2008

A Sociolegal History of Public Housing Reform in Chicago

Lisa T. Alexander

Texas A&M University School of Law, ltalexander@law.tamu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarship.law.tamu.edu/facscholar

Part of the Law Commons

Recommended Citation

Available at: https://scholarship.law.tamu.edu/facscholar/773

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Texas A&M Law Scholarship. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Scholarship by an authorized administrator of Texas A&M Law Scholarship. For more information, please contact aretteen@law.tamu.edu.
A Sociolegal History of Public Housing Reform in Chicago

Lisa T. Alexander

Waiting for Gautreaux: A Story of Segregation, Housing, and the Black Ghetto
By Alexander Polikoff
422 pages

Black on the Block: The Politics of Race and Class in the City
By Mary Pattillo
University of Chicago Press (2007)
388 pages

As the Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere (HOPE VI) program enters its fifteenth year of implementation, two recent books provide the historical context often missing from recent policy debates about HOPE VI's efficacy. Waiting for Gautreaux: A Story of Segregation, Housing, and the Black Ghetto, by long-time legal crusader Alexander Polikoff, and Black on the Block: The Politics of Race and Class in the City, by award-winning sociologist Mary Pattillo, both convey the rich sociolegal history of public housing reform in Chicago.

Both books present HOPE VI as merely the latest legal panacea in a long line of public housing reform efforts designed to confront the intransigent and intersecting problems of race and class in Chicago. Chicago's HOPE VI, "Plan for Transformation," is arguably this country's most ambitious recent public housing reform plan given the number of units being demolished and rebuilt, as well as the complex network of public and private partnerships the plan necessitates. Practitioners who read both works can

Lisa T. Alexander is Assistant Professor at the University of Wisconsin Law School. She teaches courses in affordable housing and community development law, as well as contracts and business organizations. Previously, Professor Alexander was one of several attorneys working on the case Wallace v. Chicago Housing Authority (298 F. Supp. 2d 710 (N.D. Ill. 2003)), suing the CHA under the Federal Fair Housing Act, for the displacement and re-segregation of public housing residents relocated under Chicago's Plan for Transformation. The author thanks Emily Long for her able research assistance.
glean important insights about the challenges of implementing HOPE VI in Chicago, which can be analogized to other jurisdictions.

This review summarizes each work's trajectory but also compares the works to highlight each book's contributions and limitations. Each book provides contrasting conceptions of the modern urban inner city, the role of race and law in the social construction of urban spaces, the efficacy of HOPE VI reforms, and the authors' views about their roles in urban revitalization.

I. Waiting for Gautreaux: A Story of Segregation, Housing, and the Black Ghetto

Published in 2006, Waiting for Gautreaux is Alexander Polikoff's autobiographical memoir of his forty-year legal battle to desegregate public housing in Chicago. The book is a triumph in its scope. It relays, in somewhat excruciating detail, the behind-the-scenes decision-making trade-offs involved in the litigation and in the remedial stage of the landmark case, Gautreaux v. CHA.

In 1966, Alexander Polikoff—then a thirty-nine-year-old white lawyer, a partner in the Chicago law firm Schiff Hardin & Waite, and a volunteer attorney with the ACLU—filed a lawsuit on behalf of a class of black public housing residents. Plaintiffs alleged that the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) intentionally discriminated against them by developing public housing in segregated neighborhoods in violation of the U.S. Constitution and the newly enacted Civil Rights Act of 1964. The case was the Brown v. Board of Education, a call for public housing reform.

In 1969, a federal judge issued an order enjoining CHA from building any more public housing in poor minority neighborhoods. In 1971, shortly after the enactment of the Federal Fair Housing Act in 1968, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit also found the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) liable for intentional racial discrimination through its federal funding of CHA's activities. Finally, in 1976, the U.S. Supreme Court held that HUD and CHA were both required to work throughout the Chicago metropolitan region (city and suburbs) to remediate their past histories of discrimination.

Admirably, ever since those important findings, Polikoff has sought to dismantle Chicago's black urban "ghettos," as he calls them, and to fight housing segregation in the Chicago metropolitan region. His book clearly evidences his steadfast commitment to these causes while providing a detailed illustration of the formidable obstacles he has faced in bringing these goals to fruition. Polikoff derives his title from Samuel Beckett's play, Waiting for Godot, in which the protagonists wait for a day that never comes. Similarly, Polikoff still awaits the full realization of his life's work. His role in Chicago's public housing reform saga invokes images of Man of La Mancha's Don Quixote valiantly fighting windmills. The book's tone is personal and conveys a very intimate sense of the herculean nature of Polikoff's quest to build public housing in predominantly white neighborhoods in segregated Chicago during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.
In part 1 (chapters 1–3), Polikoff describes his ten-year legal battle, from 1966–1976, to hold CHA and HUD liable for intentional racial discrimination. Polikoff introduces chapter 1 with the story of his initial involvement in the case and provides a brief history of the evolution of racism and segregation in the United States from the post-Reconstruction period through to the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. This history locates the initial origins of racism in Chicago’s public housing programs.

In chapters 2 and 3, respectively, Polikoff describes the difficulties he faced in persuading the courts to require CHA and HUD to remediate their past histories of discrimination by creating public housing opportunities throughout Chicago’s metropolitan region. Polikoff interweaves discussions of the legal issues with descriptions of the political obstacles he faced and with personal vignettes of life events that coincided with the evolution of the litigation.

In part 2 (chapters 4–6), Polikoff describes the on-the-ground political resistance he faced in implementing a metropolitan-wide remedy. In chapter 4, he recounts how, under the first Mayor Daley, the City of Chicago and CHA initially resisted their mandate to develop scattered-site public housing throughout the city. CHA’s early efforts to build public housing units in both minority and white neighborhoods were consistently undermined by classic not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) resistance from working- and middle-class white, black, and Latino neighborhoods. One working-class white neighborhood presented Polikoff with a gold-plated pooper-scooper to symbolize the “mess” they perceived he was bringing into their neighborhood.8

Chapter 5 describes the Gautreaux Assisted Housing Program (Gautreaux Program), which Polikoff clearly views as the Gautreaux litigation’s greatest accomplishment. In 1974, shortly after the Nixon administration created the Section 8 program, now known as the Housing Choice Voucher Program, Polikoff and his legal team sought to apply the terms of the Gautreaux consent decree (Decree) to CHA’s administration of Section 8 in Chicago. Given the federal government’s then retreat from the construction and stewardship of public housing, Polikoff asserted that Section 8 vouchers were the functional equivalent of public housing; therefore, CHA’s Section 8 voucher program should be covered by the Decree.9 Polikoff won that legal battle and initiated the Gautreaux Program to help a select group of public housing residents, who received Section 8 vouchers, move to low-poverty, predominantly white, working- and middle-class Chicago suburbs.

The Gautreaux Program helped approximately 8,000 Gautreaux families move to the suburbs.10 The overall number of residents served is small compared to the 40,000 families that were in the Gautreaux class.11 However, many sociolegal studies have chronicled the tangible benefits that Gautreaux families who moved to the suburbs received compared to those of city movers. Polikoff notes that in their book, Crossing the Class and Color Lines, published in 2000, Northwestern University sociologist James
Rosenbaum and Northwestern Law School professor Leonard Rubinowitz touted the benefits of the *Gautreaux* Program.\(^1\) They explain that “compared with city movers, suburban movers were more likely to be '(1) in high school, (2) in a college track, (3) in a four-year college, (4) in a job, (5) in a job with benefits, and (6) not outside of the education and employment systems.’”\(^2\) As Polikoff acknowledges, these outcomes reveal the “creaming” of public housing residents inherent in the *Gautreaux* Program. Families with five or more children, poor credit, and serious housekeeping problems were not eligible to participate in the *Gautreaux* Program, and “only about 20 percent of entrants [in the program] actually moved.”\(^3\)

However, these outcomes provided the basis for Polikoff’s strong belief that the suburbs provide greater quality-of-life benefits for poor public housing residents than the inner city.\(^4\) Polikoff believes that residential mobility will result in greater social mobility for public housing residents. He contends that public policies should help public housing residents develop the initial social capital they so desperately need to avail themselves of greater quality-of-life benefits outside of the ghetto.\(^5\) Throughout chapter 5, Polikoff describes how Chicago-based nonprofit organizations, such as the Leadership Council of Metropolitan Chicago, helped to prepare public housing residents to “present themselves favorably to suburban landlords.”\(^6\) They were encouraged to become “knowledgeable ‘consumers,’ able to discuss program features with prospective landlords.”\(^7\) The creaming inherent in the program was also designed to make the residents more palatable to resistant suburban communities and landlords.

The success of the *Gautreaux* Program led HUD, under the leadership of Henry Cisneros, to pursue the Moving to Opportunity program (MTO), a federal mobility program employing vouchers, between 1994 and 1998. However, there were significant differences between the two programs. Under the MTO, public housing residents were only encouraged to move to areas of lower-poverty concentration rather than to predominantly white low-poverty areas, thereby making class a proxy for race. High-poverty areas were defined as census tracts with poverty populations of more than 40 percent, and low-poverty areas were census tracks with less than 10 percent poverty.\(^8\) Notably, HUD would not provide race-specific mobility counseling, which would apprise public housing residents of the potential benefits of moving to predominantly white low-poverty areas. The objective of the MTO, therefore, was not to remediate historical intentional discrimination but to “attack the ‘extreme spatial segregation’ by race, class, and income of American communities.”\(^9\) Ultimately, the MTO had only small effects on the educational outcomes of public housing residents and little-to-no effect on employment or welfare receipt.\(^10\) Polikoff clearly viewed the substitution of class for race as a decision that led to the less favorable outcomes of the MTO.\(^11\)

However, the MTO was an endorsement of people-based versus place-based strategies for public housing reform. Although CHA faced remarkable NIMBY resistance when attempting to build public housing in white
middle-class neighborhoods, a select group of well-prepared public housing residents with vouchers were accepted into white middle-class suburban neighborhoods. Both programs confirmed Polikoff’s belief that public housing residents can achieve tangible quality-of-life improvements through exposure to wealthier and predominantly white suburban neighbors.

These lessons explain Polikoff’s relatively optimistic posture toward Chicago’s current HOPE VI reforms. In chapter 6, Polikoff describes the origins of the mixed-income housing philosophy that is the lynchpin of HOPE VI public housing reforms. The mixed-income strategy is rooted in the theoretical work of black sociologist William Julius Wilson, then a scholar at the University of Chicago. In his early book, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, Wilson identified changes in the national labor market as a primary cause of decline and disinvestment in black neighborhoods in Chicago.23 Chicago lost significant numbers of manufacturing jobs, which were relocated to the suburbs. As a result of this job loss and the enactment of the Fair Housing Act in 1968, Wilson argued that during the 1970s and 1980s black inner-city neighborhoods experienced an outmigration of middle- and working-class blacks.24 This outmigration led to a concentration of poor blacks in the inner city.

As Polikoff explains, many policymakers reasoned that concentrated poverty was the root cause of social dysfunction in the inner city.25 Absent strong institutions such as successful schools or businesses and working-class role models, theorists posited that low-income blacks were relegated to a perpetual underclass, which lacked tangible opportunities to develop wealth or social capital. The long-standing law and custom that public housing should be reserved exclusively for poor families further exacerbated the concentration of poverty in the inner city.

At the same time, as federal money to modernize existing public housing high-rises dwindled, a new philosophy emerged in Chicago that some public housing should be rebuilt rather than renovated. According to local officials and public housing administrators, much of CHA’s housing stock was beyond repair. Additionally, urban planners and architects questioned the efficacy of high-rises as suitable housing options for the poor.26 Such structures were perceived to exacerbate crime and social dysfunction in public housing. Conveniently, this philosophy about the disutility of high-rises for the urban poor coincided with the second Mayor Daley’s desire to revitalize Chicago’s urban inner-city core by removing the blighted urban high-rises that were eyesores on Chicago’s downtown landscape.

The leadership of CHA had also changed from predominantly white administrators to black middle-class administrators and property managers. This change in the stewardship of CHA was an impetus for the shift away from race-based to class-based remediation as a strategy for public housing reform. As Polikoff explains, the new, predominantly black, stewards of Chicago’s HOPE VI reform process were interested in creating income diversity in poor black inner-city neighborhoods.27 Recognizing that pure racial integration was politically challenging and that it did not lead
to tangible quality-of-life improvements in inner-city neighborhoods, the new stewards sought to redevelop predominantly black areas by giving primacy to class diversity over racial diversity concerns. As such, many middle-class black developers, administrators, and officials, among others, began to advocate for the mixed-income approach.

Vincent Lane, CHA’s black chief executive officer and, in 1989, the co-chair of the National Commission to Study Severely Distressed Public Housing Developments, developed the first national Mixed-Income New Communities Strategy (MINCS). Lane proposed that through the MINCS program, Congress should authorize a demonstration project in which half the rental apartments in existing public housing buildings should be reserved for moderate-income families whose incomes ranged up to 80 percent of the area median income. "Private housing was to be developed in tandem, a quarter of it rented to public housing families." Polikoff endorsed the mixed-income concept but also fought to require CHA to fulfill its obligation under Gautreaux to disestablish segregation when rehabilitating existing facilities.

Ultimately, under Chicago’s current HOPE VI Plan for Transformation (Plan), the majority of Chicago’s new mixed-income developments are slated to be occupied by one-third public housing tenants; one-third individuals with low incomes, defined as somewhere between 50 percent to 80 percent of county area median income; and one-third market-rate individuals with incomes above 80 percent of county area median income. Notably, the number of housing units reserved for former public housing tenants does not meet the demand. The Plan was originally slated to produce 25,000 new or rehabilitated public housing units by FY 2009. The projected 25,000 units are significantly less than the total number of units torn down. The Plan reduces the total number of public housing units in Chicago from about 38,000 to 25,000. By FY 2009, the tenth year of the program, the CHA expects to complete 80 percent of the goal, and it will develop the remaining units by the end of FY 2015.

All former public housing residents eligible to return to the available public housing units in each mixed-income facility must also meet site-based resident selection criteria. Much of the resident-screening criteria may be difficult for public housing residents to meet, such as criteria that require credit histories, criminal background checks, drug testing, housekeeping or home visits, and an evaluation of a resident’s employment or self-sufficiency record. Consequently, many former public housing residents may not be able to return to the new mixed-income developments.

Toward the end of chapter 6, Polikoff discusses both the promise and the perils of the mixed-income HOPE VI approach. Given the difficulties that he faced in building scattered-site units in predominantly white neighborhoods, Polikoff believes that HOPE VI reforms will be successful if only a few public housing residents can live with stable, higher-income, predominantly white families. Yet Polikoff also remains skeptical that former public housing residents will realize significant quality-of-life benefits as the
areas around them gentrify. He believes that the suburbs now contain the entry-level jobs well-suited to public housing residents' limited skill sets. Additionally, Polikoff fears that many black public housing residents will likely live only with middle-class blacks. Recent studies have shown that upper-income whites are willing to live in mixed-income public housing redevelopments in Chicago's downtown areas that contain small numbers of black public housing residents. However, Polikoff fears that these whites will be less willing to move to public housing redevelopments in neighborhoods outside of the downtown area. Polikoff implicitly suggests that public housing residents will therefore not reap the benefits of living near upper middle-class white residents, who are more likely to create the social institutions necessary to effectuate quality-of-life changes in the neighborhood. Consequently, even with HOPE VI reform, Polikoff contends that many public housing residents will still be in communities of disadvantage and disparity because middle-class black neighborhoods do not have opportunities on par with those available in similarly situated middle-class white neighborhoods.

Finally, in chapter 7, Polikoff admits that he is "still handling Gautreaux." For Polikoff, handling Gautreaux means shaping the outcomes of Chicago's Plan for Transformation. Yet in chapter 7, Polikoff reveals his true normative objective: to create a national Housing Choice Voucher mobility plan, whereby public housing residents throughout the nation can use vouchers to move to areas of "opportunity" outside of America's ghettos. This final recommendation shows Polikoff's preference for people-based versus place-based strategies for the mitigation of public housing residents' poverty. Citing Yale law professor Owen Fiss, Polikoff explains that the way out of the persistent poverty and racism that poor blacks experience in ghetto neighborhoods is "to relocate all residents of the ghettos who choose to move." As I will explain in part 3, this solution is predicated on some assumptions about the ghetto that may no longer be entirely accurate.

II. Black on the Block: The Politics of Race and Class in the City

Published in 2007 and written by Northwestern University sociology and African American studies professor Mary Pattillo, Black on the Block: The Politics of Race and Class in the City is a multidisciplinary work that provides a rich ethnography of the Chicago neighborhood North Kenwood-Oakland (NKO). Located on Chicago's historically segregated South Side, North Kenwood-Oakland is a predominantly black inner-city neighborhood that has been continuously shaped by law, urban politics, and planning. In 1998, Pattillo moved to NKO. She studied the neighborhood both as a participant observer and as an ethnographer. Her book draws upon a variety of sources such as interviews of neighborhood residents, notes from community meetings she attended, and archival research.

Black on the Block is extremely thorough and well-written. Pattillo ambitiously covers a vast terrain, and the depth of her research is evident.
Her book is simultaneously a sociolegal history, a work of legal criticism, a review of urban redevelopment policy, and a study of the impact of gentrification on social relations within a neighborhood. The greatest strength of Pattillo’s work is that it engages the social conflict that intersecting forces of racism and classism can create within a neighborhood. Although Polikoff often glides over, or underemphasizes, such complexity, Pattillo squarely confronts and even embraces it in her book.

Pattillo’s book is nuanced. She uses NKO as a prism through which she refracts a constellation of simultaneously interconnected, but conflicting, social interests and actors on Chicago’s urban redevelopment stage. Throughout the book, Pattillo traces the interactions of four key neighborhood stakeholders in NKO: (1) government officials, (2) private investors and developers, (3) institutions and community organizations, and (4) residents. Polikoff identifies and describes similar actors, but the multiple and often conflicting interests of residents are more fully explored in Pattillo’s book. Although Polikoff gives us glimpses into residents’ views about segregation in the early years and about mobility counseling in later years, the voices and perspectives of public housing residents are given relatively short shrift in his account. In contrast, Pattillo thoroughly chronicles residents’ perceptions of the urban policies and laws that shape their neighborhood.

Pattillo’s work also unveils the social conflict that lurks beneath the surface of seemingly commendable win-win postmodern urban redevelopment efforts. Pattillo artfully uses Chicago’s HOPE VI Plan for Transformation as a backdrop for the broader drama of growing class fissures within the “Black community.” Pattillo explores how HOPE VI reforms influence the social dynamics among different groups of people—most notably, black people—present on NKO’s blocks. She describes struggles between black public housing residents, middle- and working-class black homeowners, black city officials, black developers, and black community organizations, as well as white city politicians. Although many books present race and class as dichotomous forces in urban redevelopment, Pattillo uncovers what occurs when these forces intersect in the inner city. Pattillo avowedly seeks to “dismantle the notion of a unitary Black political agenda” by unveiling the emerging role of “black middlemen” and “middlewomen” in inner-city redevelopment.

Black middlemen and middlewomen are middle-class African Americans who are the new power brokers of urban inner-city reform. Pattillo asserts that black middlemen and middlewomen now occupy more roles in local city government and politics and constitute a significant presence in the revitalizing inner city. Pattillo’s identification of this new group and her interpretation of the group’s significance in urban redevelopment is her book’s most interesting and subtle contribution to prevailing debates about HOPE VI reform.

Pattillo shows that black middlemen and middlewomen are now the anointed representatives of what is often presented as a unified black perspective on inner-city urban reform. They are advocates for their own
interests. But at the same time, they act as brokers of the interests of Chicago's predominantly white city government officials and private investors, and as brokers of the interests of poor black public housing residents. Current practitioners implementing HOPE VI reforms in multiple jurisdictions will undoubtedly see their reflections in the characters Pattillo describes.

In exploring the role of this new group, Pattillo demonstrates that HOPE VI reforms are experienced differently by different constituents within Chicago's predominantly black revitalizing neighborhoods. This insight may undermine the broad claims of many politicians and policy makers that HOPE VI reform in Chicago has had positive neighborhood effects for a majority of former public housing residents. Pattillo's work suggests that black middle-class homeowners and the predominantly white political establishment that seeks to bring upper middle-class residents back to the city may be the ultimate primary beneficiaries of HOPE VI reform.

Chapter 1, entitled "4432 Berkeley," opens with a description of a residence in NKO. In 1998, Pattillo moved into the residence at 4432 South Berkeley Avenue. The building is located in NKO's historic district, where old wealthy white Chicago industrialists, such as Daniel P. Burnham, William E. Hale, and Gustavus F. Swift, built residences in the 1880s and 1890s. Pattillo uses the building to reveal the historical evolution of the neighborhood and to demonstrate the impact of law and urban policy on the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic composition of the neighborhood. What started in 1886 as a residential neighborhood for wealthy Chicago industrialists later became a neighborhood for white working-class ethnic immigrants, working- and middle-class blacks in the 1950s and 1960s, and eventually predominantly poor blacks. Law and urban policy played an essential role in shaping the changing character of the neighborhood.

Chapter 2 is entitled "The Black Bourgeoisie Meets the Truly Disadvantaged." Drawing her title from prevailing sociological debates about the black middle class, Pattillo asserts that the current location and role of the black middle class is quite different from the claims made in E. Franklin Frazier's 1957 book, *The Black Bourgeoisie*, and in William Julius Wilson's 1987 work, *The Truly Disadvantaged*. Contrary to the arguments of sociologists such as Wilson, Pattillo asserts that many middle-class black residents have always remained in Chicago's inner-city neighborhoods and that now even more members of the black middle-class are returning to revitalizing inner-city neighborhoods. Pattillo notes that Wilson, in his work *The Truly Disadvantaged*, advanced several remedies for urban poverty such as "labor market and safety net reforms." However, Wilson's claims about the re-introduction of working- and middle-class blacks into inner-city neighborhoods were the solutions that resonated most forcefully with urban policy makers.

This insight suggests that although the absence of the black middle class was not the primary cause of the poverty and plight of the urban underclass, the focus of policy makers on this factor, to the exclusion of other causes, conveniently dovetailed with a broader agenda to reduce the
amount of public money expended to house the poor and to prepare urban inner-city spaces for the return of the middle class.

“White Power, Black Brokers” is the title of chapter 3. In chapter 3, Pattillo outlines the significance of black middlemen and middlewomen for postmodern urban revitalization efforts. Pattillo explains that, as agents of multiple principals, black middlemen and middlewomen must constantly negotiate and balance conflicting interests while advancing their own personal agendas. Pattillo notes that this balancing act of the black middle class can both benefit and disadvantage poor black inner-city residents. Black middlemen and middlewomen can help bring economic resources and investments to previously disinvested neighborhoods by giving such poor and raced spaces the gloss of respectability and legitimacy. At the same time, Pattillo acknowledges that gentrification and growth have the downside of displacement. Pattillo notes that “low- and moderate-income NKO residents are not the secondary beneficiaries in a growth regime because their tenure in the neighborhood is threatened by growth.” By acknowledging this complexity, Pattillo begins to dismantle the prevailing notion held by many that the interests of black public housing residents are fully expressed, captured, or represented by their selected tenant representatives, black lawyers, black public housing administrators, or black developers. Pattillo explains that black middlemen and middlewomen brokers often must pursue the interests of Chicago’s predominantly white political interests and in the process may enhance their own individual interests.

Pattillo explores the politics of school reform in NKO in chapter 4, linking educational reform and public housing reform, two social issues that are often discussed as separate problems. Pattillo’s work highlights how the problems are intertwined. She notes that original poor public housing residents will also likely not be the ultimate long-term primary beneficiaries of current educational reform initiatives in NKO.

Although they are not as clear and well-organized as other chapters of Pattillo’s book, chapters 5 and 6 are essential to her implicit critique of present HOPE VI reforms in NKO. In chapters 5 and 6, Pattillo discusses the controversy over CHA’s decision to revitalize the Lakefront Properties, a former public housing development in NKO that overlooks Lake Michigan. The Lakefront Properties were selected as the first site for Vincent Lane’s MINCS demonstration project. In the early 1990s, NKO was a predominantly black neighborhood. Given the Gautreaux lawsuit’s legacy, in order for new public housing to be revitalized in NKO, the community would have to be designated a revitalizing area under the Decree. In a 1981 order, a federal judge held that public housing in Chicago could be built in “revitalizing areas,” which were defined as areas containing a substantial minority population but which were undergoing sufficient redevelopment or revitalization to justify the assumption that such areas would become more integrated in a relatively short time. Pattillo interprets the revitalizing areas decision as a judicial retreat from stewardship of integration.
In chapter 5, Pattillo explains that in May 1996, a court battle ensued regarding whether NKO should be considered a revitalizing area. If NKO received revitalizing area status under the Decree, CHA could commence constructing new public housing redevelopments in a manner consistent with the MINCS demonstration project. A group of relatively new black middle-class homeowners called the Residents for the Responsible Redevelopment of North Kenwood-Oakland (RRR) formed to oppose the classification of NKO as a revitalizing area. Although RRR was not a party to the lawsuit, it was the primary organization that made the case against public housing in NKO. As Pattillo explains, “RRR’s argument was three-fold: (1) NKO had more than its fair share of public and other subsidized housing (i.e., concentration), (2) the neighborhood suffered unfair concentration because it was African American (i.e., racial harm), and (3) replacing the demolished high-rises would doom NKO’s fledgling revitalization efforts (i.e., economic harm).”

Although RRR’s position seemingly reflects class conflict within NKO, Pattillo explains that through RRR, black middle-class residents were also claiming their co-equal status with public housing residents as victims of CHA’s legacy of intentional racial discrimination. RRR argued that public housing in Chicago was disproportionately located in predominantly black neighborhoods. Consequently, black neighborhoods had received more than their fair share of housing for the black poor. RRR asserted that predominantly white neighborhoods should share the burden of supporting housing for the poor. Given that the 1981 decree made class a sufficient proxy for race, however, middle-class blacks’ claims about the continuing effects of past racism in public housing, or the present effects of “laissez-faire racism,” were rendered “legally irrelevant” by the 1981 decree. Although legally irrelevant, Pattillo contends that such claims are socially relevant in that they demonstrate the salience of race for multiple groups of blacks that are differently situated with respect to class or wealth.

In chapter 6, Pattillo continues to describe the debate over Lakefront Properties. She notes how what originated as a promise in 1991 to revitalize existing buildings at Lakefront Properties became, ten years later, a proposal to demolish Lakefront Properties to make way for the new HOPE VI mixed-income redevelopment project known as Lake Park Crescent. Although some inner-city middle-class black residents, such as those involved in RRR, initially opposed public housing revitalization in their communities, Pattillo’s account of the ideological shift amongst the black stewards of inner-city reform suggests that an alternative vision of MINCS’s promise began to emerge.

As the emerging brokers of inner-city reform, many black middlemen and middlewomen may have recognized that they were well-positioned to both spearhead and to financially benefit from a mixed-income approach to public housing reform. Black middlemen and middlewomen likely believed that HOPE VI legislation, and the mixed-income approach that it spawned, could simultaneously revitalize the nation’s inner cities and
improve the social capital of the black urban poor. According to Pattillo, this change in vision was brokered by the black middlemen in private meetings in Chicago between largely private institutional actors such as developers, university representatives, financial intermediaries, and lawyers. Public housing residents were largely excluded from these private meetings. This philosophical shift also conveniently dovetailed with the broader goal of Chicago's predominantly white political establishment to revitalize Chicago's urban core. The MINCS idea prompted the national shift in public housing reform known as HOPE VI.

Ultimately, the HOPE VI approach to revitalization in NKO is illustrative as it reveals the downsides of the "middleman role." Pattillo contends that the social capital that black middlemen and middlewomen bring to the inner city also includes the power to exclude. The subtext of Pattillo's work is that poor black public housing residents are largely excluded from the private decision-making tables in HOPE VI reform. Although CHA and other agencies hold formal meetings, many of the critical decisions that will determine which public housing residents can ultimately return to the new developments are made in private settings not subject to public review. Such private decisions, as well as HOPE VI legislation's lack of a requirement that every unit demolished should be replaced in a new mixed-income environment, may combine to preclude large numbers of original public housing residents from returning to the new developments. HOPE VI may, thus operate as an agent of gentrification and displacement in NKO that will ultimately benefit only small numbers of former public housing residents. The implication is that HOPE VI reform may primarily serve to legitimize the efforts of Chicago's white political establishment, and their "middlemen brokers," to reclaim the inner city for their predominantly middle-class white constituents under the guise of reforms that will ultimately benefit the poor.

Finally, chapter 7 explores concerns in NKO about crime reduction. Pattillo notes that although both public housing residents and black middle-class residents are concerned about crime, black middle-class residents are quick to perceive public housing residents as the primary culprits of crime in revitalizing communities. Because public housing residents are deemed the problem, they are often excluded, or they are not necessarily included, by their black middle-class neighbors in private neighborhood efforts to reduce crime. Thus, public housing residents' exclusion from private neighborhood decision-making forums also occurs in the sphere of neighborhood crime control.

III. A Comparison of Waiting for Gautreaux and Black on the Block

The efficacy of HOPE VI is the subject of continued scholarly and political debate. Both Polikoff's and Pattillo's books are useful in that they analyze HOPE VI in a historical and sociocultural framework. Both Polikoff and Pattillo recount the history of laws and urban policies that socially
constructed Chicago’s inner-city neighborhoods as racialized spaces. Their books also demonstrate that HOPE VI is not the first public housing reform effort that in attempting to ameliorate past history may fall short of its stated goals. Urban renewal, scattered sites, mobility counseling, and other reform efforts were also subject to similar critiques.

The limited success of past reform efforts evidences the intractability of race and class as social phenomena that structure inner-city inequities. Nevertheless, it is likely that neither Pattillo nor Polikoff would advocate that federal HOPE VI funding should be terminated. Rather, both authors would likely advocate that the federal government should amend HOPE VI to include more resident involvement in decision making and to provide financial support for residents unable to return to the new HOPE VI developments.

However, Polikoff is more optimistic than Pattillo that Chicago’s HOPE VI Plan for Transformation may further Gautreaux’s remedial goal. Although Pattillo explicitly states that her work is “not an evaluation of the various policy approaches to improving public housing,” implicit in her discussion of HOPE VI is the suggestion that few poor blacks will be the long-term beneficiaries of HOPE VI reform.

Yet, these two authors do agree when critiquing HOPE VI’s elevation of class diversification over race diversification as a normative goal of public housing reform. Race is still salient for Polikoff in that policy makers must continue to consider the racial concentration impacts of their urban policy decisions. As such, Polikoff remains a staunch advocate for desegregation and integration.

However, Polikoff does not see any utility in maintaining the racial identity of Chicago’s urban ghettos as predominantly black spaces. Polikoff seems undisturbed by the notion that HOPE VI over time may bring large numbers of upper middle-class whites to the inner city while displacing large numbers of poor blacks. He is not concerned because he views the suburbs as the superior metropolitan space to which poor blacks should migrate. Polikoff is convinced that Chicago’s predominantly white working- and middle-class suburbs are the keys to greater social mobility for public housing residents. This conviction also explains, in part, his veiled hostility to Chicago’s inner city. Polikoff perceives the condition of public housing residents, and the inner-city spaces they inhabit, as inherently lacking. This viewpoint informs Polikoff’s conception of the ghetto. It is simultaneously a physical space and sociological condition. As Polikoff explains, “it would be difficult to find many features of American society that match the black ghetto’s poisoning effect on attitudes, values, and conduct.”

In this sense, Polikoff rejects the asset-based perspective of community revitalization. The asset-based approach is predicated upon the assumption that even disinvested and disadvantaged locations have something of value. An asset-based perspective focuses on the positive attributes of a community and builds and revitalizes from that perspective. The tone
of Polikoff's work implies that Chicago's inner-city neighborhoods and residents have few assets upon which to build a proper revitalization foundation. Although many recent studies by social mobility and opportunity agenda advocates support the view that segregation and isolation still plague the inner city, Polikoff's perception of the ghetto underestimates recent socioeconomic and demographic changes in the ghetto spawned by HOPE VI reforms. Pattillo notes that initial data suggests that public housing redevelopments' proximity to Chicago's downtown area, public transportation, and lakefront access will make it very attractive to upper middle-class whites in the not-too-distant future. If former public housing residents cannot meet the resident-screening criteria for admission into the new HOPE VI redevelopments, or if the public housing units in Chicago's HOPE VI mixed-income developments are defunded, it is highly likely that upper middle-class whites will become the predominant group living in the former ghettos.

Although Pattillo is also an advocate of integration and desegregation, she appears to recognize that there is some promise and social utility in the concept of a "black community." She explains that many members of the black middle-class still see their racial identity "as a unifying social category." Pattillo notes that "[t]he black middle-class has not abandoned the black poor, either ideologically or geographically." Pattillo notes that the sense of connectedness that some black middle-class residents feel toward their poorer black neighbors is the key feature that distinguishes the black middle-class from white middle-class gentrifiers returning to the inner city. Pattillo sees both promise and peril in this connectedness. The increasing presence of the black middle-class may mean that some poor blacks are displaced, but Pattillo's thesis suggests that poor blacks as a group may not be summarily dismissed. Her theory implies that the "we-ness" that many middle-class blacks feel toward their poorer black counterparts may act as a buffer against rapid displacement. In contrast to Polikoff, Pattillo seems less eager to move large numbers of blacks from Chicago's urban ghettos. Instead, Pattillo's tone suggests that she is more interested in studying the social dynamics of urban revitalization and identifying how poor blacks can enhance their role in such reform.

Lastly, although Polikoff's book is a memoir, at times he is less self-reflective than Pattillo regarding his own role in Chicago's inner-city redevelopment process. Interestingly, the book is filled with poignant stories and intimate glimpses into Polikoff's life but he is rarely explicitly self-reflective about how his own class, racial, and ethnic status may influence his normative vision of outcomes of the Gautreaux litigation, his view of the normative objectives of inner-city revitalization, and finally his own assessment of the inner city.

For example, Polikoff acknowledges that the Gautreaux litigation developed against the backdrop of the civil rights movement and Martin Luther King Jr.'s notorious visit to Chicago in 1966 to promote fair housing. King remarked that "the people of Mississippi ought to come to Chicago to learn how to hate." Although Polikoff clearly demonstrates his commitment
to desegregation and to integration throughout the book, in chapter 2 he makes a surprising admission. He acknowledges that he and his legal team distanced themselves from the civil rights movement itself, explaining thus: "[W]e were a small group of volunteer lawyers working on a specific case; they were national civil rights leaders engaged in high-stakes political action. None of us thought to connect the two." Polikoff views this oversight as one of his greatest regrets, yet this curious admission is the first in a series of vignettes throughout the book that reveal Polikoff's perception of himself as a legal director and architect of the movement for public housing desegregation and reform rather than as a collaborative grassroots participant in that movement. He mentions early in chapter 2 that his principal named plaintiff, Dorothy Gautreaux, died early in the litigation. It seems that the litigation’s tenuous connections to a grassroots movement for reform died with her. From that point on, the narration demonstrates that, although Polikoff and his legal colleagues always endeavored to meet their ethical obligations to the class, they viewed themselves as legal stewards providing direction and legitimacy to the struggle for public housing reform in Chicago.

Polikoff's self-perception of his role in inner-city reform reflects an ideology prevalent amongst many public interest lawyers, who used the impact-litigation model of lawyering during the 1960s and 1970s. Endowed with legal training, impact-litigation lawyers could wage rights-creating legal battles to vindicate important social goals on behalf of a class of clients. The law could provide an opportunity to reform important public institutions during the remedial stage of the litigation. The distance that Polikoff puts between himself and a grassroots movement for public housing reform illustrates one of the classic critiques of impact litigation.

In contrast, Pattillo explicitly explores her own role as a black middlewoman. In a section of the book entitled "Middleman Me," Pattillo acknowledges that as a black middle-class resident of NKO, she also "trade[s] on [her] ability to 'profess.'" As a sociologist engaged in participant observation and ethnography, her aim is to uncover the multiple voices and visions in NKO; however, Pattillo also realizes that as a black middle-class resident of NKO, there are times when she, too, has acted against the interests of the "littleman." She explains that although she loves urban living, she also loves driving her car without much traffic. Consequently, she tends to vote against redevelopment efforts that result in high densities. She admits that this position contributes to the gentrification of NKO. Pattillo also acknowledges that she has received tangible monetary benefits for studying NKO's complexity. She is funded by some of the same institutions that back Chicago's Plan For Transformation. Lastly, like the black middlemen, Pattillo concedes that she is caught in the middle as well, "alternately refusing, fumbling with, and wielding the master's tools." Pattillo's self-reflective tone throughout her book is refreshing, particularly in a work that is not styled as an autobiography or memoir. It gives the reader a more complete understanding of the conflicting forces at work in urban inner-city reform.
IV. Conclusion

The experience of reading Polikoff and Pattillo's different books about Chicago's public housing reform process also caused me to reflect inwardly about my own previous involvement in that world. As a black middle-woman, a former litigator, and transactional attorney in Chicago working on issues of housing discrimination and urban revitalization, I can hardly be considered to be a tabula rasa with no insights or perspectives on the matter of HOPE VI reform. However, from reading these two works, I gained a greater appreciation for the complex sociological impacts of public housing reform in Chicago over the decades. These books also lay bare the limitations of both litigation-based and transactional community development-oriented approaches to confronting the obdurate problems of race and class in Chicago.

In his memoir, Polikoff effectively chronicles the history of Chicago's failed efforts to improve its public housing stock as well as to improve the social condition of its poorest public housing residents. This history explains, in part, the promise many policy makers see in Chicago's current HOPE VI reform plan. Yet, his primary focus on people-based strategies to improve the condition of Chicago's former public housing residents underestimates the extent to which market forces, HOPE VI, and local public policies may serve to substantially integrate and gentrify Chicago's urban ghettos. Polikoff's outdated conception of the ghetto leads him to underemphasize the need for public policies that will keep substantial numbers of former public housing families in place as their old neighborhoods integrate and gentrify. Furthermore, Polikoff does not sufficiently discuss whether public housing residents' interests are inadequately represented by their tenant representatives or black middle-class stewards in the private decision-making networks of HOPE VI reform. His inattention to these dynamics tends to weaken the force and utility of his long-term prescriptions for public housing reform.

In contrast, Pattillo's book suggests that the privatized nature of HOPE VI reform tends to exclude public housing residents from the critical decision-making tables. Pattillo also explores how complex dynamics of race and class may render public housing residents' black middle-class and/or tenant representatives ineffective in advocating for their long-term interests. Although she does not provide legal or policy solutions to this problem, her illumination of this dynamic signals the challenges that class fissures may present to a unified black perspective on HOPE VI reform. On the other hand, during a time when policy makers cite the declining significance of race as a social category, Pattillo's insight that black identity may still serve a unifying function that might enable middle-class and poor blacks to forge alliances to secure mutually beneficial long-term outcomes from urban reform is a welcome one—particularly if such alliances help blacks, who formerly inhabited intentionally racialized ghetto spaces during periods of disinvestment and despair, retain a meaningful presence as the areas revitalize.
The books raise more questions than they answer. However, they begin to uncover and engage the social complexity that is inherent in HOPE VI reform efforts and that is so often glossed over in the prevailing policy and even academic debates.

1. Alexander Polikoff was lead counsel in the landmark case *Gautreaux v. CHA*. He served for twenty-nine years as the executive director of Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI), a Chicago-based public interest law and policy center. He is also the author of *Housing the Poor: The Case for Heroism* (1977) and numerous articles on civil rights and urban policy.

2. Mary Pattillo is a professor of sociology and African American Studies at Northwestern University. Professor Pattillo is also a faculty associate at Northwestern’s Institute for Research on Poverty. Black on the Block is Pattillo’s second work exploring the role of the black middle class in current urban inner-city politics. In *Black Picket Fences: Privilege and Peril Among the Black Middle Class* (1999), Pattillo also explored the contemporary role of the black middle class through an ethnography of the Chicago black middle-class neighborhood, Groveland.


9. *Id.* at 226.

10. *Id.* at 248.

11. *Id.*

12. *Id.* at 250 (citing Leonard S. Rubinowitz & James E Rosenbaum, *Crossing the Class and Color Lines: From Public Housing to White Suburbia* 76–77 (2000)).


14. *Id.* at 249.

15. *Id.* at 371–72.

16. *Id.* at 389.

17. *Id.* at 246.

18. *Id.*

19. *Id.* at 264.

20. *Id.* (quoting Henry Cisneros, the newly sworn-in secretary of HUD).

22. Polikoff, supra note 8, at 274.
23. Id. at 340 (discussing William Julius Wilson, When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor 29 (1996)).
24. Id.; see also Mary Pattillo, Black on the Block: The Politics of Race and Class in the City 96 (2006).
25. Polikoff, supra note 8, at 324.
26. Id. at 283.
27. Id. at 299.
28. Id. at 302.
29. Id. at 288.
30. Id. at 291.
32. See Sudhir Venkatesh, Breaking Promises at the CHA: Many CHA Units Not Going to Ex-Residents, Chi. Trib., July 3, 2007, at 15 (explaining that two-thirds of CHA families on the waiting list find that their applications to return are being denied).
33. CHA is behind its original production schedule. By FY 2009, the tenth year of the program, CHA expects to have 80 percent of the goal completed; and it estimates that it will develop the remaining 5,000 public housing units by the end of FY 2015. See PLAN FOR TRANSFORMATION, supra note 31.
34. Janet L. Smith, Public Housing Transformation: Evolving National Policy, in Where Are Poor People to Live?: Transforming Public Housing Communities 93 (Larry Bennett et al. eds., 2006).
35. See Casey Sanchez, CHA pushes “Plan for Transformation,” to 2015, Chi. Def., Oct. 20, 2006, at 3 (explaining that the remaining 5,000 units will be built between 2010 and 2015).
36. Id.
38. Polikoff, supra note 8, at 374.
39. Id. at 371.
40. Id. at 317.
41. Id. at 277-28.
42. Id. at 277 (citing Mary Pattillo-McCoy, Black Picket Fences: Privilege and Peril Among the Black Middle Class (1999)); see also Sheryll Cashin, The Failures of Integration: How Race and Class Are Undermining the American Dream 127-66, 156 (2004) (noting that “the five common assumptions about suburban life do not seem to maintain for most other middle-class black communities”).
43. Polikoff, supra note 8, at 331.
45. Polikoff, supra note 8, at 369.
46. Pattillo, supra note 24, at 15-16.
47. Id. at 3.
48. Id. at 123.
49. Id. at 18.
51. See Antonio Olivo, Downtown Chicago Tops All in City Living, CHI. TRIB., Nov. 15, 2005, at 7 (explaining that Chicago's downtown housing market leads the country in widespread revival of residential urban centers).
52. PATILLO, supra note 24, at 38.
53. Id. at 25.
54. Id. at 17.
55. Id. at 107.
57. PATILLO, supra note 24, at 18.
58. Id. at 105.
59. Id. at 139.
60. Id. at 110.
61. Id. at 179.
62. Id. at 232.
63. Id. at 185.
64. Id. at 215.
65. Id. at 181.
66. Id. at 198.
67. Id. at 210.
68. Id. at 142. The income mix of the Lake Park Crescent is governed by a court-issued "revitalizing area" order requiring that half of the public housing units be reserved for families with incomes below 50 percent of area median income and the other half of the public housing units be reserved for families with incomes in the range of 50 percent to 80 percent of the area median income. See Gautreaux v. Chi. Hous. Auth., Nos. 66 C 1459, 66 C 1460 (N.D. Ill. June 3, 1996).
69. Id. at 240.
70. Id. at 255.
71. Id.; see also Raj Nayak & William Wilen, Relocated Public Housing Residents Face Little Hope of Return: Work Requirements for Mixed-Income Public Housing Developments, 38 CLEARINGHOUSE REV. 515, 522 (2004) (explaining how CHA's tenant selection plans may preclude the most vulnerable public housing residents from reaping the benefits of the plan).
72. PATILLO, supra note 24, at 256 ("The downside, from a justice perspective, is that those without social capital do not share in (or get less of) the benefits.").
73. Id. at 294 ("Yet, public housing residents are less successful in joining the coalition of new and old home owners against crime because they reside within what is purported to be the physical instantiation of the problem itself.").
74. See, e.g., Patrick E. Clancy & Leo Quigley, Response, HOPE VI: A Vital Tool for Comprehensive Neighborhood Revitalization, 8 GEO. J. ON POVERTY L. & POL'Y 527 (2001); Lynn E. Cunningham, Islands of Affordability in a Sea of Gentrification: Lessons Learned from the D.C. Housing Authority's HOPE VI Projects, 10 J. AFF. Hous. & CMTY. DEv. L. 353 (2001); Megan Glasheen & Casius Pealer,


76. See, e.g., HOPE VI Improvement and Reauthorization Act of 2007, H.R. 3524, 110th Cong. (2007) (a new bill that reauthorizes HOPE VI from 2008 to 2015 and provides for resident participation enhancements such as restoring one-for-one replacement and increasing resident involvement).

77. PATTILLO, supra note 24, at 21.

78. Id. at 312 n.22 (discussing a study predicting that 14 percent of the population of the Chicago neighborhood of Bronzeville will be white for the 2010 census, increasing rapidly to 25 percent by 2015).

79. See Wallace v. Chi. Hous. Auth., 298 F. Supp. 2d 710 (N.D. Ill. 2003) (Business and Professional People for the Public Interest initially represented the Wallace plaintiffs, who alleged that CHA’s failure to provide social services that prepared them for, and informed them about, the benefits of living in racially diverse neighborhoods perpetuated segregation).

80. POLIKOFF, supra note 8, at 370–71.

81. Id. at 371.

82. Id. at 367.


86. PATTILLO, supra note 24, at 312 n.22.

87. Id. at 301.

88. Id.

89. POLIKOFF, supra note 8, at 40.

90. Id. at 41.

91. Id. at 47.

92. See e.g., Derrick A. Bell, Jr., Serving Two Masters: Integration Ideals and Client Interests in School Desegregation Litigation, 85 YALE L.J. 470 (1976).


95. *Id.* at 141.
96. *Id.* at 145.
97. *Id.*
98. *Id.*
99. *Id.*
100. *Id.*
101. *Id.* at 147.