about monster masks and tricks or treats, a real life horror was taking place in a long-forgotten corner of the city:

City officials and others

who were in that building on the last day. Some were relatives of tenants in the building. Some were drug addicts, prostitutes or others who live on the margins of our society.

It is safe to assume that all had nowhere else to go. I hadn't spent much time in the building before it closed and didn't know most of the residents of 4037, but I know that it was a typical building in the Robert Taylor Homes complex: gang members controlled the lobby, which was dank, dark and stank of urine.

The elevators stank of urine also, and, when they worked, clanked ominously as they made their haphazard way up fifteen floors. During the days and parts of days that the elevators didn't work, residents of all ages and in all types of health made their way up the stairways, which were as dank and dark as the lobbies and hallways.

Once fully occupied, the building was abandoned gradually; a family would move out because of tragedy, fire or relocation, and a few shoddy boards were hastily nailed up on the doors and windows. A veritable Wild Kingdom of rats, roaches, dogs and cats competed with drug addicts and the homeless to rip down those boards and take over the vacant apartments.

Despite the chaos and neglect of the building, many people's apartments were their havens. I have always been impressed with the tenacity and resourcefulness of so many residents who keep immaculate apartments, rear their children with great love and structure, and exemplify the strong community spirit of true neighbors. Not all of

agency was trying to accomplish.

It apparently does not bother the current CHA officials that they are making people homeless in the process of making their promised mixed-income communities. Quite the contrary, CHA officials boast about their involvement in the process of demolition and relocation, claiming that they must clear the way for the new mixed-income communities that will be built on the sites where the high-rises once

**B**ut as I witnessed during the recent closure of 4037 S. Federal St., CHA officials are often committing cruel acts to make their grand ambitions a reality.

stood. I have actually seen CHA officials cry in public settings, apparently overcome by their emotional commitment to this cause that they consider so noble.

occurring.

The only thing I could do was keep on doing what I am doing: empowering residents by giving them control over their

income communities. It is incumbent on those of us who know where this road leads to show the rest of us.



**Stateway Gardens public housing Local Advisory Council President Francine Washington hands a food basket to a resident of the Harold Ickes Homes during a Thanksgiving Day food giveaway provided by the Chicago Housing Authority in November.**

Photo by Beauty Turner



**Ethan Michaeli**

**Attention: ALL CHICAGO PUBLIC HOUSING RESIDENTS**



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The Hayes Center is now accepting students into the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Technology Program. Through the WIA YouthTech Program, young people can receive training to become a Telecommunications Technician (Voice and Data Cabling) or a Microsoft Office Specialist. Classes are now forming. You must be between the ages of 18 - 21, have a high school diploma or GED, and a valid driver's license to enroll. Call Davalla Stovall today at: (312) 745-2661



### **A Visit To The FIC**

Students from Jean Baptiste Point DuSable High School pose with Charles A. Hayes Family Investment Center President and CEO Zenobia Johnson-Black following a tour in early November during which the youth learned of the many resources available at the FIC.

### **OTHER CLASSES FOR ALL AGE GROUPS**

**GED PREPARATION CLASSES  
(OPEN ENROLLMENT, SIGN UP  
TODAY)**

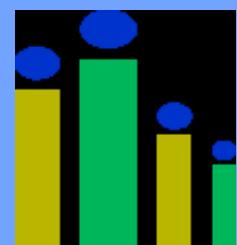
**"HOW-TO WORKSHOPS"  
CISCO CLASSES**

**MICROSOFT OFFICE SPECIALIST  
MICROSOFT WORD, EXCEL,  
POWERPOINT, AND ACCESS  
(MONTHLY CLASSES)**

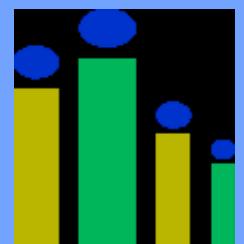
**1P - 4P**

**6P - 9P**

**INTERNET ACCESS AND  
FREE EMAIL**



A Technology  
Learning Center



A Technology  
Learning Center

### **CHARLES A. HAYES FAMILY INVESTMENT CENTER**

**4859 South Wabash Avenue**

**Chicago, IL 60615**

**(312) 745-2700**

**Zenobia Johnson-Black, President & CEO**

**Web Site: [www.thefic.org](http://www.thefic.org)**

