
WHAT IS GAUTREAUX?



Dorothy Gautreaux, 1927-1968



BPI

Business and Professional People for the Public Interest

WHAT IS GAUTREAU? *

It's the name of a gallant woman who died before her case was decided.	1
It's the name of a 25-year-old racial discrimination case against CHA and HUD.	2
It's the name of the country's largest residential mobility program.	8
It's the name of a new concept in public housing.	11
It's possibly an important part of the answer to the nation's urban poverty problem.	12
It's the work of a great many people.	13

The Name of a Gallant Woman.*

Long before there was a Gautreaux decision there was Dorothy Gautreaux — a builder of community, a breaker of barriers, an inspiration and organizer to her fellows, a visionary. It is fitting that the Gautreaux case has been carried on in her name.

I can still visualize this intense, yet wonderfully warm, brown-skinned woman as she participated in the planning and strategy meetings of the coordinating body of the Chicago civil rights movement during the 1960s. Dorothy always brought to the often rancorous debates a sense of hope and possibility. When discussion became stymied over abstract principles or personalities, she punctured the posturing by quietly stating what she and her small band of tenant organizers were going to do — specifically. For many of us, Dorothy's judgment was the touchstone of whether a proposal had merit and should be acted upon.

The resources of her spirit more than compensated for the modest material goods at her command. Her fellow CHA activists remembered how “when you were down, she would lift you up.” She had the knack of drawing people out, encouraging them to act on their own behalf. A tireless organizer, she was demanding both of herself and others. She produced results because her demands were tempered by patience and understanding.

Dorothy Gautreaux was of, by, and for the tenants in public housing. Her very being contradicted the perceived wisdom that CHA tenants lived under such heavy control and threat from the political machine that they could not be expected to stand up for themselves. Her view was that the tenants both could and ought to direct their own lives. She set out to prove that proposition by example.

“She did not live to see the court find in her favor.”

For many years, Dorothy lived in the Altgeld-Murray Homes on the furthest south reaches of

Chicago. Before the flourishing of the civil rights movement, she sought to “build community” out there — she organized Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts and PTAs. Somehow, she also managed to balance the hectic schedule of an organizer with the time-consuming demands of good parenting; she and her husband raised three daughters and two sons. In these tasks, she was assisted by the bonds she forged with neighbors and friends. As one of them summed it up, “She was a community-minded person.”

In Chicago, the civil rights movement first took shape around *de facto* segregated schools. Dorothy Gautreaux took advantage of this situation to improve the quality of education in the all-black Carver Schools that served the students from Altgeld-Murray. She was instrumental in establishing a separate administration for the high school, and served as President of its PTA. Her focus expanded as she organized her fellow tenants to go to demonstrations and support boycotts around the city.

Then, as the civil rights movement took greater shape and eventually joined forces with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to form the Chicago Freedom Movement, Dorothy became the tribune of the CHA tenants within its councils. The image of tenants she projected was not that of victims of abuse but of people with potential to be tapped. She was constantly nurturing that potential, in one housing development after another, holding workshops to help tenants gain the voice she knew was theirs, organizing carloads of neighbors and new-found friends to join the next demonstration. With great pride, she brought Dr. King to Altgeld for a rally.

Dorothy Gautreaux, and the thousands of black women and men like her around the country, made the Gautreaux suit possible. Their dreams, their determination, and their challenges made it clear that the old order could not stand.

Unfortunately, she did not live to see the court find in her favor against the CHA. Regrettably, we have not had her wise counsel in implementation of the decision.

Fortunately, however, Chicago has had the example of Dorothy Gautreaux. It is a noble one to pass on to future generations. The day Dorothy left us she was still organizing. She had moved out of CHA. In the morning before she went to the hospital for what was to

*This personal recollection was written by Harold Baron.

be her last treatment, she was on the phone putting together a meeting that night to form a block club in her new neighborhood.

Little wonder that five years later her old neighbors at Altgeld-Murray battled the bureaucracy at City Hall to have a new facility named the Dorothy Gautreaux Child-Parent Center. They met stiff resistance. But, following Dorothy's example, they won.

The Name of a 25-Year-Old Case.

In the aftermath of World War II, America experienced an enormous surge in housing construction. The passage of a big new housing act in 1949 made public housing part of the surge. In the 1950s and early 1960s, huge public housing projects, many of them high-rises, were built in major cities across the country.

The United States of the early 1950s was intensely segregated along racial lines, even though desegregation of the armed forces had begun during the War. Because the public housing clientele in most large cities, including Chicago, was becoming predominantly black, there was little doubt about where the white power structure would allow the new public housing to be built. "The great ghetto gates swung shut," said one observer. "The wall of white hostility forced Negroes into ghettos. Negro public housing followed them . . ."



Governor Henry Horner Homes,
completed in 1957.

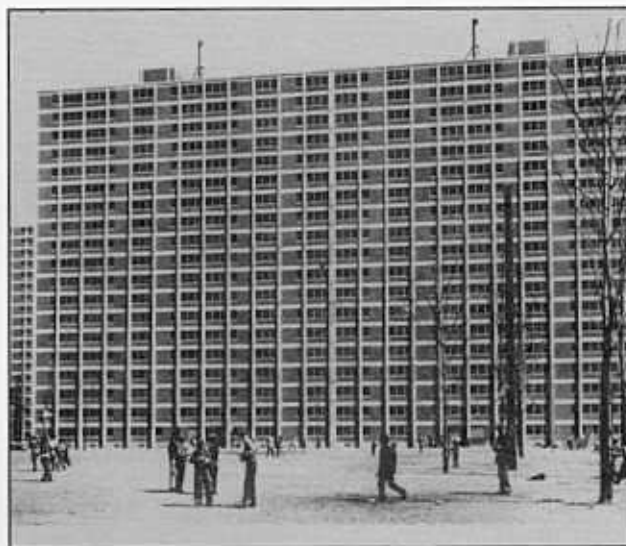
In the Chicago of the 1950s and early 1960s, it followed them in large numbers. The first of the high-rise projects built under the 1949 act was Henry Horner Homes. Completed in 1957, it had "only" 920 apartments in nine buildings, two of which were 15 stories high. In 1961, however, seven more buildings with 736



Stateway Gardens,
completed in 1958.

apartments were added. Four of the new buildings were 14 stories high.

Horner Homes was considerably smaller than Robert Taylor Homes, built in the early 1960s. Taylor Homes had 28 identical 16-story buildings with 4,415 apartments. It housed 27,000 residents, 20,000 of whom were children. All were poor, and virtually all were black. Taylor Homes itself was cheek by jowl with Stateway Gardens, a project built in 1958 whose eight buildings, two of 10 stories and six of 17, contained an additional 1,684 apartments.



Cabrini Extension,
completed in 1958.

In 1964, a new seasoning was added to the country's racial stew: Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act outlawed racial discrimination in any program receiving federal aid. On August 26, 1965, a Chicago group called the West Side Federation sent a letter to Robert Weaver, the federal government's top housing official, asking Weaver to disapprove — on the basis of Title VI — the Chicago Housing Authority's latest

group of proposed public housing sites. An amalgam of 53 black neighborhood organizations, the Federation was an outgrowth of the previous year's massive civil rights rally led by Martin Luther King in Soldier Field.

The Federation letter pointed out the "pervasive pattern" of segregation in CHA projects, most of which were located in the most solidly segregated areas of the city. CHA's newest proposal for nine more ghetto developments, four of them high-rises, six next to large existing public housing projects, would surely mean more of the same. "There exists no ascertainable reason," the letter said, "why the [new] sites were selected in the Negro ghetto." It argued that their selection constituted "discrimination" under Title VI.

The impetus for the West Side Federation letter had come from Harold Baron, research director of the Chicago Urban League. Baron viewed CHA's latest site proposals as a clear violation of the 1964 law. He saw in the situation a possibility for changing a federally funded public housing system that gave virtually all of its non-white tenants no choice but to live in solidly black neighborhoods.

In mid-October, the Federation received a reply to its August letter. The gist of the response, signed by Marie McGuire, Commissioner of the Public Housing Administration, was that because most CHA applicants appeared to want to live in ghetto neighborhoods, as shown by the "location preferences" in their applications, CHA's proposed ghetto sites complied with the PHA's site selection regulations. The regulations stated that the aim was to select "from among otherwise available and suitable sites those which will afford the greatest acceptability to eligible applicants."

McGuire's letter contained this key sentence as well: "We are also advised that sites other than in the south or west side [Chicago's black ghetto area], if proposed for regular family housing, invariably encounter sufficient objection in the [City] Council to preclude Council approval." In other words, because Chicago aldermen refused to approve locations outside the ghetto, non-ghetto sites were not "otherwise available" for Chicago public housing. Therefore, there was no violation of law.

With legal objections thus disposed of, planning for the new CHA projects proceeded apace; final City



Harold Baron

Council approval came the following summer. The day the approval was announced, the *Chicago Sun-Times* carried an editorial, "Public Housing's No. 1 Mistake," accompanied by a cartoon showing a huge steel beam, labeled "Public Housing," being hoisted into the air by a construction crane of the "New Ghetto Construction Co." Undeterred by the criticism, CHA promptly proposed still another group of projects, 1,300 units on twelve more ghetto sites.

Harold Baron and the West Side Federation were also undeterred. Baron feared that McGuire's reasoning would encourage other state and local governments to require local bodies, such as Chicago's City Council, to approve federal programs even though they were not themselves the recipients of federal funds. Under the McGuire theory, the receiving agencies would not have to comply with Title VI since they would be acting under orders from other local bodies who, because they were not receiving federal money, were not subject to

the law. Title VI would be neutralized, and federal funds would continue to flow to local agencies whose practices reinforced racial segregation. Baron and the Federation sought help from the American Civil Liberties Union in Chicago.

In early August 1966, soon after final City Council approval of CHA's latest proposed projects, a class action case was filed against CHA on behalf of all CHA tenants and all persons on CHA's waiting list. A separate suit against HUD was also filed, alleging that HUD had assisted CHA's discriminatory housing policy by providing financial support. The suits charged that CHA's placement of virtually all of its projects in black ghettos was a violation of Title VI and also of the equal protection clause of the Constitution. The first named plaintiff, the one by whose name a case comes to be known, was Dorothy Gautreaux.

The case was assigned to the late Judge Richard B. Austin, a former prosecutor, state court judge, and one-time candidate for governor, who had been appointed to the federal district court in 1961 by President Kennedy. Austin had a sarcastic wit and a reputation as a "tough little scrapper." He was five feet four inches tall, with a bristly white crew-cut that made him look, as one reporter put it, as if he had an acrylic rug on top of his head. One of his proudest accomplishments was having sentenced Jimmy Hoffa to prison for fraud. He lived in an affluent white suburb and was viewed as a friend of Mayor Richard Daley. He was not considered a "liberal" on the question of race. When Austin was first told what the Gautreaux case was about, his immediate response was, "Where do you want them to put 'em [CHA projects]? On Lake Shore Drive?"

CHA promptly asked Austin to dismiss the Gautreaux case. Taking a leaf from McGuire, it argued that the plaintiffs had chosen the areas in which they wished to live and were therefore barred from complaining about CHA's location policy. To support the argument, CHA produced application forms undeniably showing that the plaintiffs had expressed a preference for projects in ghetto areas rather than the few in white neighborhoods.

The facts were that CHA employees had been instructed to tell black applicants about the long waiting time for white neighborhood projects, and in this and other ways to "steer" them to the black projects to which CHA wanted them to go. Proof of the steering was essential if the lawsuit was to survive.

The lawyers found it. They located CHA's tenant supervisor of the early 1950s (when most of the plaintiffs had filed their applications) in Upper Manhattan. On a stormy night late in 1966, she related the story of the steering, complete with a description of CHA's coding system (referring to blacks as "B" families) and documents that listed which projects were open to blacks and which to whites. Her story was duly filed with Austin.

"Do you want them to put 'em on Lake Shore Drive?"

Affidavits from some of the individual plaintiffs showing their desperate need for housing were also submitted. Dorothy Gautreaux said that before moving to a CHA project, she and her husband and child had all occupied one bedroom in an uncle's apartment. Odell Jones, his wife, and three children were living in two rooms and cooking in the bathroom. Doreatha Crenshaw and her three children lived in a rat- and roach-infested one-and-a-half room flat. And so on. Each of the plaintiffs also said that their applications had been filled out by CHA interviewers who had told them to choose the project where, according to the interviewer, they could get apartments most quickly.

The affidavits succeeded. In March 1967, Austin held that the plaintiffs had a right to sue, notwithstanding their expressed "preferences" for ghetto locations. However, the judge also ruled that on the issue of the locations chosen for CHA projects, actual intent to discriminate would have to be proved. Without such proof, Austin said, the mere fact that CHA sites had turned out to be almost exclusively in black neighborhoods would not be sufficient to show a violation of the law.

Faced with the necessity of proving intentional discrimination, the lawyers asked Austin to require CHA to turn over all its files having anything to do with site selection. CHA's attorney was outraged and complained that it would take thousands of hours and tens of thousands of dollars to comply with the request. The ACLU lawyers said they would do the job themselves if the judge would require CHA to make its files available.

Austin agreed, and a reluctant CHA was forced to open its file cabinets. Through the good offices of the Urban League, half a dozen college students were

enlisted, instructed what to look for, and set loose with mimeographed forms to record what they found. All that summer, in basements and storage rooms, they pored through filing cabinets and folders.

“The statistical result was that 99.4% of CHA’s family units were placed in black neighborhoods.”

Most of the documents they examined were useless, but a few were helpful. The most important find was a copy of an agreement CHA Executive Director William Kean had entered into with Alderman Murphy, chairman of the City Council housing committee. Its stated purpose was to “insure close coordination” between the housing committee and CHA “to provide for the selection of the most satisfactory sites.” In effect, however, the agreement turned the ultimate decision on sites over to the City Council’s housing committee: CHA would clear all sites with the committee before proposing them to the Council and would propose none of which the committee disapproved. The statistical result of the “close coordination” was that in the 13 years following the 1954 Kean-Murphy agreement, 99.4% of CHA’s 10,256 family units — all but 63 — were placed in black neighborhoods.

Armed with the documents unearthed by the students, the lawyers began to interrogate CHA officials. Thousands of pages of sworn testimony were produced. Most were as useless as most of the documents. Again, however, a few choice questions produced helpful answers.

The executive director of CHA admitted that he had told an alderman in the City Council hearing that CHA could not “find” suitable sites outside black neighborhoods because CHA was hamstrung by the City Council’s veto power. The director also testified that he and the head of the City’s Planning Department would visit Mayor Daley after CHA had made an initial selection of sites, at which point the Mayor would say to the Planning Department head, “John, talk to the aldermen.” Later, CHA would be advised of the outcome of the talks and submit only those sites that the aldermen had told “John” would be approved. The CHA general counsel admitted that suitable land in white areas was “unavailable” solely because of the City Council’s veto power. In an affidavit, CHA Chairman Charles Swibel acknowledged that the City

Council had CHA “over a barrel” and that CHA therefore acquiesced by choosing sites in black neighborhoods.

Toward the end of 1968, the ACLU lawyers announced they were ready for trial. Fearing the publicity a trial would generate, CHA again asked Austin to dismiss the case, arguing now that the materials developed during the pretrial period proved that CHA had no actual discriminatory intent and that if anyone was discriminating, it was the aldermen. While waiting for a ruling on CHA’s motion, the ACLU lawyers filed a similar motion of their own, contending that the same materials proved their case.

In February 1969, Austin decided that the facts were not really in dispute and that CHA’s own documents and testimony showed that intentional discrimination on its part had been established. He ruled that both Title VI and the equal protection clause of the Constitution had been violated.

“John,” the Mayor said, “talk to the aldermen.”

Austin found that the statistics alone proved a deliberate intention to discriminate. He said that no criterion other than race could plausibly explain the location of CHA’s projects and that the testimony of CHA officials corroborated the fact that there was deliberate intention to segregate. Neither the laudable goal of providing needed housing, nor the possibility that the aldermen were not themselves racists but were simply reflecting the sentiments of their constituents, could justify a governmental policy of keeping blacks out of white neighborhoods.

The closing paragraph of Austin’s opinion conveyed the judge’s sense of the urgency of the problem:

“[E]xisting patterns of racial separation must be reversed if there is to be a chance of averting the desperately intensifying division of whites and Negroes in Chicago. On the basis of present trends of Negro residential concentration and of Negro migration into and White migration out of the central city, the President’s Commission on Civil Disorders estimates that

Chicago will become 50 percent Negro by 1984. By 1984, it may be too late to heal racial division.”

Front page headlines announced Austin’s decision. Mayor Daley expressed his concern that the ruling could slow public housing construction. Editorials discussed the “public housing dilemma” at length — “the realities of changing neighborhoods and of whites fleeing to the suburbs are eloquent testimony to the difficulties that still lie ahead.”

Chairman Swibel denied that CHA’s actions had ever been discriminatory. He emphasized that opposition to public housing by a community might be based on “economic and cultural factors” as well as on race. He said that CHA’s great goal had been to build urgently-needed housing for low-income families and that CHA had proceeded “where the community welcomed public housing and where the need for slum clearance was the greatest.” But because of the importance of its goal, CHA would not appeal; it would do its best to comply with Judge Austin’s order. Swibel added that Austin’s opinion placed the responsibility for the location of public housing squarely where it belonged — “on the entire community as it is constituted by all of its citizens.”

“The realities of changing neighborhoods and of whites fleeing to the suburbs are difficulties that still lie ahead.”

Judge Austin’s February opinion had merely pronounced a dispersal goal. Still remaining was the task of drafting a specific order to achieve the objective, a task that took almost five months. There were long discussions with the judge in his chambers, to which each side brought the views of outsiders such as civic groups, urban planners, other experts, and the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. The ACLU lawyers argued for a formula that would require a majority of future CHA units to be built in white neighborhoods, urging that the old pattern would surely continue if a specific formula were not imposed. A letter to Austin from the Civil Rights Commission supported that view. “We believe,” the Commission’s letter said, “that the ‘essential element’ in a decree would be ‘the requirement of a ratio of white area to black area units.’”

On the other hand, CHA wanted an order that merely prohibited it from discriminating, without defining that word or spelling out how the past imbalances were to be redressed. It was fearful about ending public housing.

As the decree finally emerged from the long discussions in Austin’s chambers, it was not as restrictive as CHA had feared. Public housing for the elderly was not affected. The large, already approved ghetto area projects for 1965 and 1966 could go forward; only future CHA projects would be affected. Three-quarters of future units were to be located in white areas. But half the tenants in new projects could be residents of the local community. In white neighborhoods, these would of course be whites. Other provisions of the decree prohibited too-large projects or the concentration of public housing in any one neighborhood. The hope was that small-scale, controlled “ice breaking” in stable communities would build a favorable experience with which to counter block-busting fears in neighborhoods threatened with wholesale racial change.

The decree was finally signed on July 1, 1969. Editorial comment was generally favorable, if somber. *The Daily News* said that whatever happened, “one thing that Judge Austin has done is to put Chicago face-to-face with its most crucial issue — whether it is to be a city united or a city divided.” It added: “The [City] Council, under the leadership of Mayor Richard J. Daley, must act in the full knowledge that if the decision is for a divided city, that can only be a stopgap on the way to a city in social and economic ruin.”

The *Sun-Times* editorial said that “whites who would flee the city at the sight of a black face must realize they live in a diverse society and they cannot, after all, run forever.” The editorial continued that the Austin ruling opened the way for “some truly imaginative planning for a viable bi-racial city,” and urged the city to “work to implement a sound Austin plan.”

Other comments were less hopeful. *The Chicago Tribune* editorialized that the dispersal of CHA sites ordered by Austin “is something more easily said than done.” *Time* magazine quoted the leader of a white homeowner group as threatening: “If the construction really starts, we’ll take action of some sort, and not letters or petitions.” Congressman Roman Pucinski said the Austin ruling “probably has dealt the death knell to public housing here.”

One more piece of the lawsuit puzzle remained to be put in place — the case against HUD. After preliminary skirmishing, Austin dismissed the suit against HUD, ruling in essence that HUD had merely supplied CHA with money and was not itself responsible for CHA's wrongdoing.

“HUD was legally as responsible as CHA for the discrimination in Chicago.”

However, in September 1971 the U.S. Court of Appeals reversed Austin's decision and held that HUD as well as CHA was liable for the public housing discrimination in Chicago. The appellate judges relied heavily on Marie McGuire's old letter to the West Side Federation to show that HUD was fully aware of the Chicago realities and therefore had approved and funded CHA's program with knowledge of CHA's discriminatory practices. That, the court said, constituted discriminatory conduct by HUD in violation of both the Constitution and the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Therefore, HUD was legally as responsible as CHA for the Chicago discrimination.

Following the Appeals Court decision, BPI lawyers (the case had moved to BPI in early 1970 when the lead counsel for the plaintiffs left private practice to join BPI) began a series of carefully structured presentations to Austin. They tried to persuade him that HUD should be actively involved in remedial efforts (in addition to merely supporting whatever CHA did), and that the remedy should not be confined within the Chicago city limits. However, Austin ultimately refused to grant metropolitan relief. In September 1973, he ruled that a remedy encompassing the entire metropolitan area would be improper because it would involve political entities not in the lawsuit and against whom no acts of discrimination had been proved. Instead, he entered a simple “best efforts” order against HUD, directing it to cooperate with CHA's remedial efforts within Chicago.

Austin's order was appealed and argued in July 1974 before a panel of the Court of Appeals that included former Supreme Court Justice Tom Clark. A few days after the oral argument, the U.S. Supreme Court, deciding a Detroit school desegregation case named *Milliken v. Bradley*, rejected the metropolitan area approach. The decision necessitated the prompt

filing of a supplemental brief distinguishing Gautreaux and housing from Milliken and schools. The following month, the Court of Appeals, in a 2-1 decision, with Justice Clark writing for the majority, reversed Judge Austin, held that a metropolitan-wide remedy was proper, and sent the case back to Austin to work out a comprehensive metropolitan area plan.

In May 1975, the Supreme Court agreed to review Clark's decision, heard oral arguments in January 1976 and, in April 1976, handed down an 8-0 decision affirming the Court of Appeals. Justice Stewart, writing for the Court, ruled that the Milliken decision rejecting a metropolitan approach did not impose a general ban precluding federal courts from ordering corrective action beyond a municipal boundary, but proscribed relief extending to the suburbs in that case because there had been no showing that the constitutional violations within Detroit had any effect beyond the city limits. In Gautreaux, on the other hand, the relevant “housing market area” was found to extend beyond the city limits, and HUD had the authority to operate throughout the area. Thus, it would be appropriate for HUD to attempt to provide housing alternatives for Gautreaux families in the suburbs without, however, undercutting the role of local governments. Subject to that limitation, the nature and scope of the remedial action was to be left to the district court.

“By 8-0, the Supreme Court sent the lawyers back to the drawing board.”

With the principle of metropolitan area relief established, it was back to the drawing board. In June 1976, BPI lawyers agreed with HUD not to return to the trial court to seek a formal metropolitan remedial order for one year if, during that time, HUD would take certain initiatives. Among other things, HUD was to establish and fund a metropolitan-wide rent subsidy demonstration program for up to 400 Gautreaux families to provide housing opportunities mostly in suburban areas, with a maximum of 25 percent of the families to be housed in minority areas. Through such a program, both sides hoped to learn something about the mechanics of providing suburban housing to inner-city families before asking the trial court to deal with that question. The program got underway near the end of 1976.

For a brief description of what has happened to this rent subsidy program and to the scattered site public housing CHA was supposed to build, please turn to the next two sections of "What is Gautreaux?"

The Name of the Country's Largest Residential Mobility Program.

One of the two remedial Gautreaux programs (the other, scattered site public housing, is discussed in the next section of this pamphlet) has been a rent subsidy program operated throughout the six counties of Northeastern Illinois. This "Section 8" Program (so-called because of the section of the 1974 Housing Act in which it appears) utilizes private, not public, housing whose owners voluntarily agree to participate. It pays a portion of the rent charged to an eligible participating family — the family pays 30% of its income and HUD pays the rest.



Carol Hendrix, an early director of the Gautreaux Rent Subsidy Program

The Gautreaux Section 8 Program offers three potentially important benefits. First, it offers "instant housing" to eligible families — nothing needs to be built or rehabilitated; the housing is already "there," subject only to the private landlord's willingness to participate in the program. Second, it offers ghetto residents a means of escape from their ghetto communities, subject again only to the willingness of private landlords to participate. Third, it offers new housing opportunities without identification or stigma, for the Section 8 arrangement is a contract among the landlord, the tenant and housing agencies of which neighbors and the community at large need have no knowledge.



Kale Williams, Executive Director of the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities

Following the Supreme Court's 1976 Gautreaux decision, HUD, the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities (a Chicago fair housing organization), and BPI worked out the arrangements to begin the Gautreaux Section 8 Program. The first family was placed in November of that year, and the program got seriously underway in January 1977. Under the Leadership Council's direction, it has now been operating continuously for some 14 years.

The results have been illuminating. By the Spring of 1991, over 4,200 Gautreaux families had been enabled to move to new locations, slightly over half to more than one hundred suburbs, the rest to non-ghetto neighborhoods of Chicago. Although there is no typical Gautreaux family, most are black, female-headed, receive public aid and, before their Gautreaux Program moves, lived either in inner-city public housing projects or in inner-city neighborhoods characterized by poverty and racial impaction.

The experiences of the Gautreaux families are increasingly a matter of widespread interest. Journalists have focused on the human interest story. Among others, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and a number of magazines have examined the Gautreaux Program through feature articles. Early in the life of the Gautreaux Program, HUD itself conducted a study and concluded:

“Most Gautreaux families are satisfied with their participation in the demonstration. Substantial majorities are pleased with their new neighborhoods (especially the schools), their housing, and with public services. The major problems are inadequate transportation and locational inconveniences.”

More recently, the Gautreaux Program has attracted academic interest. Researchers, led by Professor James E. Rosenbaum of Northwestern University, have conducted a number of studies of the experiences of the Gautreaux mothers and children in their new environments, comparing them with the experiences of comparable public housing families who remained in the city. The ongoing studies have been funded by several foundations and have, so far, resulted in the publication of academic papers and a book contract. Here are some preliminary conclusions from a Rosenbaum article:

“Our first study compared the experiences of Gautreaux children whose families moved to the suburbs with those of children whose families moved within the city. The outcomes for the suburban movers were generally very positive, although they had to contend with more demanding schools, a dramatically different environment, and some racism from teachers and peers.”



One of over 4,000 Gautreaux families who have moved to better communities, and life chances, under the Gautreaux Program.

“The suburban children experienced an initial decline in grades immediately after their move because the suburban schools had higher academic standards than their city schools. However, by the time of the interviews, their grades had improved and were on a par with those of their city counterparts. Gautreaux mothers who moved to the suburbs were more satisfied than city mothers with their children’s schools, particularly with teachers and the safer environment. Teachers were able to respond to these new students, and many went out of their way to help Gautreaux students.”

“[W]e studied three aspects of the Gautreaux mothers’ experiences: their satisfaction, social integration,

and employment outcomes. We examined how these women coped with the difficulties they encountered in their new situations, including racial discrimination, isolation, access to services, and employment.”



Mary Davis, Associate Director of the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities, Supervisor of the Gautreaux Rent Subsidy Program

“[W]hile suburban movers had unpleasant experiences with a few neighbors, they also made friends with many white neighbors and were generally as well integrated in their new neighborhood as the city movers. The same proportion of both groups have made friends and feel their neighbors are friendly These findings are quite striking and unexpected.”

“We found that suburban movers were about 13 percent more likely than city movers to have a job post-move, even after accounting for the effects of individual attributes. Further, among respondents who had never been employed before moving, 46 percent of suburban movers had a job after moving, while only 30 percent of city movers did.”

“These findings demonstrate that the Gautreaux form of racial and socio-economic integration is feasible.”

“[T]he bottom line is that suburban movers are more likely to have jobs than city movers.”

“These findings have important implications for policy. First, they demonstrate that the Gautreaux form of racial and socio-economic integration is feasible. These low-income black women are very satisfied with their move to the suburbs, particularly because of the benefits for their children.”

“Stirring lessons for all cities with isolated underclass communities.”

“Our findings . . . indicate that helping low-income black women move to areas with better employment prospects greatly increases their ability to find work. The move not only benefits those who are relatively advantaged in terms of education or previous experience, but also those who have no employment experience pre-move. Our findings imply that intensive relocation assistance should be an option that policy makers consider to help reduce the problem of long-term poverty.”

"The Gautreaux Program has begun to show us what happens when people of different races and classes live together. The results indicate that these low-income blacks and their white suburban neighbors have overcome many of the social, economic, and racial barriers that separate them."

In 1988, in connection with a lengthy, front-page story, the *New York Times* editorialized:

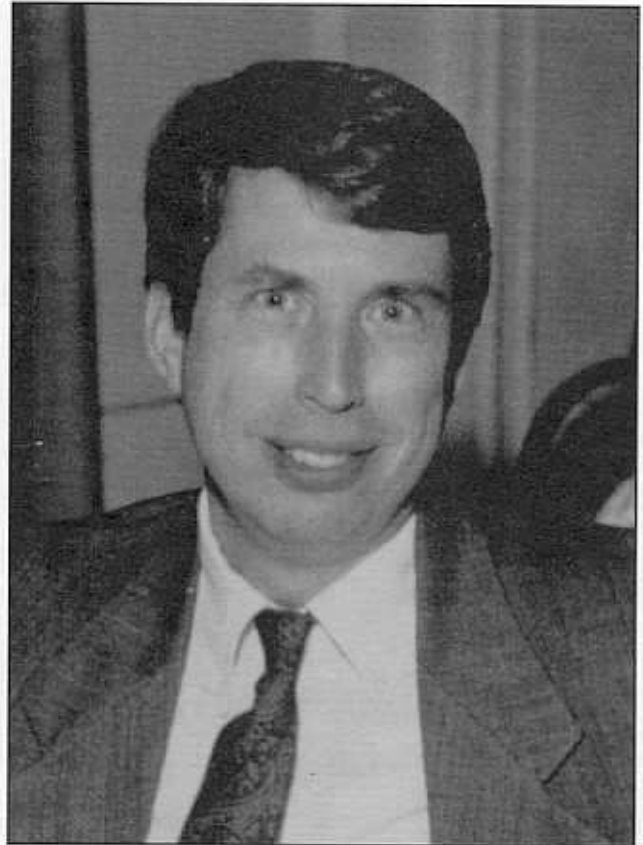
"The [Gautreaux] program's success, documented in a new study, offers stirring lessons for all cities with isolated underclass communities."

The Name of a New Concept in Public Housing.

The other remedial Gautreaux Program has been scattered site public housing. The purpose has been to employ funds available for public housing construction in a way markedly unlike the huge, ghetto neighborhood concentrations of the past — small-scale, scattered individual buildings blended unobtrusively into their host neighborhoods.

Here, however, Gautreaux remedies stalled badly. For years after Judge Austin ordered the Chicago Housing Authority to build scattered site housing, very little was accomplished. Partly, this was due to CHA intransigence — public housing is not exactly popular in the neighborhoods and CHA, an instrumentality of City Hall, had little incentive to undertake a politically unpopular initiative. Partly, it was due to incompetence. A scattered site program is a complicated undertaking, requiring land acquisition, architectural, building, budget and management abilities, as well as a river-pilot's skill in negotiating the shoals of the HUD bureaucracy. CHA was simply not up to the task.

Finally, after years of frustration and continuing litigation, at the end of 1987 the Court took the job away from CHA and gave it to a court-selected private developer, the Habitat Company. As "Receiver," Habitat's officers, Daniel Levin and Philip Hickman, have now put the scattered site program on track. First, they completed the rehabilitation of some 40 buildings CHA had purchased, thereby adding some 250 apartments to the



Philip Hickman

scattered site inventory. Then they initiated a construction program, the first fruits of which have now ripened — 100 townhouse apartments on eleven sites in ten different wards. Additional sites have been acquired and others are in the pipeline, all to be built upon with over \$100 million of Gautreaux scattered site funding that had accumulated in HUD's coffers during all the years that CHA was not producing. The prospect is that many hundreds of additional scattered site units will be constructed.

Two other aspects of the scattered site program deserve mention. First, under the new, forward-looking leadership of Vincent Lane at CHA, arrangements have been made to turn all 1,400 scattered site units, plus those to be built in the future, over to locally-based private management. The Housing Resource Center of Hull House has for several years pioneered this concept. Under the inspired direction of Sue Brady, HRC now manages over 300 scattered site apartments in some 60 buildings on the North Side, characterized by increasing tenant participation in governance as well as by good property management. It is expected that the remaining scattered site units will be turned over to private managers during 1991.



Artist's rendition of new scattered site townhouses

Arrangements have also been made with CHA, HUD and the Court to allow half of the apartments in each scattered site building to be made available to income-eligible residents of the neighborhood, thereby to foster integration of public housing into the fabric of the local community.

A Part of the Answer to the Urban Poverty Problem?

Two recent books have refocused public attention on what it means to grow up in, or in the environs of, a large, inner-city public housing project. (*The Promised Land*, by Nicholas Lemann, and *There Are No Children Here*, by Alex Kotlowitz.) Referring to Kotlowitz's story of two such children, Tracy Kidder says, simply, "The facts of their lives are horrifying."



Sue Brady

It is hoped that the new scattered site public housing program in Chicago — well-constructed, low-density buildings, scattered through the neighborhoods, locally managed and housing local residents as well as Gautreaux families — will lead to an entirely new image, and reality, for public housing. This new experience may have considerable public policy relevance as the nation begins to confront the question of what to do with the aging, physically deteriorating stock of public housing high-rises built in the 1950s and '60s — i.e., to rehabilitate them and risk perpetuating our high-rise tragedies of the past, or to replace them instead with locally-managed scattered site dwellings on the Gautreaux model.

The positive results of the Gautreaux rent subsidy program of course compel the conclusion that that program should be enlarged in the Chicago area and replicated elsewhere. Because the administrative expense of the program is small (a one-time cost of less than \$1,500 per family) and the Section 8 rent subsidy is cheaper than conventional public housing, the program is a bargain: It greatly increases the chances that parents, and their children, will become contributing members of society instead of ciphers in the welfare and prison systems.

"Should society not offer an equal opportunity to underclass blacks and Hispanics to make the same escape?"

One of the strongest currents in community and philanthropic circles today is to address the so-called underclass problem through "in-place" strategies — community organizing, community-based economic and housing development, and the like. The objective is to strengthen and "empower" communities to remake their neighborhoods and their lives, physically, economically, socially and psychologically. While for most low-income families there is little other choice, Gautreaux families are afforded an alternate way to achieve, almost instantaneously, many of the results that an in-place strategy promises only after years — better education, better job opportunities, better public facilities and safety.

A paper by an official of a major national foundation says:

“[T]he major legal and political breakthroughs that have occurred since the mid-1950s . . . have made it possible for middle-class blacks and Hispanics to make impressive gains in education and employment, and to escape from the ghettos and the barrios of the center city.”

If middle-class blacks and Hispanics have been given the opportunity to escape from the ghettos and barrios of the center city, then should society not offer an equal opportunity to underclass blacks and Hispanics to make the same escape? The Gautreaux Programs are showing that is possible for society to do so.

The Work of a Great Many People.

Gautreaux is like a jigsaw puzzle done at a party — there are lots of contributors. The Urban League and Harold Baron were instrumental in the conception. The Leadership Council, under Kale Williams’ direction, has for nearly 15 years superbly run the Section 8 Program. Daniel Levin and Philip Hickman have begun to do what for so long seemed impossible — build scattered site public housing in Chicago. Hull House’s Housing Resource Center and Sue Brady have, with grit and imagination, pioneered the private management of scattered sites. James Rosenbaum and Leonard Rubinowitz of Northwestern University’s Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research have conducted extensive studies of the Gautreaux Section 8 Program and are telling a growing audience of the favorable results.

Tonight we honor these and others who participated in putting the puzzle together: Irving Gerick, who as head of the Illinois Housing Development Authority helped start the model of what became the Gautreaux Section 8 Program; the Leadership Council’s troubleshooter, Harry Gottlieb, and its directors of the Section 8 Program, Henry Zuba, Carol Hendrix, Mary Davis, Almeta Rollins and Julie Fernandes; Vincent Lane of CHA, whose cooperation has made private management a reality; the lawyers, Julie E. Brown, Cecil C. Butler, Douglass W. Cassel, Jr., Merrill A. Freed, Elizabeth L. Lassar, John Lawlor, Howard A.

Learner, Roger Pascal, Alexander Polikoff, Milton I. Shadur, Harris D. Sherman, Robert J. Vollen, Bernard Weisberg and Charles Markels, whose labors seem never to end; the ACLU which began the case, and BPI which has carried it on for over two decades; and, of course, the Gautreaux families who started it all, first among them Dorothy Gautreaux herself, whose spirit — though she did not live to see the fruits of her beginning — has infused the entire undertaking.

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