An Intellectual and Political History of Crime, Poverty, and Public Safety: Public Housing in Late 20th Century Chicago

by

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Introduction

Nearing the end of the twentieth century, Chicago's public housing communities were notoriously dangerous, and both the residents and the public were acutely aware of how shootings and other violence had become so regular in the neighborhoods. "I gotta walk down the long way instead of walking the short way," ten-year-old Senque Selvy said, scratching his head and searching for the right words, "cause, you know, like if someone could shoot you with a bullet…you gotta be careful walking to school in Cabrini-Green."[1] Deon Crosby, an eleven-year-old from Cabrini-Green Homes that held aspirations to become a lawyer, stated that "I can't go to school without rolling under cars and dodging bullets. I'm scared because it could be any of us. I don't care about no Christmas presents. I thank God for waking up."[2] Cabrini-Green Homes was one of Chicago's largest and most iconic public housing projects with a lamentable reputation known across the country, and the experiences of Senque and Deon were far from exaggerated.

Shortly before the boys shared their demoralizing perspectives on their neighborhood, seven-year-old Dantrell Davis was shot and killed while walking hand-in-hand with his mother at Cabrini-Green. Crossing the parking lot between his apartment and Edward Jenner Public School, Dantrell was hit in the head by a stray bullet from a gang-affiliated sniper perched in a nearby high-rise building. Only one month after his father was murdered and the third elementary student from his school to be killed by gunfire this year, Dantrell's story scarred the community and dragged public housing developments in Chicago onto the national stage. One of

[1] "Response to Dantrell Davis Death at Cabrini-Green," Media Burn Independent Video Archive, filmed 1992 at Cabrini-Green Homes, Chicago, IL, video, 0:18-0:55, https://mediaburn.org/video/cabrini-green/.
[2] Don Terry, "Even a Grade School Is No Refuge From Gunfire," *New York Times*, October 17, 1992, https://www.nytimes.com/1992/10/17/us/even-a-grade-school-is-no-refuge-from-gunfire.html.

many highly publicized tragedies in Chicago's public housing, the death of Dantrell Davis solidified the projects, and Cabrini-Green especially, as symbols of reckless urban violence ravaging low-income urban communities. Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley condemned the "wanton violence, the total disregard of human life by gangs and drug dealers"[3] in the neighborhoods, and Vincent Lane, the chairman of the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) that oversaw all of Chicago's public housing, stated that "Cabrini symbolizes all that is wrong with public housing."[4] Such incidents led to the eventual demolition of the public housing developments in Chicago only a few short years later, and they were the evidence that American politicians needed to support some of the most draconian and invasive crime control policies in American history.

Most telling, however, was the heartbreaking perspective that Dantrell's classmates had about their neighborhood. Even if the police officers removed all of the drug dealers and criminals from Cabrini-Green and stationed themselves on the street for all hours of the day, one young boy said, new gang members and criminals would enter, and "this neighborhood's going to stay the same."[5] This dismal characterization of the public housing developments had become the norm for residents, and it has prompted scholars, politicians, and the public since the late twentieth century to ask: how did we get here? What do the intellectual and political histories of crime, poverty, and public safety teach us about crime control policy and its relation to those in public housing in the late twentieth century?

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[3] "Response to Dantrell Davis Death at Cabrini-Green," Media Burn Independent Video Archive, filmed 1992 at Cabrini-Green Homes, Chicago, IL, video, 1:35-1:43, https://mediaburn.org/video/cabrini-green/.
[4] Frank James, "CHA Plans a Facelift at Cabrini," *Chicago Tribune*, December 25, 1992, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
[5] "Response to Dantrell Davis Death at Cabrini-Green," Media Burn Independent Video Archive, films 1992 at Cabrini-Green Homes, Chicago, IL, video, 10:58-11:25, https://mediaburn.org/video/cabrini-green/.

An Intellectual and Political History of Crime, Poverty, and Public Safety

Federal crime control policy in the late twentieth century underwent a major shift between the 1960s and the 1990s. Two major groups emerged with distinct ideologies, crime control policies, and understandings of the intersection between crime and poverty. First, the '*sociological reformers*' emphasized prevention of crime and rehabilitation of offenders, and its supporters sought to reduce crime by alleviating other related social ills such as unemployment, poor education, and poverty. Sociological reform dominated national politics in the 1960s. But in the 1970s, the '*tough on crime consensus*' rose to prominence with efforts focused on retribution, deterrence, and incapacitation. A shift driven by sensationalized accounts of crime in the media, conservative discontent with progressive social policy, and actual increases in crime rates gave the tough on crime consensus a platform to unliterally influence presidential rhetoric and congressional legislation until the end of the twentieth century. Aided by intellectual movements that associated poverty with crime and attributed crime to poverty, crime control became increasingly connected to social welfare policy and targeted at low-income communities over the course of four decades. This shift facilitated a massive change in public safety programs and on-the-ground policing in public housing complexes. Following the rise of the tough on crime consensus, crime control, public safety, and policing became much more punitive and aggressive

Figure 1: A Tower at Cabrini-Green in Chicago's Near North Side; Figure 2: Resident of Cabrini-Green Homes

and led to escalating rates of incarceration and a ballooning carceral state in America that disproportionately affected poor urban citizens.

In Chapter 1, I will explain how this paradigmatic shift normalized harsher and more punitive crime control policies that had severe impacts on low-income urban neighborhoods as they broadened governmental surveillance, stretched the reach of law enforcement, and expanded the power of the criminal justice system in local communities. This chapter will articulate how the sociological reformers' connection of social factors common to low-income neighborhoods– unemployment, poor education, substandard housing, and poverty–to crime supported government-led social programs to alleviate such conditions while simultaneously institutionalizing a pathology of criminality among those in poverty. From the 1970s onwards, the tough on crime movement acknowledged the sociological reformers' findings, but they instead divested from social programs and directed their policies of retribution, deterrence, and incapacitation towards poor neighborhoods, particularly public housing. The normalization of such assumptions regarding crime and poverty encouraged tough on crime politicians to experiment with punitive public safety practices in public housing communities.

In Chicago, the CHA public housing complexes became emblematic of concentrated poverty and rampant crime in national and local media over the course of the late twentieth century. However, residents of Chicago's public housing perceived the crime and poverty in their communities differently. Many residents fought for their struggles to be made public in an effort to gain sympathy and support from government agencies. Others criticized the dire poverty and pervasive crime in their communities, and they disliked the stigmatizing attitude wielded by reporters and politicians. Nevertheless, these circumstances captured national attention, particularly in the 1990s, and fueled tough on crime rhetoric and policy in the upper echelons of

federal politics. As a result, tough on crime politicians used Chicago as an example to crack down on crime in public housing, largely at the expense of the residents. In Chapter 2, I will explain the conditions of crime and poverty in Chicago public housing under the CHA, explore how such a situation arose, provide examples of how the public perceived CHA public housing, and connect residents' lived experiences with larger national trends, particularly conservative welfare and housing reform.

While media coverage of Dantrell Davis's murder at Cabrini-Green in 1992 exhibits the widespread attention that Chicago's public housing received in national politics, crime–particularly violent crime in low-income urban neighborhoods like public housing–had already been a primary political issue in federal agendas since the 1960s. Moreover, while the tough on crime consensus only began to make headway at the federal level in the 1970s, Chicago's approach to crime control had already been characteristically 'tough' before being 'tough' was a politically advantageous stance. Yet, these competing timelines were still essential to public safety in Chicago. When national policies and legislation began incorporating tough on crime ideology, Chicago's already-tough public safety programs became more invasive and aggressive through a combination of community-based and repressive policing tactics. Chicago's law enforcement apparatus became increasingly punitive, and the city divested from public housing and other social services. Chicago had proven itself to be the quintessential testing grounds for tough on crime policy and public safety programs.

In Chapter 3, I will describe public safety and policing in Chicago in the late twentieth century, evaluate their implementation, and highlight residents' understandings of them in their communities. On the ground, CHA residents sought different protocols to protect their communities. Some wanted more police, more punishment, and more surveillance. Many others

dissented against these encroachments into their daily lives, had negative experiences with police and security officers, and petitioned for more rehabilitative programs based on improving social conditions and welfare. But by the 1990s, liberal politicians–those who had typically been sociological reformers in decades prior–had given up on sociological reform for crime control, welfare, and public housing, and the tough on crime movement had solidified itself as the uncontested, undisputed tough on crime consensus.

Historiography

As expansive as the literature on crime, poverty, and public safety may be, many scholars disregard essential connections between federal and local crime control, the issues of crime and poverty, legislation and lived experiences, and intellectual movements and politics. In historian Elizabeth Hinton's book *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America*, Hinton takes a wide-reaching approach to encapsulate the major trends of American social policy and crime control in the late twentieth century. She links the social programs of the War on Poverty to the later policies of the Wars on Crime and Drugs, arguing that "it is one of the essential ironies of American history that [the War on Crime's] punitive campaign began during an era of liberal reform and at the height of the civil rights revolution."[6] Hinton attributes the increasingly draconian public safety and policing practices of the late twentieth century to the expansion of federal powers in the 1960s. These developments, Hinton asserts, sparked a process of mass incarceration that has had an intentionally disproportionate effect on people of color in the United States.

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[6] Elizabeth Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 1.

In Hinton's more recent book, *America on Fire: The Untold History of Police Violence and Black Rebellion since the 1960s*, she shifts her focus to policing. *America on Fire* explores police brutality and civilian rebellion, a critical junction in the story of crime and public safety, and it argues that 'law and order' rhetoric and 'tough on crime' policies grew as a response to unrest related to the Civil Rights Movement. Together, Hinton's works provide an exceptionally well-researched history of mass incarceration and policing in the mid- to late-twentieth century United States[7] and effectively connect major intellectual movements with policy and legislation with lived experiences. Although influential and robust, her books lack substantial analysis on the distinct relationship between crime and poverty and focus solely on national history. Hinton writes about crime primarily in consideration with race, and while race has a distinct, indispensable role in the story of crime and poverty, there also exists a critical relationship–both real and imagined–between crime and poverty that has its own distinguishing qualities. [8] This relationship is especially evident when assessing crime control in low-income urban communities such as public housing in Chicago. Additionally, Hinton fails to adequately connect the broad policy agendas of the wars on poverty, crime, and drugs to local communities, something which other scholars like Andrew J. Diamond and Simon Balto do exceptionally well.

While Hinton writes about the United States as a whole, Diamond concentrates his research on the city of Chicago.[9] Diamond's book *Chicago on the Make: Power and Inequality in a Modern City* chronicles the social, political, and cultural history out of which contemporary

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[7] Many others such as Heather Ann Thompson, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, James Forman Jr., Michael Javen Fortner, Julilly Kohler-Hausmann, Bruce Western, and Michelle Alexander had made important contributions to contemporary scholarship on mass incarceration.

[8] Khalil Gibran Muhammad's *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019) is another important work that highlights mass incarceration and racialized policing in America.

[9] Another important scholar that wrote about Chicago was Arnold R. Hirsch, whose book *Making the Second Ghetto: Race & Housing in Chicago, 1940*-1966 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983) reveals how Chicago codified and entrenched racial segregation as black Americans moved into the city.

Chicago was shaped. He crafts *Chicago on the Make* as a story of ordinary Chicago residents while efficiently weaving in the broader institutional dimensions of politics, governance, and demographic change. Interestingly, Diamond finds that "nothing has seemed more natural and inevitable in Chicago over the past several decades than authoritarian mayors and racial segregation."[10] Furthermore, he connects Chicago crime control policy with national trends and argues that Chicago was a trendsetter with 'law and order' appeals and 'tough on crime' practices well before they had reached national politics. Simon Balto extends Diamond's arguments to the realm of policing in Chicago in his *Occupied Territory: Policing Black Chicago from Red Summer to Black Power*. He highlights the over-patrolling and under-protection of black communities in Chicago, and he contends that the federal wars on crime and drugs cannot be understood without considering local-level policing. While Diamond and Balto articulate the history of Chicago as it is relevant to national politics, they do not offer extensive research on Chicago's public housing, some of the communities most affected by federal and local policies throughout the late twentieth century.

Audrey Petty and Susan J. Popkin build on the public housing literature with primary accounts of how legislation–both federal and local–impacted life as a CHA resident. Petty's *High Rise Stories: Voices from Chicago Public Housing* shares testimony from residents hailing from various public housing developments and highlights both the struggles and the triumphs of living in CHA housing in the late twentieth century. From interviews with residents young and old, she unveils commonalities and differences in the Chicago public housing experience. Susan J. Popkin's *The Hidden War: Crime and the Tragedy of Public Housing in Chicago* details the history of Chicago's public housing as it is relevant to crime control policies and resident

[10] Andrew J. Diamond, *Chicago on the Make: Power and Inequality in a Modern City* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017), 6.

interaction with public safety. She suggests that while Chicago's public safety initiatives may not have been punitive by name, they were in practice. Diamond, Balto, Petty, and Popkin expertly explore the social histories of Chicago in the twentieth century, but they do not identify the intellectual movements that caused rifts in national politics. Political rhetoric and crime control policy in the late twentieth century depended on a growing body of criminological research, and various twentieth-century scholars had tremendous influence on policy, legislation, and public safety practices across the United States.

Each of these scholars has offered significant contributions to the literature on crime, poverty, and public safety in America and in Chicago, but only by uncovering the links between federal and local crime control policy, unique intersections between crime and poverty, the influence of legislation on lived experiences, and connections between intellectual movements and politics can we discover new, deeper dimensions to crime, poverty, and public safety in Chicago's public housing in the late twentieth century.

Chapter 1: The Theory and Policy of American Crime Control

Dantrell Davis's tragic death inspired the first ever truce among gangs in Cabrini-Green and revitalized national awareness of the horrors taking place in Chicago's slum-like public housing neighborhoods. Violence and crime in low-income urban neighborhoods were already highly salient political issues since the 1960s, but governmental solutions had been quite obviously ineffective. To understand how the situation in Cabrini-Green went so awry and why federal and local law enforcement had failed so miserably, it is pertinent to analyze the theories that informed American crime control policies.

In this chapter, I will outline the prominent crime control debates in the United States from the 1960s to the 1990s, and I will assess their impact on major federal legislation, policy, and practices that were put forth to solve the issue of crime. The theories that influenced crime policy can be categorized into two distinct groups that were distinguished by understandings of crime, poverty, and public safety. The first group was the '*sociological reformers*,' who believed that crime was to be reduced through investment in programs that would alleviate social ills such as unemployment, poor education, and poverty, which were understood to be the root causes of crime. Their efforts focused on prevention and rehabilitation, and they held the most influence in national politics and policy in the 1960s and early 1970s until the second group, the '*tough on crime consensus,*' emerged and advocated for more severe punishments for crime and increased power of law enforcement. This group ignored any root causes and directed their attention towards retribution, deterrence, and incapacitation. After this shift, being 'tough' on crime was the prevailing ideology in American politics and crime control. Due to the nature of each of these groups and their understanding of crime, its causes, and its solutions, the perceived relationship

between crime and poverty was an essential driving factor in the policy and rhetoric of both the sociological reformers and the tough on crime consensus. Democrats and Republicans alike embraced both of these theories to support legislation and other agendas in every stage of the late twentieth century.

This analysis will explore the tension between these two intellectual camps, explain how these theories were realized in policy, and bring to light how they connected crime and poverty. This chapter will enable us to examine more critically the underlying theory and policy of crime control in late twentieth century Chicago through local intersections of crime, poverty, and public safety in Chicago's public housing, which will be the focus of later chapters.

Crime Trends in the Twentieth Century

Before diving into theories of crime control, it is important to briefly contextualize them with crime trends in the twentieth century.[11] These rates were rather steady until a jump during the Prohibition Era in the 1920s but quelled in the following decades until the 1960s, at which point crime rates suddenly spiked and remained on the rise. Between 1960 and 1970, violent crime increased 126%,[12] and between the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1990s, the overall rate of violent crime more than doubled before peaking in 1991.[13] That year, homicide

[11] Crime statistics in the twentieth century can be unreliable, both locally and nationally. Most crime data is sourced from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Report, which began in 1930. It has been criticized since its origin for containing inaccurate crime measurements. Oftentimes, some scholars argue, increases in crime rates were not due to more crimes being committed but rather improvements in crime reporting technology and procedures. Such inconsistencies between crime and crime rates led to false perceptions of violence among Americans and misled policymakers. Elizabeth Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America*, 6-7; Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America*.

[12] Marta Nelson, Samuel Feineh, and Maris Mapolski, "A New Paradigm for Sentencing in the United States," *Vera Institute of Justice*, February, 2023, https://www.vera.org/publications/a-new-paradigm-for-sentencing-in-the-united-states, 18.

[13] Rashawn Ray and William A. Galston, "Did the 1994 Crime Bill Cause Mass Incarceration?," *Brookings Institution*, August 28, 2020, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/did-the-1994-crime-bill-cause-mass-incarceration/.

reached an average of 9.8 deaths per 100,000, although this number in some cities was much higher.[14] In the late 1960s, crime became a focal point of national politics, largely in reaction to widespread outbursts of violence that erupted as a result of the Civil Rights Movement and the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968. Every major urban center in the country endured rebellions and riots during this period, bringing the issue of crime to the forefront of the American psyche.[15] By the mid-1990s, although crime rates began declining, a large portion of the population still believed otherwise.[16] This consistent increase in crime in the late twentieth century begs us to question the viability and intent of crime control policies and practices across the country. To begin digging at this problem, we must first understand the various theories on crime control that undergirded American crime policies and politics.

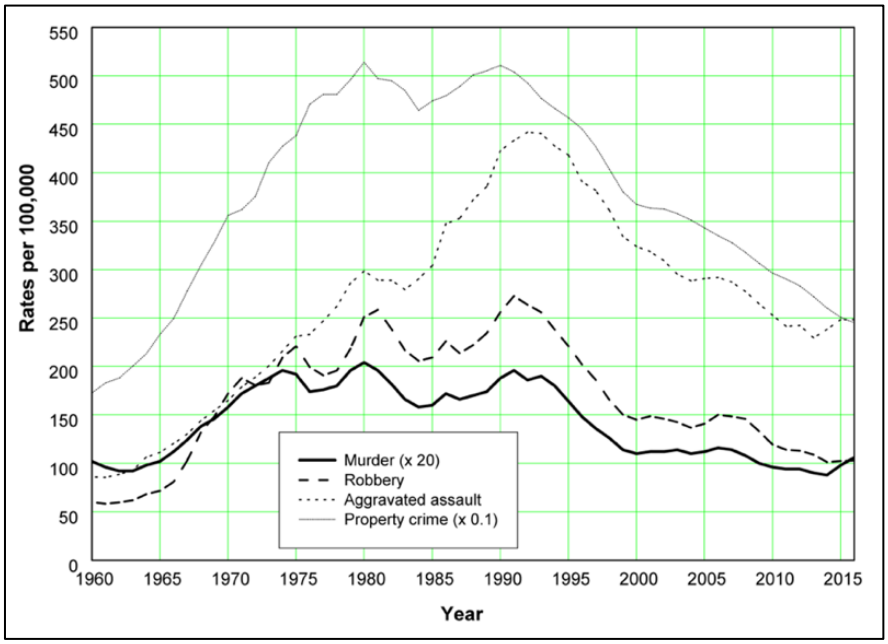

Figure 3: Violent crime (murder, robbery, aggravated assault) and property crime rates in the United States from 1960 to 2015.

[14] Nelson, Feineh, Mapolski, "A New Paradigm for Sentencing in the United States," 19.
[15] Elizabeth Hinton, *America on Fire: The Untold History of Police Violence and Black Rebellion since the 1960s* (New York: Liverwright Publishing Corporation, 2021), 2.
[16] Lauren-Brooke Eisen, "America's Faulty Perception of Crime Rates," *Brennan Center for Justice*, March 16, 2015, https://perma.cc/5T2Z-N8UM.

Intellectual Explanations and Political Responses to Crime and Crime Control

From the early 1960s until the end of the century, intellectual explanations for crime and national crime policy followed a near-chronological trajectory and complemented one another quite well. Confronted with climbing crime rates and civil unrest, criminology emerged in the mid-twentieth century as a powerful field that sought to improve understandings of crime, its causes, and its solutions in academic and political circles. Historians, sociologists, political scientists, and many others flocked towards this discipline to contribute to its novel goals, and government officials depended on it to better inform crime control policies and practices in criminal justice systems and law enforcement agencies. And in the midst of heightening racial tensions and new fears about drugs, a sense of urgency for reinforming the government's role in public safety captivated the American public. The intellectual support for the sociological reformers and the tough on crime consensus was pivotal to crime control policies of the late twentieth century.

The Sociological Reform Era: The 1960s

The sociological reformers were the dominant voices in academia and politics in the 1960s. They advocated, in true Great Society fashion, for investment in programs to alleviate other social ills such as poverty as a mode of preventing crime and programs designed to rehabilitate criminal offenders. These suggestions, while chasing the roots of crime and attempting to improve the livelihoods of citizens, discretely invented a narrative attributing crime to poverty and assumed that those facing economic deprivation were more likely to engage in criminal behavior. Such an understanding of crime and its relationship to poverty created a pathology of criminality for poor individuals and families that took hold in the minds of

politicians and dictated how law enforcement would interact with low-income communities. Two major works in criminology propelled this platform with significant influence on crime control policy and the public's understanding of crime and poverty. Edwin H. Sutherland and Donald R. Cressey published in 1955 a canonical text, *Principles of Criminology* (6th Edition released in 1960), and Richard A. Cloward and Lloyd E. Ohlin built on the field of research with their 1960 book *Delinquency and Opportunity: A Theory of Delinquent Gangs*.

Fundamental to sociological reform, Sutherland and Cressey argued that crime had social rather than individual causes. Following this logic, the optimal method of reducing crime was to target negative social conditions that, if improved, would eliminate the root causes of criminal behavior. Their studies found that groups with higher crime rates were associated with the particular conditions of "poverty, bad housing, slum-residence, lack of recreational facilities, inadequate and demoralized families, feeble-mindedness, emotional instability, and other traits and conditions."[17] While they ensured that none of these factors were singlehandedly responsible for crime, as it still occurred in the absence of these conditions, this analysis of its causes encouraged governmental action on these social ills with the intent to reduce crime through prevention.[18] Yet, their theories promoted anti-poverty programs that linked those in poverty to crime and conflated the two issues as stemming from similar pathological causes.

Similarly, Cloward and Ohlin attributed crime to a gap between aspirations and opportunity. They argued that criminal behavior thrived in communities in which young people–men, mainly–were unable to achieve their goals through socially acceptable means. Their hypothesis was part of "strain theory," in which 'strained' or disadvantageous conditions erected

[17] Edwin H. Sutherland and Donald R. Cressey, *Principles of Criminology*, 6th ed. (Chicago: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1960), 74-75.
[18] Ibid., 30.

blockades to opportunities available elsewhere and incentivized criminal behavior.[19] Its application resembled a process by which "youthful delinquents" were integrated with "adult criminality" as a "means of achieving success-goals" in the face of institutional and structural barriers.[20] Notably, Cloward and Ohlin assigned criminal behavior to the lower class, as "the pressure to engage in deviant behavior will be greatest in the lower levels of society," due to the fact that they lack sufficient access to employment and education.[21] Like Sutherland and Cressey, they recommended social programs to relieve adversarial social conditions in low-income communities, thereby alleviating the pressure to commit crime.

The work of these sociological reformers had a direct impact on federal policy. Cressey served on the Organized Crime Task Force of the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice under President Johnson,[22] and Cloward co-founded in 1966 the National Welfare Rights Organization, which advocated to federalize the popular Aid to Families with Dependent Children welfare program.[23] Ohlin served on the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare under President Kennedy; the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice under President Johnson; and the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice under President Carter.[24] Cloward and Ohlin together organized the Mobilization for Youth, an anti-poverty and anti-crime program during the 1960s

[19] "Strain Theory" comes from the work of Robert K. Merton, who developed the sociological and criminological concept in 1938 and who argues that society pressures individuals to achieve certain socially acceptable goals even though the individuals lack the means to do so. Robert K. Merton, "Social Structure and Anomie," *American Sociological Review* 3, no. 5 (1938): 672–82. https://doi.org/10.2307/2084686.
[20] Richard A. Cloward and Lloyd E. Ohlin, *Delinquency and Opportunity: A Theory of Delinquent Gangs* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1960), 22.
[21] Ibid., 86.
[22] "Prof. Donald R. Cressey, 68, Expert on Sociology of Crime," *New York Times*, July 28, 1987, https://www.nytimes.com/1987/07/28/obituaries/prof-donald-r-cressey-68-expert-on-sociology-of-crime.html.
[23] "Richard A. Cloward," The New Press, accessed April 1, 2024, https://thenewpress.com/authors/richard-cloward.
[24] Margalit Fox, "Lloyd E. Ohlin, Expert on Crime and Punishment, Is Dead at 90," *New York Times*, January 3, 2009, https://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/04/us/04ohlin.html.

that became a model for many of President Johnson's War on Poverty programs.[25] Moreover, sociological reform was well-received by the American public, which was enveloped by the sentiment of the New Frontier, the Great Society, the Civil Rights Movement, and the broader desire to uplift underprivileged communities through governmental action. Correspondingly, the dominant themes in crime control policy in the 1960s and early 1970s were efforts to prevent crime through social programs and rehabilitate offenders.

Between 1961 and 1969, Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson pursued ambitious progressive policies. With the Civil Rights Act, Voting Rights Act, Economic Opportunity Act, and other groundbreaking legislation, the two presidents attacked with force the elusive problems of racism, poverty, education, housing, and employment in America. Such an agenda fostered a political environment hospitable to broad, wide-reaching social programs led by an expanding federal government. Facing rising crime rates and urban protests, and influenced by the research of the intellectual sociological reformers, these two men began the 'War on Crime,' a rhetorically and legitimately powerful response to the perceived national crisis of crime. Yet, a residual disdain for presumably criminal low-income urban communities budded in the public consciousness to be expressed in the coming years.

The early initiatives of the War on Crime promoted preventative and rehabilitative locally-oriented law enforcement solutions to reduce crime. In 1961, Kennedy launched the offensive with a "total attack" against delinquency in the United States to be supported by the new Committee of Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime.[26] His anti-delinquency programs sought to provide low-income Americans with counseling, job training, remedial education, and

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[25] Stephanie Flanders, "Richard Cloward, Welfare Rights Leader, Dies at 74," *New York Times*, August 23, 2001, https://www.nytimes.com/2001/08/23/nyregion/richard-cloward-welfare-rights-leader-dies-at-74.html.
[26] "A Total Attack on 'J.D.,'" *New York Times*, May 15, 1961, https://www.nytimes.com/1961/05/15/archives/a-total-attack-on-jd.html.

other social welfare programs to prevent youth crime.[27] A few years later, Johnson took crime control to unprecedented heights with the Law Enforcement Assistance Act of 1965. He intended to strengthen law enforcement across the country and eliminate the social ills related to crime, asserting in 1966 that "the only genuine, long-range solution for what has happened lies in an attack–mounted at every level–upon the conditions that breed despair and violence."[28] The act hoped to improve the "the capabilities, techniques, and practices of State and local agencies engaged in law enforcement, the administration of the criminal laws, the correction of offenders [and] the prevention or control of crime."[29] Johnson progressed the War on Crime further with the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, which expanded the scope and power of state law enforcement agencies via upscaled funding for locally-oriented programs. $400 million (~$3.6 billion today) was allocated to the newly established Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) to "increase the effectiveness, fairness, and coordination of law enforcement and criminal justice systems at all levels of government."[30] The LEAA provided large block grants to states for independent allocation and provided funding for criminal justice research. At the same time, Johnson's bills established a permanent position for the federal government in policing, criminal justice, and incarceration for decades to come.

When President Richard Nixon assumed the presidency in 1969, he adopted the programs of the Great Society, the policies of the sociological reformers, and an increasing fear of drugs in America. In the 1960s, the American public believed that over half of crimes were drug-related, but by the 1970s, this percentage had shot up to 90%.[31] Nixon's solution was the Comprehensive

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[27] Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America*, 3.
[28] Hinton, *America on Fire: The Untold History of Police Violence and Black Rebellion since the 1960s*, 8.
[29] Law Enforcement Assistance Act of 1965, Pub. L. 89-197, 79 Stat (1965).
[30] United States General Accounting Office, "Overview of Activities Funded by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration," November 28, 1977, https://www.gao.gov/assets/ggd-78-21.pdf.
[31] James Inciardi, *The War on Drugs IV: The Continuing Saga of the Mysteries and Miseries of Intoxication, Addiction, Crime, and Public Policy*, ed. 4 (Delaware: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon, 2008), 286.

Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of 1970. The bill implemented new schedules and procedures for the manufacture and sale of controlled substances to prevent drug abuse, and it repealed mandatory minimum sentences for first time possession charges as created by the Boggs Act of 1951 and the Narcotics Control Act of 1956.[32] Additionally, it authorized nearly $2 million for educational, treatment, and rehabilitation programs under the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.[33] These decisions embodied the spirit of sociological reformers, but ultimately, these early preventative and rehabilitative efforts failed to reduce crime or drug abuse rates, and the relationship between crime and poverty became more controversial and contested.

There was also a more punitive side to the legislation of the 1960s and early 1970s. While Johnson's policies favored social programs to curb crime rates, his rhetoric suggested a heavy-handed use of law enforcement–something for which his two pieces of legislation provided a sturdy platform. In a conversation with Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley in 1968, Johnson admitted in reference to recent riots that "I don't know how to handle these things…But I do know one thing: we've got to handle them with muscle and toughness."[34] Many of the funds distributed by the LEAA had gone to riot-control arsenal, military-grade equipment, and other discretionary purchases that enabled police violence and brutality in urban communities. By 1970, the Safe Streets Act had allocated $40 million (~$361 million today) towards military weaponry in local law enforcement agencies alone,[35] and by 1973, the LEAA had become the fastest-growing federal agency in the 1970s as the budget for the War on Crime ballooned from

[32] Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of 1970, Pub. L. 91-513, 84 Stat. 1236 (1970).
[33] "Nixon Signs Drug Abuse Control Act," *New York Times*, October 28, 1970, https://www.nytimes.com/1970/10/28/archives/nixon-signs-drug-abuse-control-bill.html.
[34] Hinton, *America on Fire: The Untold History of Police Violence and Black Rebellion since the 1960s*, 22.
[35] Hinton, *America on Fire: The Untold History of Police Violence and Black Rebellion since the 1960s*, 12.

$10 million in 1965 to nearly $850 million in 1973.[36] Moreover, in June 1971, Nixon famously declared the 'War on Drugs' during a press conference in which he named drug abuse "public enemy number one."[37] Indeed, his 1970 Drug Abuse bill increased penalties for drug trafficking to five years to life and provided federal narcotics agents "no-knock" powers to enter homes without warrants to prevent the destruction of potential evidence.[38] This rhetoric, the punitive measures in legislation, and the expansion of law enforcement in America signaled a shift in the federal approach to drug and crime policy that would become more apparent during Nixon's remaining years in office.

The sociological reformers' preemptive tactics to reduce crime by prevention and rehabilitation normalized the presence of well-equipped law enforcement authorities in low-income communities. At its very core, prevention of crime was necessarily criminalizing by empowering law enforcement officers to search for crime, which swept swaths of otherwise peaceful and innocent individuals into the criminal justice system. This reality validated the pathology of criminality among poor communities, as such an idea was in fact becoming substantiated on paper. With more police in low-income neighborhoods, it was inevitable that more poor individuals would be arrested. And perhaps most importantly, the declaration of the war on drugs represented an inflection point in federal policy as Nixon expanded the already-growing governmental powers in the realm of crime control and criminal justice, divested from progressive social programs, and capitalized on existing links between crime and poverty that would direct 'tough on crime' theory and policy in the next three decades.

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[36] The initial $10 million was allocated by Congress to the War on Crime. After the establishment of the LEAA in 1968, funding went towards the agency. Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America*, 2.

[37] Richard Nixon Foundation, "President Nixon Declares Drug Abuse 'Public Enemy Number One,'" YouTube, April 29, 2016, video, 0:28 to 0:36, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y8TGLLQlD9M.

[38] Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of 1970, Pub. L. 91-513, 84 Stat. 1236 (1970).

The Early Tough on Crime Era: The 1970s and 1980s

In the mid-1970s and 1980s, the tough on crime movement ascended as a dominant voice in American crime control policy. Sensationalized reporting on unrelenting crime and drug abuse rates spread fear amongst the public, and conservative backlash to progressive social policies of the past decade suggested the failure of the sociological reformers. Researchers and policymakers grew reluctant to consider crime a social problem and viewed it as a problem of individual behavior, moved away from efforts to discover the causes of crime, and shunned crime control policies grounded in prevention and rehabilitation.[39] Unlike the sociological reformers, the scholars that encouraged the tough on crime consensus believed that crime control was most effective when it punished criminals through retribution, stopped crime through deterrence, and ensured public safety by incapacitating repeat offenders. All three primary aims– retribution, deterrence, and incapacitation–relied on law enforcement and incarceration, were more punitive, and damaged low-income neighborhoods like those found in public housing.

Three intellectuals made major strides in crime control theory to lay the foundations of tough on crime policies in the late twentieth century. Andrew von Hirsch in his 1976 *Doing Justice: The Choice of Punishments* argued in favor of retribution in the form of 'just deserts theory,' which insisted that punishment was to be proportional to the seriousness of a crime committed. Understanding the relationship between crime and crime control as a utilitarian one, von Hirsch suggested that law enforcement agencies and the criminal justice system deal

[39] The 1970s also saw a shift in mental health policy by moving towards deinstitutionalization and a reduction in the reliance on psychiatric hospitals without sufficient mental health services for local governments and communities, which contributed to an increase of individuals with mental health issues entering the criminal justice system. Today, nearly half the people in American jails and more than one-third of those in prisons have been diagnosed with a mental illness, compared to about one-fifth in the general population. Alisa Roth, "The Truth about Deinstitutionalization," *The Atlantic*, May 25, 2021, https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2021/05/truth-about-deinstitutionalization/618986/.

specifically with the symptoms of criminal behavior, not the root of the behavior itself.[40] He believed that there was little justification for the government to pursue any goal other than providing an offender retribution for which they deserve. In this way, 'just deserts' provided justification for mandatory minimum sentences and zero tolerance protocols.

Gary Becker's 1968 work "Crime and Punishment: An Economic Approach" advanced tough on crime theories with the concept of deterrence. His premises balanced on the assumption that humans are, generally, rational beings that consider the costs and benefits of committing a crime as well as the likelihood that they would be apprehended and punished. The logic follows, in an economic sense, that if the 'cost' of committing a crime increased, then there would be fewer 'consumers,' or criminals.[41] Those who can expect certainty of a severe sentence would be deterred from crime. As with retribution, deterrence suggested maximum punishments for crimes through monetary fines or incarceration, a revocation of probation and parole, and enhancements of punishment based on prior criminal records.

James Q. Wilson, the third tough on crime intellectual, revolutionized the development of crime control policy and altered the trajectory of the tough on crime movement. His 1975 magnum opus *Thinking About Crime* reshaped understandings of crime and its solutions. He criticized the lack of consensus among sociological reformers who did not have specific, measurable policy recommendations that could reduce crime nor a general agreement on which social problems were to be alleviated, by what means, and to what extent. Wilson's theory

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[40] Andrew von Hirsch, *Doing Justice: The Choice of Punishments* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976); Andrew von Hirsch, "The 'Desert' Model for Sentencing: Its Influence, Prospects, and Alternatives," *Social Research* 74, no. 2 (2007): 413–34. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40971938.

[41] Gary S. Becker, "Crime and Punishment: An Economic Approach.," *Journal of Political Economy* 76, no. 2 (1968): 169-217, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1830482.

deviated from past scholarship in that it did not focus exclusively on crime rates, but rather public order and the fear of crime, which, according to him, was a greater predictor of crime.

Wilson's thesis has become known as 'broken windows theory.'[42] Broken windows theory holds that unchecked neighborhood disorder will lead to a fear of increasing crime in the community, whether substantiated or not, which in turn will cause individuals to withdraw from public spaces and streets. With fewer people on the streets, there is less social control, and as a result, serious crime will be able to flourish. This theory has been translated into 'broken windows policing,' which seeks to reduce crime via the aggressive policing of misdemeanors and social disorder. Wilson envisioned the function of the police as one of "order-maintenance," rather than law enforcement, and he endorsed increasing foot patrols as the mode of achieving it.[43] Regarding punishment for offenders, he believed that the only way to deal with crime was direct incapacitation to keep potential repeat offenders off the street. This simple, symptom-based approach was welcomed in political and public spheres, and his influence in federal policy cannot be understated, as he served on the White House Task Force on Crime in 1966, the National Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse Prevention from 1972 to 1973, the Attorney General's Task Force on Violent Crime in 1981, the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board from 1985 to 1990, and the Police Foundation from 1971 to 1993.[44]

The tough on crime consensus relied on intellectual justification for the policies of retribution, deterrence, and incapacitation. In practice, these goals appeared primarily as

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[42] Wilson's 'broken windows' theory was largely inspired by the work of Edward Banfield, an early critic of the Great Society and social welfare, who authored *The Moral Basis of A Backward Society* (1958) and *The Unheavenly City* (1970), two foundational works in the tough on crime catalog. Edward Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1958); Edward Banfield, *The Unheavenly City: The Nature and Future of Our Urban Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1970).
[43] James Q. Wilson, *Thinking About Crime*, rev. ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 69-71.
[44] "James Q. Wilson," Faculty Directory, Pepperdine School of Public Policy, accessed April 1, 2024, https://publicpolicy.pepperdine.edu/academics/faculty/james-wilson/.

mandatory minimum sentences, 'truth in sentencing,' 'zero tolerance' policies, new and longer sentencing protocols with 'three strikes' and 'habitual offender' enhancements, and 'broken windows' policing.[45] These policies were harsher than anything before, broadening the surveillance of high-crime and low-income neighborhoods, expanding the reach of law enforcement, and increasing the power of the criminal justice system in local and state governments. Legislative responses to crime in this era altered the description of prohibited behaviors, which in essence redefined 'crime.'[46] Local governments criminalized more behavior and worsened the severity of penalties, which granted federal and state policymakers an increasingly active role in law enforcement and criminal justice systems. During these two decades, politically conservative public figures and Republicans were the main leaders of the tough on crime consensus. But, both sides of the aisle supported tougher crime control policy, as many Democrats in Congress sponsored and authored some of the most punitive reforms.

President Richard Nixon led the shift away from the progressive social policies of Johnson's Great Society and towards an embrace of the tough on crime movement. Nixon's rhetoric in his 1968 presidential campaign was explicit that greater investments in welfare and social programs did not reduce crime. He fearmongered, fed into the narrative that 'law and order' in urban America was crumbling, and campaigned on the slogan "Vote Like Your Whole World Depended on It."[47] His advertisements displayed images of violence on domestic soil,

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[45] These policies worked in tandem with one another. For instance, mandatory minimums are a concept by which convictions for various select crimes are given a strict sentence, oftentimes much higher than precedent, and zero tolerance policies are rules that enforce punishments for crimes regardless of circumstance. Mandatory minimums increased the discretion of prosecutors in how they charged a defendant, and zero tolerance policies reduced the discretion of judges by prohibiting consideration of subjective circumstances, individual culpability, or history.

[46] Herbert Jacob and Robert L. Lineberry, "Governmental Responses to Crime: Executive Summary," *U.S Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice*, June 1982, https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/81621NCJRS.pdf, 5-6.

[47] "1968: Nixon," The Living Room Candidate: Presidential Campaign Commercials 1952-2020, video, accessed April 1, 2024, http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1968.

played eerie music, and criticized the Democrats for allowing lawlessness to take over American cities.[48] In July 1968, Nixon told the Republican National Convention Committee on Resolutions in a statement titled "The Crusade Against Crime" that

> The American people are bolting their doors and arming themselves because they are rapidly losing confidence in the capacity and determination of government to defend them and their families and their property from crime and criminals… [Americans] want government that will set itself up as an irreconcilable enemy of crime, a government that will wield its full powers to guarantee that for the criminals that torment the innocent, society's retribution will be ample and swift and sure…Let us now lay to rest the equally deleterious doctrine that those who speak for popular or favored "causes" are entitled to favored considerations before the bar of justice.[49]

By sowing such a fear of crime among the American people and condemning allegedly misdirected crime control policies of the 1960s, Nixon effectively turned his voters against the sociological reformers. His campaigning solidified an early tough on crime consensus, and he led the nation towards a crime control agenda founded on retribution, deterrence, and incapacitation. During Nixon's presidency, the federal government enabled extensive surveillance by FBI agents and local police, drug raids by the Office of Drug Abuse and Prevention, and amendments to criminal codes.[50] When he left office, draconian sentencing reforms, aggressive police forces, and exorbitant prison construction had become regular.

By the end of the 1970s, the work of tough on crime thinkers had lodged itself in the minds of politicians, policymakers, and the public. Many became convinced that, in Wilson's

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[48] Ibid.
[49] Richard Nixon, "Statement Submitted to Republican National Convention Committee on Resolutions: 'The Crusade Against Crime,'" Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/statement-submitted-republican-national-convention-committee-resolutions-the-crusade.
[50] Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America*, 16-17

words, "nothing works" except incapacitation and incarceration.[51] Importantly, the tough on crime crowd did not deny that social factors like poverty were related to crime. Yet, they deliberately chose not to fund social programs to correct society's ills and instead focused on individual and group pathologies, punitive criminal justice, and aggressive law enforcement to change behavior. For example, in a 1978 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) report titled "Crime in Public Housing," the department admitted that various social factors had legitimate connections to crime.[52] Nevertheless, HUD argued that improving these circumstances would not reduce crime rates.[53] As a result of such understandings, the tough on crime consensus escalated their goals of retribution, deterrence, and incapacitation while portraying those in less socially desirable communities as more likely to engage in criminal behavior. By the turn of the decade, the wars on crime and drugs had established their battlefronts in low-income neighborhoods and deployed law enforcement to fight on their behalf.

Ronald Reagan, elected president in 1981 and holding the post until 1989, held a three-front crusade against crime, drugs, and welfare simultaneously. The eight-year dominance of tough on crime policies during Reagan's presidency permanently changed the principles and functions of criminal justice and law enforcement in America. Assuming the War on Crime from his predecessors, Reagan's first strike against rising crime rates was executed through the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984, a bill that redesigned criminal punishment with much more punitive intentions. The law established a federal sentencing commission and

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[51] James Q. Wilson, "'What Works?' Revisited: New Findings on Criminal Rehabilitation," *The Public Interest* 61 (Fall 1980): 3, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
[52] These factors included a lack of social organization, cohesion, and informal social control; social services and crisis intervention programs; and employment opportunities for residents, to name a few. W. Victor Rouse and Herb Rubenstein, "Crime in Public Housing: A Review of Major Issues and Selected Crime Reduction Strategies," *American Institutes for Research*, December 1978, 24-25, https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/66418NCJRS.pdf.
[53] Ibid., 55.

eliminated parole for federal prisons, among other provisions.[54] This was one of the first steps in a cascade of tough on crime legislation.

In the 1980s, the War on Drugs reached its apex, and Reagan intensified drug-related criminal penalties to deter potential drug users or dealers, incapacitate offenders, and appease an ominous fear of drugs.[55] The recreational use of drugs such as marijuana and heroin had risen in the 1970s, but in the 1980s, cocaine and crack cocaine swept into major urban centers across the country. Its popularity captivated Americans and paralyzed many with fears of drug-related violent crime in their cities. Following the tragic cocaine overdose and death of NBA first-round draft pick Len Bias in June 1986, politicians and policymakers responded with force. In October of that year, the Reagan administration passed the Anti-Drug Abuse Act, which reintroduced mandatory minimum sentencing for a variety of drug offenses, including marijuana. In the spirit of punishing drug users and dealers, it prescribed massive sentencing disparities between crack and powder cocaine offenses.[56] After this bill, a person convicted for possession of only five grams of crack cocaine received a five-year minimum sentence, but one needed to possess 500 grams of powder cocaine to receive the same sentence. Even though powder cocaine is more potent and there is no medical reason for a 100-to-1 sentencing disparity, crack was much cheaper and more prevalent in low-income minority communities, which entrenched a severe economic and racial injustice in the American penal system. As such, the Anti-Drug Abuse Act

[54] Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984, Pub. L. 98-473, 98 Stat. 1837 (1984).
[55] Some scholars contend that the War on Drugs began as early as the 1950s. For instance, Matthew Lassiter's 2023 book *The Suburban Crisis: White America and the War on Drugs* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2023) provides a novel, more comprehensive analysis of the War on Drugs.
[56] Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986, Pub. L. 99-570, 100 Stat. 3207 (1986).

of 1986 was a direct attack on low-income neighborhoods, incarcerating poor individuals for longer durations and for lesser crimes.[57]

During Reagan's administration, he overhauled the American welfare state and furthered the pathology of criminality among those receiving government benefits. Reagan pushed for the removal of half a million families from welfare rolls, one million Americans from food stamps, and 2.6 million previously eligible children from school lunch programs.[58] Believing that the welfare state harmed the poor by making them financially dependent on the government and reluctant to work, Reagan slashed funding for Aid to Families with Dependent Children and allowed states to require that welfare recipients be employed to receive benefits. He wielded virulent rhetoric against the poor on welfare, composing the idea of the "welfare queen" who abused the welfare system through fraud, deception, and manipulation.[59] This derogatory and stigmatizing label was predominantly used against single Black mothers who, so it went, purposely had multiple children to reap maximal rewards from the government. These rhetorical appeals and welfare cuts led to a worsening public perception of those in poverty, and it contributed to both the pathology of criminality among low-income communities and an actual criminalization of those in poverty.

In summary, the tough on crime crowd of the 1970s and 1980s turned away from seeking 'root causes' of crime and rejected prevention- and rehabilitation-based social programs. Its policies triggered disproportionate criminalization of those in poverty, and its upheaval of the welfare state contributed to the pathology of criminality in low-income communities. Tough on

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[57] Deborah J. Vagins and Jesselyn McCurdy, "Cracks in the System: Twenty Years of the Unjust Federal Crack Cocaine Law," *American Civil Liberties Union*, October 2006, https://www.aclu.org/documents/cracks-system-20-years-unjust-federal-crack-cocaine-law?redirect=cpredirect/27181.
[58] Hinton, *America on Fire: The Untold History of Police Violence and Black Rebellion since the 1960s*, 232.
[59] Gillian Brockwell, "She Was Stereotyped as 'The Welfare Queen.' The Truth Was More Disturbing, a New Book Says," *Washington Pos*t, May 21, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2019/05/21/she-was-stereotyped-welfare-queen-truth-was-more-disturbing-new-book-says/.

crime rhetoric in the 1980s portrayed those in poverty as inherently more prone to crime, violence, and drug abuse, which spurred reluctance on behalf of the public to support adequate welfare programs or appropriate crime control. Wielding the pervasive fear of crime in America and growing discontent for progressive social policy, Republicans in the federal government effectively led the tough on crime movement until the end of the 1980s. But in the next decade, Democrat President Bill Clinton endorsed the tough on crime policies and supported retributive and incapacitative legislation.

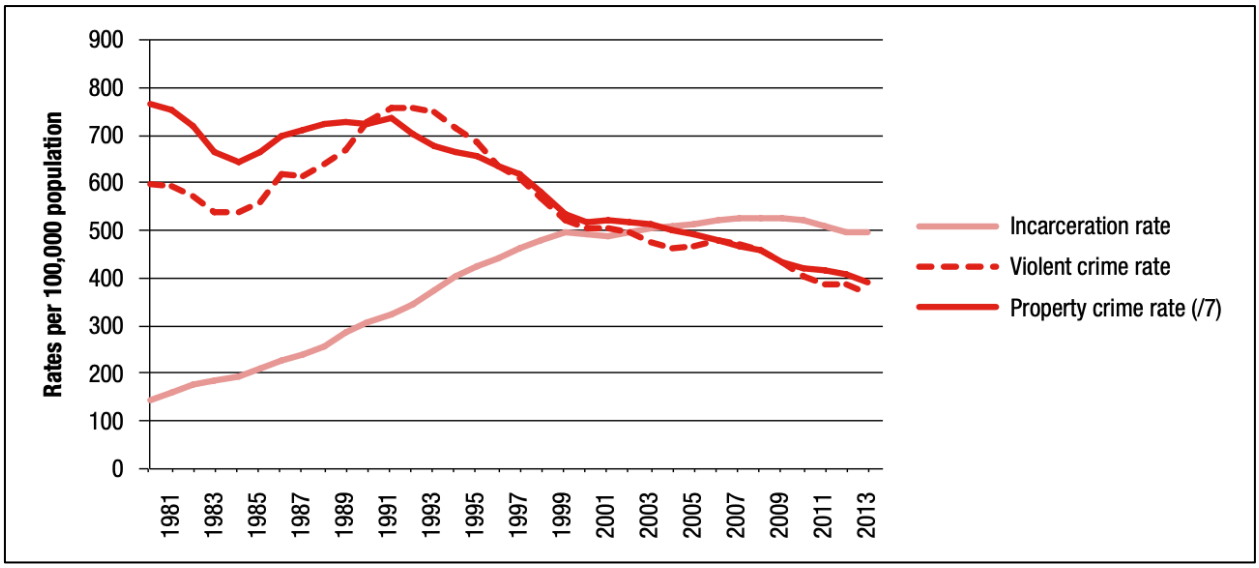

Figure 4: Incarceration and Crime Rates from 1981-2013.

Tough on Crime Becomes a Consensus: The 1990s

The 1990s were the pinnacle of tough crime control policy, but unlike the three prior decades, the tough on crime agenda had established itself as conventional political wisdom and was no longer a new idea among politicians. 'Tough on crime' overcame being just a movement–by this time, it had become an authoritative consensus across the American political landscape at the same time that liberal politicians denounced progressive social policy in

housing, welfare, and crime. According to criminologist Alfred Blumstein, policy formation in the 1990s seemed "to have little need to invoke any research findings to support a position based strictly on ideology of raw political appeal" despite the fact that "toughness in many aspects of addressing crime-control policy" was becoming more and more apparent as "not necessarily effective or efficient."[60] Nevertheless, President Clinton harnessed public fears of crime to bolster his tough on crime stance. In his 1994 State of the Union Address, he declared that "violent crime and the fear it provokes are crippling our society, limiting personal freedom, and fraying the ties that bind us."[61] Led by the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, the 1990s witnessed some of the most punitive legislation grounded in retribution, deterrence, and incapacitation under Clinton's watch.

The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, commonly known as the Crime Bill, was the culmination of the three decades prior that collectively amassed support for such a monumental piece of tough on crime legislation.[62] "The largest and most draconian crime bill in American history," it included a $10.8 billion program to hire one hundred thousand new police officers and $10 billion for prison construction.[63] It ushered in an array of punitive federal sentencing legislation and incentivized similar policies in the states with the billions of dollars to expand policing and the carceral state.[64] The Crime Bill created new death penalty offenses, limited the higher education of inmates, reinforced mandatory minimum sentences, and

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[60]Alfred Blumstein, "Interaction of Criminological Research and Public Policy," *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 12, no. 4 (December 1996): 358.
[61] Bill Clinton, "1994 State of the Union Address," *Washington Post*, January 25, 1994, https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/special/states/docs/sou94.htm.
[62] The bill received ample support from Americans. A 1994 Gallup Poll cited that the bill was supported by 58% of African Americans and 49% of white Americans. Interestingly, while Black Americans were often hurt most by punitive policies, in the context of the crack epidemic in urban Black neighborhoods, the Crime Bill was signed by two-thirds of the Congressional Black Caucus. Ray and Galston, "Did the 1994 Crime Bill Cause Mass Incarceration?"
[63] Hinton, *America on Fire: The Untold History of Police Violence and Black Rebellion since the 1960s*, 271.
[64] Nelson, Feineh, Mapolski, "A New Paradigm for Sentencing in the United States," 19.

introduced 'truth in sentencing' for the first time in American history.[65] Truth in sentencing was a policy that mandated completion of at least 85% of a convicted person's sentence, revoking parole eligibility and other possibilities for early release. The Crime Bill was responsible for soaring prison populations with those in poverty bearing the largest share of incarceration. Clinton's Crime Bill and support for the tough on crime consensus coincided with a significant drop in crime while simultaneously imprisoning more individuals at a faster rate than ever.[66] Low-income individuals who were swept into correctional supervision–whether it be through incarceration, parole, or probation–were harmed and disenfranchised at much higher rates and severities than those of the middle- and upper-classes.

Conclusion

During the 1990s, there was a significant decline in crime rates across the country. From 1990 to 1999, violent crime decreased 28% and property crime decreased 26%.[67] For the incumbent tough on crime crowd, these changes represented the success of their policies, particularly imprisonment, which increased 61% during the 1990s.[68] However, scholars and research organizations today have pointed out there were many more factors at play than just

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[65] Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, Pub. L. 103-322, 108 Stat. 1796 (1994).
[66] In 1994, the rate of reported violent crime was 713.6 per 100,000 individuals, but in 2000, the rate was 506.5 per 100,000. Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Reported Violent Crime Rate in the United States from 1990 to 2022 (per 100,000 of the population)," chart, October 16, 2023, Statista, accessed April 6, 2024, https://www.statista.com/statistics/191219/reported-violent-crime-rate-in-the-usa-since-1990/.; From 1991 to 1998, the combined local and federal prison population rose from 789,610 to 1,252,830, which was a 59% increase in only seven years, while the rate of incarceration rose from 313 per 100,000 to 461 per 100,000 for an increase of 47%. Jenni Gainsborough and Marc Mauer, "Diminishing Returns: Crime and Incarceration in the 1990s," *The Sentencing Project*, September, 2000, https://www.prisonpolicy.org/scans/sp/DimRet.pdf; Importantly, many scholars oppose any strong causal relationships between the increase in incarceration and the crime decline. Olivia Roeder, Lauren Eiesen-Brooke, and Julia Bowling, "What Caused the Crime Decline?," *Brennan Center for Justice*, February 12, 2015, https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/what-caused-crime-decline#:~:text=More%20important%20were%20various%20social,in%20cities%20that%20introduced%20it.
[67] Roeder, Eisen-Brooke, Bowling, "What Caused the Crime Decline?," 5.
[68] Ibid., 7.

tough on crime policies that contributed to the decline in crime. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, criminal justice policies, economic factors, and environmental/social factors all played major roles in reducing the crime rate. The factors that had the greatest impact on the crime decline were aggregate growths in income and decreases in alcohol consumption during the 1990s. Yet, each of these were estimated to have only been responsible for 5-10% of the decline. The only criminal justice policy with a significant impact was an increase in the number of police, which accounted for just 0-5%.[69] While some scholars have recently questioned any correlation between incarceration and crime rates, the causes of crime remain hotly debated.

More concerning than whether or not tough on crime policies caused the crime decline of the 1990s are the real effects of the policies on American citizens and communities. Scholars such as historian Elizabeth Hinton have pointed out that the expansion of the federal penal and carceral states beginning in the 1960s has contributed directly to the exponential growth of mass incarceration in America and a lasting legacy of punishment.[70] The prison population in America more than doubled every ten years from 1975 until 1995,[71] and it skyrocketed during the 1990s. In 1990, the population was 1.1 million, but by 2000, it was 2.3 million.[72] Prison populations have decreased in recent years, but crime control is still a demanding issue at the forefront of American political and social consciousness.

While the battle for dominance in federal policy and public debate continues between the sociological reformers and tough on crime consensus today, the prevailing theories and policies of American crime control and their relationship to poverty aid our understandings of major federal legislation. Moreover, fully grasping how crime theories and policies interacted with

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[69] Ibid., 9.
[70] Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America*.
[71] Wilson, *Thinking About Crime*, XVII.
[72] Hinton, *America on Fire: The Untold History of Police Violence and Black Rebellion since the 1960s*, 271.

poverty and low-income communities at the federal level assists us in understanding why politicians and policymakers rolled out such grand crime control policies as well as how a harmful stigma against those in poverty grew out of the theories of both the sociological reformers and tough on crime crowd. The shift from the sociological reformers to the tough on crime consensus has left a legacy that regarded policing, law enforcement, and criminal justice as the primary tools for addressing public health and safety. Punitive public safety measures became the sole mode of crime control, and prisons became the main correctional and rehabilitative form of community repair. By analyzing these developments through an intellectual and political lens, we can glean information about the interplay between research and policy, and we can better comprehend similar trends in local domains, such as the city of Chicago and in public housing communities.

In the next chapter I will analyze accounts of Chicago public housing residents regarding crime and poverty in their communities alongside a study of key policies, public discourse, and national-local linkages. In the third and final chapter, I will engage with on-the-ground public safety initiatives and policing practices in CHA public housing, assess their viability as effective crime control strategies, and explore resident perspectives on public safety in their communities.

Chapter 2: Public Housing in Chicago: The Intersection of Crime and Poverty

The 1960s to 1990s were tumultuous decades for American crime and welfare policy that coincided with peaking crime rates, accelerating mass incarceration, and evolving understandings of the relationship between crime and poverty. Chapter 1 articulated how the dominant criminological debates of the sociological reformers and the tough on crime consensus influenced federal legislation and policy, and it explored the government expanded the American carceral state and targeted low-income urban communities with crime control policies and practices. As illustrated by criminological research, federal rhetoric, and legislation, in the early 1970s, the overwhelming rise of the tough on crime consensus captured national politics for the remainder of the century as politicians embraced their increasing crime control capacities and denigrated the welfare state. Additionally, the chapter argued that both the sociological reformers and the tough on crime consensus conflated in one way or another the issues of crime and poverty, pathologized those in poor neighborhoods as criminal, and contributed to emerging cleavages in crime control policy.

The theory and policy of American crime control in the late twentieth century enable an exploration of the unique intersection of crime and poverty in Chicago's public housing. This chapter analyzes internal and external perspectives of crime and poverty in Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) developments alongside a study of key policies, public discourse, and national-local linkages. Built and managed by the CHA, public housing in Chicago became a point of national contention as it fell into despair and gained a reputation as the dwelling place of Chicago's crime-ridden, poverty-stricken underclass. Robert Taylor Homes, Cabrini-Green Homes, Ida B. Wells Homes, and other massive public housing complexes suffered from

neglected infrastructure, lousy management, densely concentrated poverty, and staggering rates of violent crime exacerbated by swaths of gangs and drug dealers that relentlessly harassed their neighborhoods. The problems in these communities set Chicago apart from other American cities during the late twentieth century, and they symbolized the failure of the CHA, exemplified broader national struggles with public housing, and galvanized stigmatizing perceptions of the residents. The CHA's eventual and inevitable fallout affected the lives of hundreds of thousands of people as the CHA complexes gained attention as the center of national crime and welfare policy debates and a testing ground for public safety programs and policing practices.

Poverty and Crime in Chicago Housing Authority Public Housing

The CHA was established in 1937 and grew to be the third largest housing agency in the United States, constructing over 40,000 housing units in over twenty development sites. The projects were built to house working-class families, senior citizens, and veterans during and after World War II, but the agency's goals, services, and patrons changed dramatically in the latter half of the century. Initial plans envisaged row houses and small multi-family buildings that intended to be conducive to safe, family-friendly communities. But, in the 1950s, Mayor Richard J. Daley and the CHA pushed for the inauspicious high-rise model of public housing for which the city became known.[73] These early housing developments were strictly segregated by race and class, and over time, the physical and social conditions grew notoriously dismal. By the 1990s, the state of Chicago public housing had attracted national scrutiny, and eventually, HUD overtook the CHA in 1995 to save the developments in disarray. Nearing the turn of the

[73] Audrey Petty, *High Rise Stories: Voices from Chicago Public Housing* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2021), 17.

millennium, the situation had not improved, the violent crime and concentrated poverty reached national headlines, and the projects were slated for redevelopment or destruction.[74]

Consistent from the 1960s through the 1990s, CHA housing was characterized by, and its residents suffered from, inadequate maintenance and management, changing economic composition, and gang- and drug-related crime that progressively worsened over theses few decades. In the following pages, I will describe the rise and fall of CHA public housing through policy decisions side-by-side the lived experiences of residents to shed light on the realities of crime and poverty in Chicago's public housing.

Inadequate Maintenance and Management

The deteriorating conditions of the CHA's buildings and the managerial incompetence of the housing authority began in the 1960s and became especially apparent in the 1980s and 1990s. From shoddy construction to unrepaired central systems such as plumbing, heating, and electricity, the housing developments were haphazardly built and maintained, and they created an unwelcoming environment for tenant families. In the late 1990s, over 20,000 units–nearly all of the high-rise buildings–failed federally mandated viability tests for satisfactory living conditions.[75] Moreover, the CHA was trapped in a complicated network of city politics that obstructed successful management. For instance, in the 1980s, Mayor Jane Byrne's and Mayor Harold Washington's plans to uplift decaying public housing were impeded by Chicago's aldermen who blocked their nominations for CHA leadership positions, inducing chaos within

[74] Susan J. Popkin et al., *The Hidden War: Crime and the Tragedy of Public Housing in Chicago* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000).
[75] Ibid., 8.

the agency.[76] Financially, the CHA was corrupt to its core. In a 1995 report to Congress, HUD condemned the CHA's fraudulent use of funds. Citing an investigation from the previous year led by the former United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, HUD exposed millions of dollars being mismanaged by the housing authority. An estimated $26 million of financial losses due to fraud were discovered while $600 million in unused funds were frozen in the CHA's web of bureaucracy at the time of HUD's takeover.[77] Such inadequate maintenance and management caused the living conditions for residents to plummet and made the housing authority unable to address the pressing needs of the tenants.

Changing Economic Composition

CHA public housing faced increasingly concentrated poverty and was isolated from the more prosperous areas of Chicago. By the late twentieth century, most residents were unemployed and depended on public assistance or the underground economy to survive.[78] The economic situation was so dire that in HUD's 1995 report to Congress, eleven of the fifteen poorest neighborhoods in the United States were in CHA communities and the average income of a CHA resident was only $4,665 while the national average for public housing tenants was over $6,000.[79] These statistics highlight the intensity of poverty in CHA public housing, but to understand how the projects shifted from working-class housing to housing of last resort, it is necessary to look back to screening policy changes and federal rent legislation in the late 1960s.

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[76] From 1981 to 1989, the CHA had eight different executive directors. Popkin et al., *The Hidden War: Crime and the Tragedy of Public Housing in Chicago,* 15.
[77] Committee on Government Reforms and Oversight, "The Federal Takeover of the Chicago Housing Authority–HUD Needs to Determine Long-Term Implications," December 21, 1995, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CRPT-104hrpt437/html/CRPT-104hrpt437.htm.
[78] Popkin et al., *The Hidden War: Crime and the Tragedy of Public Housing in Chicago*, 1.
[79] Committee on Government Reforms and Oversight, "The Federal Takeover of the Chicago Housing Authority–HUD Needs to Determine Long-Term Implications."

CHA screening practices transformed the demographics of public housing in the span of only a few years. Early protocols barred tenants with poor housekeeping, long criminal records, or unreliable rent-paying abilities from the communities. As a result, the average CHA family was working-class and two-parent.[80] Yet, beginning in the late 1960s, the median household income of the residents dropped alongside the percentage of working families while the percentage of single parent households, welfare recipients, and unemployed tenants surged. The CHA had accepted families relying on welfare since 1941, but it was not until 1967 that the percentage of families on public assistance increased from its steady 25%.[81] Shockingly, in 1996, 96% of residents in Robert Taylor Homes, the largest housing complex in Chicago, were unemployed.[82] While accurate data on screening norms is difficult to obtain, anecdotal evidence suggests a drop in screening standards around this time, which can possibly be attributed to higher volumes of public housing applications that pressured officials to quickly fill vacant apartments.[83] These declines in screening practices skewed tenant composition towards higher levels of poverty, and in the late 1960s, this development was codified in law.

Federal rent legislation effectively structured poverty into public housing, particularly with the 1969 Brooke Amendment to the Housing Act of 1937. In an effort to make public housing more affordable for those families who might not have steady employment or rely on public services, the Brooke Amendment capped public housing rent at 25% of an unemployed or

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[80] Bradford D. Hunt, "What Went Wrong with Public Housing in Chicago? A History of the Robert Taylor Homes," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society (1998-)* 94, no. 1 (2001): 108–9.
[81] Hunt, "What Went Wrong with Public Housing in Chicago?," 109–110, 121-122.
[82] Lily Geismer, Left Behind: The Democrats' Failed Attempt to Solve Inequality (New York: PublicAffairs, 2022), 229.
[83] In 1965, the Chicago *Daily News* reported that the CHA rushed to fill Robert Taylor Homes and resorted to improper screening protocol as early as 1963. Hunt, "What Went Wrong with Public Housing in Chicago?," 108–10.

welfare-dependent tenant's income.[84] This was a significant improvement from former policies that determined rent by maintenance costs, and it eased rent burdens for many tenants with low or unreliable income. Working-class tenants that were not enrolled in welfare programs, however, paid a modified flat rate that was not as financially advantageous. Consequently, between 1967 and 1974, the percentage of working-class families in CHA housing decreased from 50% to 10%, and those relying on Aid for Dependent Children, the most popular welfare program in public housing, increased from 36% to 83%.[85] In 1981, the Brooke Amendment's rent standards were increased to 30% and were applied to working-class families with the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act.[86] This 30% was a massive jump in rent from the flat rates for the few working-class families that remained in public housing. Combined with the deteriorating infrastructure and poor management, almost all tenants who had the means for housing in the private market vacated public housing by this time.[87] These policies favored the neediest potential residents, and made the CHA developments become exclusively for those on welfare and the poorest residents in the city.[88]

The declining socioeconomic composition of the resident population in CHA public housing posed serious challenges for the housing authority, especially given severely limited funding for maintenance and inconsistent public safety. Writing in the *Residents' Journal*, a CHA-published tenant newspaper, resident Annie R. Smith summarized the compounding

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[84] Housing and Urban Development Act of 1969, Pub. L. 91–152 (1969); In 1981, the Brooke Amendment's rent standards were increased to 30% and were applied to working-class families with the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act. Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981, Pub. L. 97–35 (1981).
[85] Hunt, "What Went Wrong with Public Housing in Chicago?," 109.
[86] Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981, Pub. L. 97–35 (1981).
[87] Hunt, "What Went Wrong with Public Housing in Chicago?," 109.
[88] The data regarding Americans on welfare must be qualified by the fact the during this time, more citizens began receiving welfare benefits without any change to their financial status as part of various progressive programs. Instead of becoming poorer, these Americans only became more qualified for welfare under new rules. It is possible that the existing residents simply acquired welfare, and that new welfare-dependent residents did not move in.

physical and economic flaws of CHA public housing, stating that "nothing is wrong with building houses for the poor in poor neighborhoods. But when you mix poor design with poor material and place it in a poor neighborhood with poor people, you tell me how many people can rise from such rubble."[89] The aggregation of changes in screening policies and federal rent legislation triggered the increase in poverty in public housing that led to such feelings of destitution. Moreover, at the same time, residents reported that crime and gang violence skyrocketed in their communities.

Crime in CHA Public Housing

While certainly not the intention from the outset, Chicago public housing complexes were fertile ground for gangs, drug dealers, and other criminal activity, and by the 1990s, the violence had become unbearable for residents. Janelle Jones, a resident of CHA public housing, wrote in the fall of 1997 that

> It's bad enough to live [in a low rent, high-rise public housing development] as it is without waking up to the sounds of shooting… Now it has become so bad that I can't even ride the bus to my grandmother's house as I usually do because they're shooting over there. Can't go pick up my son from school without dodging bullets going and coming! At any given time, my life or my son's could have ended. Just like that: poof. Gone."[90]

This was the dangerous reality of living in Chicago public housing in the late 1990s, a reality that was ubiquitous for nearly all CHA residents. Two decades prior, Chicago's infamous street gangs began infiltrating the public housing developments–particularly the high-rises–and terrorized vulnerable families with violence and drug dealing. The high-rises were located near

[89] Annie R. Smith, "A Decree but to What Degree?," *Residents' Journal*, (Periodicals, Chicago, Illinois, Fall 1997, 4), Chicago History Museum Abakanowicz Research Center.
[90] Janelle Jones, "Our America," *Residents's Journal*, (Periodicals, Chicago, Illinois, Fall 1997, 7), Chicago History Museum Abakanowicz Research Center.

expressways and had enormous and open layouts, limited security, and a multitude of abandoned units that made them easy places to dodge law enforcement. The density of individuals in these buildings provided drug dealers with a consistent customer base, and their high percentage of children provided gangs with a constant flow of young recruits. To put this in perspective, during the twentieth century, the typical Chicago neighborhood had two adults per one youth (under 21 years old) for a ratio of 0.5 youths per adult. In late twentieth century CHA housing, this ratio was almost five times as large with a peak of 2.39 youths per adult on average in 1970. In Robert Taylor Homes, the 1970 ratio was a shocking 2.89 youths for every adult.[91] This ratio remained inflated throughout the next few decades. In 1995, over 50% of CHA public housing residents were under 15 years old.[92] As a result, the crime in CHA housing disproportionately affected and involved children like Dantrell Davis. From the 1970s onwards, droves of gangs and drug dealers funneled into the complexes and established a formidable community presence.

Many inhabitants of public housing cited the 1970s and 1980s as the juncture when crime escalated to alarming levels. Dolores Wilson, a resident of Cabrini-Green from 1958 to 2011, noted a substantial increase in crime in the years after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s death in 1968. New residents moved in, gang writing appeared on the walls, and snipers in the high-rises "would set up in a window of the towers and just shoot at anyone," including her son who was killed as he stood outside of his church.[93] Sabrina Nixon, a teenager who lived in Cabrini-Green during the 1980s, recalled this decade as the period during which her neighborhood became wracked by gang activity, shootings, and 'turf'-related conflict. The neighborhood was so

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[91] Bradford D. Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster: The Unraveling of Public Housing in Chicago* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 147.
[92] Committee on Government Reforms and Oversight, "The Federal Takeover of the Chicago Housing Authority–HUD Needs to Determine Long-Term Implications."
[93] Petty, *High Rise Stories: Voices from Chicago Public Housing,* 32, 36.

dangerous that Ms. Nixon and her peers "took a chance with [their] lives just going to school."[94] At times, gang violence was so dangerous near her home that she would stay with her grandmother for multiple days until the gang warfare subsided.[95] These claims have been corroborated by historians of public housing, including Lily Geismer who cites that a CHA public housing resident in the 1980s had a 50% higher chance of being the victim of a violent crime than the average Chicagoan.[96] How this sudden, severe increase in crime came about in public housing is a complicated and controversial story,[97] but understanding resident perceptions on crime in their communities and how they were affected by it can illuminate the realities of public housing unrepresented elsewhere.

Crime was quite potent in public housing, but the fear of crime was equally damaging. According to Samuel Nolan, interim director of the Chicago Department of Public Safety in 1979, "the fear of crime is often as debilitating as crime itself" for CHA residents.[98] With gangs wielding much of the social power in public housing communities, many residents dreaded leaving their apartments or cooperating with law enforcement. Gang members were well-known in the community and were often residents' relatives, friends, and neighbors. Reporting gang

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[94] Ibid., 115.
[95] Ibid., 116.
[96] Geismer, *Left Behind: The Democrats' Failed Attempt to Solve Inequality*, 209.
[97] Many scholars have proposed theories for the prevalence of crime in public housing. In 1993, Terrence Dunworth and Aaron Saiger argued that "poverty, unemployment, the growth of single-parent families, and weak informal social controls have all been cited as factors that make criminal activity more likely in public housing than in other areas; at the same time, they make residents particularly attractive victims for criminals." Terrence Dunworth and Aaron Saiger, "Drugs and Crime in Public Housing: A Three-City Analysis," report prepared for the U.S. Department of Justice: National Institute of Justice, March 1994, 6, https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/145329NCJRS.pdf; In 1991, Alexander Kotlowitz argued in his book *There Are No Children Here*, that young men in public housing faced substantial pressures to involve themselves in gangs and drug trafficking, which made it more difficult to succeed in conventional career paths, a sentiment closely aligned with criminologists Cloward and Ohlin. Alexander Kotlowitz, *There Are No Children Here* (New York: Doubleday, 1991); In 1990, Wesley G. Skogan argued that the dark hallways, abandoned apartments, graffiti, trash, and street prostitution in public housing created visible disorder that bred fear, undermined social cohesion, and promoted crime, an idea closely resembling James Q. Wilson's 'Broken Windows Theory.' Wesley G. Skogan, *Disorder and Decline: Crime and the Spiral of Decay in American Neighborhoods* (New York: Free Press, 1990).
[98] "Eight Elderly Buildings Take Part in New Crime Safety Plans," *Chicago Housing Authority Times*, (Periodicals, Chicago, Illinois, October 1980, 1), Chicago History Museum Abakanowicz Research Center.

activity could have serious repercussions, including ostracization and even bodily harm. Fearful public housing residents were caught in a paralyzing situation–do they allow gangs to continue to commit crimes and wreak havoc on their communities, do they inform the police of wrongdoing at the risk of their own wellbeing, or do they join gangs to protect themselves?

Young males were especially vulnerable to gangs and were targeted as potential recruits or enemies, and many resorted to joining gangs to protect themselves. Ms. Wilson of Cabrini-Green commented that as gangs invaded her neighborhood in the 1980s, a culture of "when in Rome do as the Romans do" emerged, which pushed many young men to join or form gangs despite reservations to do so.[99] Even as the president of her building's advisory board, Ms. Wilson admitted that she wanted to carry a gun because of how much "slicing and shooting" was occurring near her building.[100] Other residents like Donnell Furlow, a resident of Rockwell Gardens in the 1980s and 1990s, were introduced to gang culture early in their lives. By age ten, Mr. Furlow was storing and cleaning AK-47s for his older friends, skipping school, smoking marijuana, beating up strangers, and owning a gun. By age thirteen, he had begun selling cocaine and performing violent 'hits' for his gang.[101] Mr. Furlow confirmed the extreme violence of the high-rise buildings, stating that "it got to the point where no parents could leave the building and take the kids to school. There wasn't no coming out that building. It didn't change over time. That's the way it was."[102] Such hopelessness, defenselessness, and despair from vivid experiences with crime, gangs, and drugs promulgated a culture that was resigned to the new normal in public housing.

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[99] Petty, *High Rise Stories: Voices from Chicago Public Housing,* 35.
[100] Ibid., 35.
[101] Ibid., 58–60.
[102] Ibid., 60.

Confronting the issue of crime, residents called for diverse solutions. Many wanted cooperative community-based solutions and resident-led law enforcement programs; some sought tougher, more responsive, and more powerful policing; and others supported a response to crime that addressed other social ills such as poverty and drug addiction.[103] Even though crime was an unrelenting, unavoidable part of life for public housing residents, many still maintained a sense of hope for change through collectively amplifying their voices. According to Ms. Jones, who harbored deep anger towards the crime and gangs in her community, "when one cries for help, it's only a whisper. Yet when the masses shout, all will be heard, hopefully, instead of being pushed aside as we are."[104] Unfortunately, though, if their voices were heard, their meanings were lost as media coverage pathologized the residents as criminals and their communities as beyond repair.

Public Perceptions of CHA Public Housing

Chicago public housing was a prominent feature of Chicago's landscape. Along the Dan Ryan and Eisenhower Expressways, corridors of CHA high-rises flanked commuters on their treks to and from the city. However, few Chicagoans knew exactly what went on inside of them besides what was reported in the news or spouted by politicians and city leaders, which tended to be quite misleading and negative. According to CHA resident Johnetta Johnson in the *Chicago Housing Authority Times* periodical, "trouble in public housing usually catches the attention of

[103] It is important to note the difficulty evaluating exactly what style of policing public housing residents wanted. Many folks believed that law enforcement did not care for their communities, and when they called for 'more policing,' they did not mean more invasive or aggressive policing, but rather better, more effective policing that other more affluent communities might receive. Ray and Galston, "Did the 1994 Crime Bill Cause Mass Incarceration?"; Elizabeth Hinton, Julilly Kohler-Hausmann, and Vesla M. Weaver, "Did Blacks Really Endorse the 1994 Crime Bill?," *The New York Times*, April 13, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/13/opinion/did-blacks-really-endorse-the-1994-crime-bill.html?referringSource=articleShare.

[104] Janelle Jones, "Our America," (Periodicals, Chicago, Illinois, Fall 1997, 7), Chicago History Museum Abakanowicz Research Center.

people in the news business, but positive aspects always seem to escape them."[105] For those on the outside, the prevalence and severity of crime was sensationalized and exaggerated, and it created a pathology of those in public housing as inherently more violent. Much of what Chicago residents knew about public housing came from media sources such as the *Chicago Tribune*, one of the most widely-read newspapers in the city.

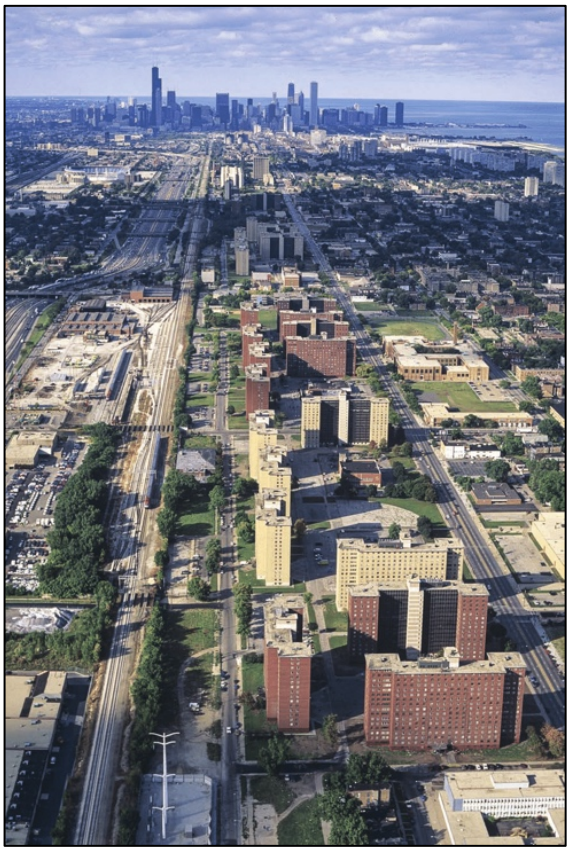

Figure 5: "State Street Corridor" of the CHA where high-rises were wedged between the Dan Ryan Expressway and State Street on the South Side of Chicago. This was the longest contiguous series of public housing in the United States, and it included Robert Taylor Homes, Stateway Gardens, Dearborn Homes, Harold Ickes Homes, and Hilliard Homes.

The *Chicago Tribune* peddled explicitly negative press regarding public housing that standardized a narrative based upon a pejorative stigma that largely blamed residents and CHA managers for their condition. In a 1988 article titled "Gang Sweep Brings Hope to a Project," the *Tribune* described how in public housing, "pushers dealt freely from vacant apartments…gangs took over and residents of the violence-plagued high-rises began sleeping in bathtubs and closets to escape the spray of bullets that came with the fall of night."[106] The author illustrated Rockwell Gardens as a "violence-torn fortress…a Vietnam battlefield."[107] Ten years later, in an article

[105] "Is Public Housing Bad? Two Residents Give Their Views," *Chicago Housing Authority Times*, (Periodicals, Chicago, Illinois, January 1975, 1), Chicago History Museum Abakanowicz Research Center.
[106] Jorge Casuso, "Gang Sweep Brings Hope to a Project," *Chicago Tribune*, October 23, 1988, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
[107] Ibid.

titled "From a World of Despair to a Life of Promise," writer Linnet Myers wrote of Sylvia McKinley and her family, who were burdened with memories of murder, drugs, and despair as they left Darrow Homes on Chicago's South Side. Myers shared with readers that in Darrow Homes, Ms. McKinley's younger brother had been killed by gunfire when he was thirteen, and that her granddaughter was only two years old when she learned to yell "hit the deck!" when gun battles started outside their building.[108] Such stories painted a daunting image of the high-rises to outsiders that instilled only trepidation and contempt. Ms. McKinley's husband was quoted comparing Darrow Homes to prison and those living there as habitual criminals: "It's like if you have a man in prison, a repeater. After a while he can't live on the street…When you have three generations of people growing up deep within those projects, they're not hardly coming out of there...They have an inner lock."[109] Mr. McKinley's words helped create the public ignominy of being a public housing resident that the *Tribune* spread to the rest of the city.

As the CHA complexes approached a caliber of mismanagement, poverty, and social decay that shocked the public, most residents were attuned to how their communities were portrayed in the media. Some were discontented with how stories were reported and how the public responded to their plight, and they explained how such portrayals poisoned the larger public consciousness. Ms. Wilson, for example, argued that the media would embellish how truly violent the Cabrini-Green community was. She contended that news outlets would attribute any crime in the vicinity of Cabrini to the housing complex, which led people outside to have "extreme ideas" of what was happening there.[110] This notoriety permeated the city of Chicago so widely that taxi drivers would refuse to pick up residents, and even Ms. Wilson's own brother

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[108] Linnet Myers, "From a World of Despair to a Life of Promise," *Chicago Tribune*, December 30, 1998, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 1-2.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Petty, *High Rise Stories: Voices from Chicago Public Housing*, 36–37.

declined to visit. Attacking reporters directly, Ms. Jones put forth that "the media only gets a third of the story. There is so much that never gets reported and what does is often distorted. Never what really happened, just the story that they want to tell."[111] Residents like Ms. Wilson and Ms. Jones disliked the negative attention due to the stigmatizing nature of the dramatized stories and sought to change the prevailing narratives.

Other residents wanted the truths of their experiences to be heard by the masses in hopes for change. In the summer of 1997, Cenabeth Cross wrote in the *Residents' Journal* that while reports would have one believe that crime is slowing down in their communities, "the violence in Chicago is escalating at a speed that boggles the mind…There are over 200 million guns on the street and it is easy to get for anyone who wants one."[112] Crime across the country was falling in the 1990s, but according to Ms. Cross, it was still a serious concern in CHA public housing that required collective action and governmental attention. In her opinion, the only way to reduce crime was to make it known to the public, regardless of how it was perceived. The differences between the perspectives of Ms. Wilson, Ms. Jones, and Ms. Cross highlight the nuance of how crime affected these communities and what residents hoped the government would do.

Yet, earlier in the decade, Ms. Cross's desire for public attention was fulfilled when the death of Dantrell Davis captured national news and prompted city officials to imminently demolish Chicago's worst public housing developments with Cabrini-Green at the top of the list. While widespread awareness was indeed achieved, elevating national consciousness of the defects of public housing did not yield the results for which Ms. Cross might have hoped.

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[111] Janelle Jones, "Our America," *Residents' Journal*, (Periodicals, Chicago, Illinois, Fall 1997, 7), Chicago History Museum Abakanowicz Research Center.
[112] Cenabeth Cross, "Stop the Violence," *Residents' Journal*, (Periodicals, Chicago, Illinois, Summer 1997, 14), Chicago History Museum Abakanowicz Research Center.

National-Local Linkages

Public housing across the country suffered in the late twentieth century, and Chicago was not alone in bearing the burden of a public housing crisis. Boston, Philadelphia, St. Louis, New Orleans, San Francisco, and a list of other cities struggled to effectively manage their public housing developments. Yet, Chicago was a particular case in that few other public housing developments in America approached the level of widely-publicized and highly-politicized crime found in CHA housing, often involving ruthless gang warfare. With the uncompromising pathology in the news, policymakers took advantage of such circumstances to drive their political agendas. The tough on crime consensus criticized the catastrophe of the CHA, likened it to failed progressive social policy, and used it as an example to push against the sociological reformers. Most evident in the 1990s, the Clinton administration took a keen interest in Chicago's public housing to discuss President Clinton's agenda to overhaul welfare and housing crime and bolster his tough on crime ambitions ahead of a mid-1990s election.

The CHA projects proved to be a useful platform to exemplify Clinton's public housing agenda. The HUD takeover of the CHA in 1995 was the result of successive failures by the CHA to control the issues of crime, poverty, and physical deterioration in their housing developments, and while it was initially a rather valiant attempt to restore integrity to Chicago's housing authority, it also offered Clinton and the New Democrats a golden political opportunity. Fixing–or at least, promising to fix–Chicago's public housing crisis, which had become too salient of an issue to ignore, would bolster Clinton's reputation heading into the 1996 election season and would affirm his hardline stances on crime and social services. Clinton embraced the Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere program, commonly known as HOPE VI, which was created by Congress under the Housing and Community Development Act of 1992 to address the

physical and socioeconomic needs of the nation's distressed public housing developments. The program pledged to raze distressed, high-density public housing throughout the United States over the following years and replace it with low-density, mixed-income housing via Section 8 vouchers and grants in partnership with private developers.[113] The program placed 14,000 CHA units on track for demolition, which would force tens of thousands of public housing residents in Chicago out of high-rises and into the private housing market.[114] Instead of searching for viable solutions to maintain public housing, the Clinton administration and HUD capitalized on the dire conditions of CHA housing to eradicate public housing altogether and proceed with other political objectives such as combatting crime and welfare.

Clinton's administration laced HOPE VI with anticrime rhetoric and anti-welfare stigma, and Chicago public housing was the perfect intersection of both crime and poverty to demonstrate and exemplify his policies. It represented the culmination of decades spent tying together these two issues together to terminate social programs for both in one smooth stroke. With the 1996 presidential campaign advancing quickly, the Clinton administration expressed anti-public housing sentiment to rile up its supporters and adopted HOPE VI as a key to its tough on crime appeals and social policy reformation. Vice President Al Gore denounced the CHA high-rises as "crime-infested monuments to failed policy [that] are killing the neighborhoods around them," referring to the buildings as "warehouses for the poor" in a speech at a HUD-sponsored event in May 1996.[115] Clinton and his administration intensified this attack on public housing and welfare in the last leg of the 1996 presidential campaign.

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[113] HOPE VI's plans for 'voucherization' of housing never came to full fruition, but HOPE VI was still the main vehicle for Clinton's priorities. Geismer, *Left Behind: The Democrats' Failed Attempt to Solve Inequality*, 210-214.
[114] For more information on how HOPE VI was implemented in Chicago, see Geismer, "From a Right to a Reward" in *Left Behind: The Democrats' Failed Attempt to Solve Inequality*.
[115] Guy Gugliotta, "REDOUBLED EFFORT TARGETS DERELICT PUBLIC HOUSING," *Washington Post*, May 31, 1996, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1996/05/31/redoubled-effort-targets-derelict-public-housing/71b6d2ca-25be-4b14-9997-b3ab112232e5/.

The Democratic National Convention in 1996 was to be held at the United Center in Chicago, which was situated adjacent to the CHA's Henry Horner Homes. Just days before the DNC, President Clinton signed into law the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act, which set out to "end welfare as it we know it," a common slogan during his campaign, and to "transform our broken welfare system by promoting the fundamental values of work, responsibility, and family."[116] With the dilapidated high-rises in the background of the convention and momentum from new welfare legislation, President Clinton and Mayor Richard M. Daley–two Democrats–emphasized the urgency to redefine public housing with HOPE VI and to "end public housing as we know it."[117] In the battle to disintegrate the existing American social safety net and privatize public housing, CHA residents became a much-exploited casualty on the razed ground upon which national crime, welfare, and housing policy was remade.

Clinton's threefold agenda gave American public housing residents minimal autonomy regarding their futures. As evident in Vice President Gore's speech, the Clinton administration cared more about the communities around the CHA developments than the people living there themselves. In 1998, Congress passed the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act, the final nail in the coffin for many public housing residents across the country. It overhauled the 1937 Housing Act and replaced it with the approach of HOPE VI, which mandated viability tests

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[116] "End Welfare as We Know It" was a common phrase in Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign. "1992: Clinton," The Living Room Candidate: Presidential Campaign Commercials 1952-2020, video, accessed April 5, 2024, http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1992; Bill Clinton, "Statement on Signing the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996," online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/statement-signing-the-personal-responsibility-and-work-opportunity-reconciliation-act-1996.

[117] President Clinton stated in his 1995 Remarks to the National Association of Home Builders that his administration sought to "[phase] out direct subsidies to housing authorities and to end public housing as we know it. Instead of subsidizing bureaucracies, we want to give money directly to residents so that they have the opportunity to take more responsibility for their own lives." This goal was to be realized by HOPE VI. Bill Clinton, "Remarks to the National Association of Home Builders," online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-national-association-home-builders-1.

and encouraged the relocation of residents to newly-constructed low-density housing via Section 8 vouchers. However, the new options made available to residents in private markets were largely unaffordable or unattainable. Chicago had an oversaturated housing market with a rental vacancy rate of only 5%, and many landlords discriminated against former public housing residents.[118] Additionally, the 1998 law prescribed rigorous screening protocols that included a work requirement and barred those with a criminal background, a pattern of drug or alcohol abuse, unpaid bills, or children with high rates of school absences.[119] Promises to redevelop public housing sites in mixed-income communities went unfulfilled as well.

In 1999, the CHA was removed from HUD's oversight, and Daley unveiled the 'Plan for Transformation' to clear the city of all of its high-rises for mixed-income housing. It slated 25,000 high-rise units for destruction or renovation over the span of ten years. In the following decade, the nearly 100,000 high-rise residents were dispersed throughout the city, oftentimes against their will and with nowhere to go.[120] According to historian Lily Geismer, between 1995 and 2002, 82% of the public housing residents moved to segregated communities that were almost completely African American and that had poverty rates over 30%.[121] Only 8% of the residents from demolished public housing units had been relocated to mixed-income communities by March 2017, eighteen years after the Plan for Transformation.[122] Where were these individuals and families to go?

Conclusion

[118] Geismer, *Left Behind: The Democrats' Failed Attempt to Solve Inequality,* 230-231.
[119] Ibid., 230-231.
[120] By 2011, all public housing in Chicago had been eradicated. Ibid., 229–32.
[121] Ibid., 231.
[122] Alexandra Silets, "Plan for Transformation: WBEZ Examines Progress of CHA Redevelopment," *WTTW News*, video, 8:38, March 28, 2017, https://news.wttw.com/2017/03/28/plan-transformation-wbez-examines-progress-cha-redevelopment.

Remembering Chicago Public Housing

While Ms. Cross advocated for public awareness of the plight of CHA residents in the late 1990s, perhaps her desires were misplaced. When national figures became involved, they did not seek to help–they sought to destroy. The turbulent history of the CHA testifies to the importance of sustainable housing plans, sound financial and managerial organization, and linkages to the community that allow resident voices to be amplified clearly. Yet, it is important to remember that these housing developments were the beloved homes of many Chicagoans and generations of their kin. Many early public housing residents speak of their communities with affection. For instance, Maude Davis, a retired public-school principal from Altgeld Gardens, remarked that her peers "never looked at Altgeld as public housing. We felt it was just paradise…There was pride in it."[123] Words such as "paradise" frequently surfaced in interviews with public housing residents. Addie Wyatt, one of the first tenants in the Altgeld Gardens project, recalled that it "was the greatest community we had seen…we had just found this heavenly place."[124] These families and individuals saw their public housing as more than massive warehouses to store those in poverty–they were vibrant, culturally-rich communities. Despite the snipers and gangs, Ms. Wilson cherished her time in Cabrini-Green. The "only time I'm afraid is when I'm outside of the community," she told a reporter in 1991, claiming that "in Cabrini, I'm just not afraid."[125] According to Alex Kotlowitz, author of *There Are No Children Here,* "tenants in the high rises often felt they belonged to something–they were among family and friends, and they had neighbors to lean on."[126] Eventually, however, the residents could not escape the violence and the emotional wreckage that devastated their communities.

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[123] Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster: The Unraveling of Public Housing in Chicago*, 3.
[124] Ibid., 4.
[125] Petty, *High Rise Stories: Voices from Chicago Public Housing*, 36.
[126] Ibid., 11.

Explaining Crime in Public Housing

As we discover in this chapter, increases in crime and the deterioration of the public housing developments coincided with major changes in the late 1960s. Whether the screening changes and federal rent legislation that concentrated poverty in public housing or another social, political, economic, or physical characteristic is to blame for the crime that took Chicago's public housing by storm in the late twentieth century, some residents have shared their explanations for crime in their communities. Vonsell Ashford of Harold Ickes Homes recalled that her community "got through the 1950s pretty good, then slowly through the 1960s things got worse…But the most important thing, [was] the kind of people they were putting in. The CHA wasn't being as careful."[127] Ms. Ashford could have been speaking in racially coded terms or referring to assumed criminal elements of the new tenants, but what is definite is that, either way, residents like her disliked their new neighbors and blamed them for the climbing crime rates. Other residents connected crime and poverty more directly. Ms. Wyatt of Altgeld Gardens believed the violence was due to "concentrating too many people in the same economic category" in the projects.[128] Ms. Ashford and Ms. Wyatt, knowingly or unknowingly, recognized the social recomposition and increasing congregation of low-income individuals in their communities, and they attributed these factors to the crime of later decades and the failure of CHA housing.

Some residents such as Annie R. Smith put forth powerful rhetoric at the end of the 1990s demanding that the residents take accountability for their situation. In a May 1998 *Residents' Journal* article, she asserted,

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[127] Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster: The Unraveling of Public Housing in Chicago*, 4.
[128] Ibid., 4.

> No matter how much the drug infiltration was perpetrated in our community, [the government] didn't make us sell the drugs or indulge in them. No matter how high the drop-out rate is in our community, they didn't stop us from going to school to better ourselves…At some point, at some time, we are our brother's keeper. If you don't believe it, you are a lost soul without love. So let's help those who are fighting for us on the political front. Let's armor our allies with votes and support their efforts so they can support ours. Stop blaming others for your misfortunes and join us in our fight to save and protect public housing.[129]

Ms. Smith's rallying cry to change the narrative of victimhood is a rather unique perspective, but it displays a keen awareness for the how residents contributed to their unfortunate conditions in CHA housing. Despite these contentions, ascribing the state of public housing in Chicago solely to the residents would be misplaced and misinformed. The relationship between crime and poverty in public housing cannot be understood without adequate knowledge of the policing efforts and community relations with law enforcement that criminalized residents at higher frequencies and drove up crime rates. Thus, the prevalence of crime can perhaps be more feasibly attributed to policymakers, housing authority officials, and law enforcement agencies that shunned social policies to uplift unemployment, education, and poverty in public housing.

The realities of crime and poverty in Chicago's public housing in the late twentieth century lay the groundwork for analyzing various public safety and policing strategies implemented in the CHA developments as symbols of the clash–or perhaps collaboration–between the sociological reformers and the tough on crime advocates. Policing has direct ties to larger trends in criminal justice, including mass incarceration, and it links intellectual and political debates about the causes of crime, its relationship to poverty, and how to strategically resolve these two social dilemmas in public housing. The failure of public housing in cities like

[129] Annie R. Smith, "A Decree but to What Degree?," 4.

Chicago contributed to the idea that poverty led to crime, and this conflation propelled damaging ideologies in national politics and in public housing complexes. The following chapter will explore various perspectives on public safety and policing in CHA public housing and will build on our understandings of crime and poverty, particularly from the lenses of the residents, local authorities, and prominent national figures.

Chapter 3: Public Safety in Chicago's Public Housing

CHA public housing's calamitous trajectory and the ubiquitous, inescapable presence of crime, drugs, and gangs in the developments testified to the need for well-researched, innovative public safety policies and practices in Chicago's public housing, the intersection of crime and poverty. With crime persisting for years on end, some residents like Ms. Jones expressed a fatalistic outlook regarding the gang violence in her community and beckoned for help. In 1997, Ms. Jones commented in the CHA *Residents' Journal* that the gang members would "act as if we are in Beirut. [War] is in our backyards and there is nothing any of us can do…There is really no escape for most."[130] Only by looking back to the public safety programs of the four decades prior can one try to reason how crime remained so prevalent for so long in Chicago's public housing, learn what worked and what did not, and understand what residents believed about public safety and policing in their communities.

Public safety in public housing was the testing ground for evolving crime control theories and policies. By analyzing Chicago specifically, we can see the dynamics between national and local public safety policies and practices as they both shaped and were shaped by the sociological reformers and tough on crime consensus. Through it, we can understand how public housing residents in Chicago experienced their lives and the materialization of sociological reform and tough on crime ideology in their communities. With higher crime and poverty rates than nearly all other neighborhoods in Chicago, CHA public housing was the focal point of experimental crime control programs that exhibited contemporary understandings of crime,

[130] Janelle Jones, "Our America," 7.

poverty, and public safety. But regardless of president, policy, or agenda, public safety initiatives were rooted in the local nexus of political, social, and economic factors.

Public safety as the manifestation of crime control in Chicago was distinct from and messier than the national arc. While there was a clear shift among criminologists and federal politicians from the sociological reformer approach to the tough on crime consensus in the late twentieth century, in the Windy City, there was no such transition. Chicago was an outlier from the beginning in regards to public safety with its embrace of tough on crime rhetoric, punitive policies, and aggressive policing. The city's story was decidedly one of intense criminalization of poverty where the poor were the most affected by repressive practices and policies. As a result, the federal shift was not as pronounced on the ground in Chicago as it was in other cities. However, the rise of the tough on crime consensus in national politics made public safety and policing in Chicago even more aggressive than it was before. To fully grasp the intellectual and political history of crime, poverty, and public safety in the United States and the lived experiences of those in Chicago's public housing, we must understand federal and local policy together and how they interacted with one another in a mutual relationship.

This third chapter will analyze public safety in Chicago public housing from the 1960s to the 1990s through community-based public safety programs and repressive and invasive policing initiatives. In doing so, it will articulate how each public safety program understood the dynamics between crime and poverty in the late twentieth century and how these understandings relate to issues of public safety.

Chicago as the Early Policing Blueprint

In the waning days of the Great Society as a budding tough on crime movement peddled narratives of fear and criticized the failures of the sociological reformers' social programs to curb increasing crime rates, Chicago was trailblazing a style of low-tolerance, invasive policing that laid the foundations for the future punitive public safety practices that would be the backbone of tough on crime policy. As historian Andrew J. Diamond writes in *Chicago on the Make: Power and Inequality in a Modern City*,

> …it was in Chicago that one of the cornerstones of Great Society liberalism–the idea of redistributing power and resources to neighborhood people–was shattered…[and] that most of the mainstream media and much of the population cheered [Mayor Richard J. Daley's] campaign of repression every step of the way as liberals throughout the nation were decrying it.[131]

While the 1968 LEAA provided funds to local law enforcement agencies across the nation, which effectively empowered them to become more aggressive in low-income minority communities, and which many scholars assert as the beginning of a punitive shift in law enforcement and criminal justice, Chicago has quite a different–yet highly influential–story when it comes to public safety and policing.[132]

Unlike many cities in the United States, sociological reform was not the primary mode of crime control in Chicago at any point in the late twentieth century; nor was there any sort of shift in the city's policing style from the 1960s to the 1990s. Chicago's public safety consistently combined the sociological reformers' prevention and rehabilitation with tough on crime retribution, deterrence, and incapacitation for a unique style of public safety. In practice, it took

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[131] Andrew J. Diamond, *Chicago on the Make: Power and Inequality in a Modern City*, 209-210.
[132] Importantly, LEAA funds were not substantial for Chicago, which already had a robust police state. For instance, LEAA funding only made up 1% of the Chicago Police Department's budget in 1970. Simon Balto, *Occupied Territory: Policing Black Chicago from Red Summer to Black Power* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 5.

on a distinctly tough on crime hue, as Mayor Richard J. Daley adopted a 'get-tough' approach to public safety and policing years before the tough on crime consensus had a stable base in national politics.[133] Indeed, during the heyday of the sociological reformers, Daley crafted this strategy with the Chicago Police Department (CPD) as he confronted bursts of large-scale rioting and rebellion during in the late 1960s and increasingly rampant gang violence.

The CPD during Daley's tenure as mayor pioneered tough on crime rhetoric and policing protocols. In 1968, following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the subsequent riots, Daley famously ordered CPD forces to "shoot to kill" arsonists and "shoot and detain" looters during riots. This blatant endorsement for unrestrained police force was conducive to a culture of violence in the CPD and promoted police brutality and civil rights abuses.[134] In an era of elevated racial tensions, the tremendous discretion to wield violence as a tool for crime control only worsened the already-contentious relations between low-income minority communities and police. Regardless, Daley did not stop there. The following year, he declared Chicago's own War on Gangs, a battle that had an exceptionally racial element.[135] According to Andrew J. Diamond, it represented the birth of a "ghetto pathology [that] reduced all black youths to gang members…incapable of anything other than criminal behavior," which in turn "justified a merciless wave of police repression, which by criminalizing youths out on the streets" proved to the public that all black youth were gang members and all gang members criminals.[136] Deviating from the more popular methods of sociological reform at the time, the war on gangs in Chicago

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[133] "Students of modern American conservatism usually recognize Richard Nixon as one of the key architects of [the backlash to black violence and reactionary politics] … And yet, if Nixon was the one who actually uttered the clever phrases, he was taking his cues from Richard J. Daley." Diamond, *Chicago on the Make: Power and Inequality in a Modern City*, 210.
[134] Harry Golden Jr., "Daley Orders 'Shoot to Kill' For Arson," *Washington Post Times Herald*, April 16, 1968, https://archives.ubalt.edu/bsr/articles/april%2015.pdf.
[135] Diamond, *Chicago on the Make: Power and Inequality in a Modern City*, 198.
[136] Ibid., 218.

averted the socioeconomic conditions and inequalities that enabled gangs to thrive and opted instead to hurl police firepower at the issue.

Figure 6: Political cartoon depicting Mayor Richard J. Daley's "shoot-to-kill" order.

The CPD was also ahead of its time in regards to 'tough' policing practices and procedures. The department had been employing 'stop and frisk' techniques long before federal policies and court cases codified their use, "aggressive preventive patrol" before Wilson's 'broken windows' theory, and arrest quotas to take more potential criminals off of the street before deterrence and incapacitation became part of a national agenda.[137] Such a style of policing that encouraged more police presence and arrests was the very framework of tough on crime public safety. Some scholars like Elizabeth Hinton point to President Johnson's LEAA and the wars on crime and drugs as the origins of the tough on crime movement and the criminalization of poverty in the United States; yet, the complex and nuanced realities of law enforcement in Chicago had a distinctively punitive character well before the tough on crime intellectuals or politicians gained a following. According to Chicago historian Simon Balto, the federal wars on crime and drugs "simply offered new opportunities for departments like the CPD to boost the aggressive pivot that they had been making for years."[138] The city was already ahead of the tough on crime curve with or without federal encouragement or assistance.

[137] Balto, *Occupied Territory: Policing Black Chicago from Red Summer to Black Power*, 5.
[138] Ibid., 125.

Chicago, both simultaneously and separately throughout the late twentieth century, embraced the goals of the sociological reformers and the tough on crime consensus for a unique blend of policies and practices in how it approached public safety in public housing. By and large, policing measures in late twentieth century CHA housing took form as community-based policing and prevention efforts that integrated individuals into public safety while also deploying more officers in high-crime communities with the objective to restore order by completing more arrests and using their authority to its full extent. And following the punitive turn in federal law enforcement policy under Nixon, Chicago's policing practices became even more repressive and draconian.

Community-Based Public Safety in Chicago and its Public Housing

Despite Mayor Daley's precedent, for a brief moment during Harold Washington's tenure as mayor of Chicago in the 1980s, public safety in the city's public housing tracked more closely to the sentiment of the sociological reformers. Many of the CPD's and CHA's public safety efforts during this period were community-based with a focus on involving residents of public housing in the policing of their neighborhoods and searching for modes of joint problem solving, information sharing, and partnership between law enforcement and community members. In contrast to reactive crime-fighting, these proactive and collaborative programs attempted to build trust amongst tenants and police within public housing developments. Typically, community-based policing involved tenant patrols, police officer foot patrols, local police stations, regular community meetings, citizen advisory committees, community newsletters, and neighborhood watch programs.[139] In practice, however, these programs actually intensified law enforcement

[139] Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, *Trends and Issues 1997*, 24, Chicago, Illinois, Chicago History Museum Abakanowicz Research Center.

presence on the ground, filled the communities with police officers, and increased punishments for low-level offenses, particularly those related to drugs. As a result, resident relationships with the CPD worsened. During the 1980s and 1990s, the Chicago Intervention Network and the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy were two of the principal community-based public safety programs.[140]

The Chicago Intervention Network

The Chicago Intervention Network (CIN) was Washington's capstone public safety campaign formed in 1985 that emphasized short- and long-term solutions to protect Chicago's youth from violence, reduce drug use and abuse, and prevent crime and gang activity. Like the sociological reformers of the 1960s, CIN linked the problem of crime and gang violence to the lack of adequate social welfare and social services. The program was based on the assumption that a gang was an alternative for individuals in low-income, newly-settled communities with weak social ties and unstable cultural links to larger society, an understanding of crime that fell in line with that of Cloward and Ohlin. Irving Spergel, a prominent sociologist and expert on gangs in the United States, opined in an August 1986 letter to the chairman of CIN that the program treated violent gangs as "[institutions] of social transition…[that] provides a means through participation in violent conflict for individuals to achieve status, personal dignity, and some economic reward."[141] CIN sought to expand the reach of social programs and mobilize adults in the community, and it supported a variety of programs for social welfare including

[140] For more details on other crime-fighting and -prevention programs in CHA public housing in the late twentieth century, see Chapter 3, "Fighting Crime in Public Housing," in Popkin et al., *The Hidden War: Crime and the Tragedy of Public Housing in Chicago*.
[141] Irving Spergel, "Crisis Intervention Specifics Project," (Letter to Ben Kendrick, Chicago, Illinois, August 8, 1986), Harold Washington Archives & Collections, Mayoral Records: Public Safety Series, box 8, folder 5, Harold Washington Library Center.

neighborhood watches across the city, rehabilitation for ex-offenders, and local community organizations.[142] While CIN's roots were fixed among the ideas of the sociological reformers, parts of the program criminalized low-income individuals and embraced rather tough on crime policies against gangs.

In public housing, CIN sponsored similar community-based policing programs. The program advised the CHA to "greatly increase the visibility and activity of police…through regular team policing and foot patrol" that was cognizant of improving working relationships between the residents and police officers.[143] The Gang Crime Task Force was established in CHA developments to provide citizen crime prevention efforts and a hardcore crackdown on gang leaders through stepped-up offensives within the housing complexes.[144] In Cabrini-Green, preventive efforts included foot patrols by both residents and police officers in areas with high population densities and high reported crime.[145] CIN also promoted Washington's Task Force on Youth Crime Prevention to address the increasing influence of gangs in Chicago's public housing communities. This task force emphasized rehabilitating former or new gang members and providing alternative social activities and pathways for potential gang members, but it also prioritized punishing offenders.[146] It supported more severe penalties for illegal possession or

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[142] "Chicago Intervention Network," Harold Washington Archives & Collections, Mayoral Records: Public Safety Series, box 4, folder 6, Harold Washington Library Center.
[143] Brenda Gaines and Benjamin Reyes, "Programs and Initiatives for CHA Residents" (Memorandum, Chicago, Illinois, July 14, 1986, 3). Harold Washington Archives & Collections, Mayoral Records: Development Sub-Cabinet Records, box 10, folder 12, Harold Washington Library Center.
[144] A. H. Leak, "City Gets Tough on Gangs as Mayor Unveils Plan," *The Chicago Crusader*, December 8, 1984, Harold Washington Archives & Collections, Mayoral Records: Public Safety/Regulatory Sub-Cabinet Records, box 8, folder 8, Harold Washinton Library Center.
[145] Dennis J. Huminiak, "The Effects of Preventive Patrol at Cabrini-Green," August, 1984. Harold Washington Archives & Collections, Mayoral Records: Public Safety/Regulatory Sub-Cabinet Records, box 8, folder 6, Harold Washington Library Center.
[146] "Final Report and Recommendations of the Juvenile Justice Committee: Mayor's Task Force on Youth Crime Prevention," May, 1985, Harold Washington Archives & Collections, Mayoral Records: Public Safety/Regulatory Sub-Cabinet Records, box 8, folder 3, Harold Washington Library Center; "Problem Statement," Harold Washington Archives & Collections, Mayoral Records: Public Safety/Regulatory Sub-Cabinet Records, box 8, folder 3, Harold Washington Library Center.

transfer of weapons and drugs as well as harsher sanctions for the unlawful discharge of firearms.[147] With the program, Chicagoans became hopeful that such a comprehensive community-based anti-gang program could begin "attacking the problem" below the surface of gang violence.[148] Pursuing the goals of crime prevention, intervention, rehabilitation, and punishment, CIN used the rhetoric of the sociological reformers to achieve tough on crime outcomes of punitive law enforcement.

Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy

In 1989, Richard M. Daley was elected mayor of Chicago, and in 1993, he launched the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) in five of Chicago's 25 police districts, eventually expanding it citywide in 1994 and 1995. CAPS restructured policing around small geographic areas and set up 'beat meetings' where the CPD and community members could identify and develop plans for addressing neighborhood problems that were beyond the scope of their reach. The initiative emphasized communication and familiarity between police and citizens, assigning foot patrol officers to the same beat so that they could build a sense of awareness within the neighborhood and camaraderie with the residents. This comprehensive policing program decentralized decision-making, increased community involvement, and sought to improve the quality of life in urban neighborhoods. Like the sociological reformers of the past, CAPS treated crime as a social ill to be managed through collaboration; however, it drew upon the tough on crime ideal of social order as well. It attacked neighborhood conditions that were believed to

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[147] Legislation Committee, "Status Report" (Letter to Mayor's Task Force on Youth Crime Prevention, Chicago, Illinois, March 6, 1985), Harold Washington Archives & Collections, Mayoral Records: Public Safety/Regulatory Sub-Cabinet Records, box 18, folder 3, Harold Washington Library Center.
[148] "Chicago Sees Gains against Gangs," *New York Times*, February 3, 1986, https://www.nytimes.com/1986/02/03/us/chicago-sees-gains-against-gangs.html.

breed crime such as abandoned buildings, vehicles, and lots; drug houses; and graffiti.[149] In total, it embraced the rhetoric of the sociological reformers, but it implemented practices that would be more adequately categorized as tough on crime.

Evaluating Community-Based Public Safety in Chicago

In the 1980s and 1990s, crime and gang violence continued to rise in public housing, and some scholars contend that it was due to the failure of community-based public safety programs. According to Popkin in *The Hidden War*, these initiatives underperformed because of a fundamental flaw: they assumed that crime stemmed from outside enemies when many of the gang members and drug dealers lived among them. The most powerful figures in the afflicted neighborhoods were the gang leaders, and residents often lacked the required confidence or resources to cooperate in coordinated crime-prevention efforts.[150] Similarly, placing more officers in public housing to promote social order has a number of drawbacks. More arrests for misdemeanors and nonviolent crimes will invariably deteriorate relationships between police officers and those in the community as they lose their neighbors, relatives, and friends to the criminal justice system. Additionally, visible signs of disorder are interpreted differently in public housing complexes where the residents have little agency over shared spaces. For residents, broken windows might not mean that no one in the community cares, but that the government does not care about them.

Community-based public safety was also based on the assumption that crime, disorder, and fear were closely related, and that police must work with citizens to solve problems and

[149] "What is CAPS?," Office of Community Policing, Chicago Police Department, accessed March 26, 2024, https://home.chicagopolice.org/community-policing-group/how-caps-works/what-is-caps/.
[150] Popkin et al., *The Hidden War: Crime and the Tragedy of Public Housing in Chicago*, 4.

prevent crime rather than just respond to calls for service. While this style would plausibly appeal to the sociological reformers in rhetoric, it was regularly repressive and invasive in ways counterproductive to social welfare efforts in practice. In *America on Fire: The Untold History of Police Violence and Black Rebellion since the 1960s*, Elizabeth Hinton reprehends the "rhetorical appeals of 'cooperation' and few poorly funded social services" in regards to public safety, suggesting that the government's true intentions were to increase the surveillance of and policing in low-income urban communities such as public housing.[151] In addition to the misleading rhetoric, Irving Spergel criticized the CIN more directly, stating that its CIN's goals to attack gang crime, prevent juvenile crime, and nurture positive youth development were too diffuse and widespread to be effective. All of these problems were "only partially related to each other … [and the city does] not have the present resources of money, knowledge, and talent to address them all."[152] Given these failures, Chicago's authorities also utilized repressive policing practices that damaged public housing communities and violated their civil rights.

Repressive Policing in CHA Public Housing: Continuing the Wars on Crime and Drugs

After Mayor Washington's untimely death in 1987, public safety in Chicago's public housing lost its commitment to community-based programs, grew more repressive and invasive, and became invariably linked to the tough on crime movement–indeed, it was the very proof that Clinton used to justify his anti-crime, -welfare, and -housing legislation. Nearly two decades after Mayor Richard J. Daley's declaration of a war on gangs, CHA chairman Vincent Lane promptly declared another war on gangs and swore to get 'tough' on gangs in public housing

[151] Hinton, *America on Fire: The Untold History of Police Violence and Black Rebellion since the 1960s*, 62-63.
[152] Irving Spergel, "Crisis Intervention Specifics Project," Harold Washington Archives & Collections, Mayoral Records: Public Safety/Regulatory Sub-Cabinet Records, box 8, folder 5, Harold Washington Library Center.

only months after assuming his position in 1988.[153] After the federal Anti-Drug Abuse Act in 1988 mandated that local housing authorities evict tenants who picked up a criminal charge or engaged in criminal activity, including drug or alcohol abuse, housing agencies such as the CHA reinvigorated their punitive crime control and anti-drug programs. Richard M. Daley, mayor of the city from 1989-2011, supported this crackdown on crime and drug abuse.[154] Notorious for his 'law and order' agenda as Cook County State's Attorney, Daley personified what it meant to be 'tough on crime,' and his partnership with Lane revamped public safety in Chicago's public housing.[155] In the CHA developments, these new initiatives expanded surveillance of residents and deteriorated their privacy within their own homes.

Public Housing Drug Elimination Program

These revisions in public safety policy were most notable in the CHA's Public Housing Drug Elimination Program (PHDEP). Created in 1988, the program was "an extensive anticrime initiative" that involved "sweeping buildings for drugs and weapons, improving security, removing unauthorized tenants, responding to residents' needs for services and maintenance, and implementing drug prevention and intervention programs."[156] Confronting rising crime rates from drug trafficking and gang activity, PHDEP was intended to reduce residents' fear of crime

[153] Popkin et al., *The Hidden War: Crime and the Tragedy of Public Housing in Chicago*, 16; "CHA Finally Gets Tough with Gangs," *Chicago Tribune*, September 25, 1988, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
[154] Mayor Richard M. Daley stated after the death of Dantrell Davis in 1992 that he must declare "a war against the gangs and drug dealers and gangbangers in our city and our nation. We have to–we have a war here and we have to go after them the same way they go after innocent people." "Response to Dantrell Davis Death at Cabrini-Green," Media Burn Independent Video Archive, filmed 1992 at Cabrini-Green Homes, Chicago, I, video, 1:38-1:58. https://mediaburn.org/video/cabrini-green/.
[155] As State's Attorney, Daley completely changed the way that low-level offenses and drug crimes were prosecuted. David Jackson, "The Law and Richard M. Daley," *Chicago Mag*, May 13, 2011, https://www.chicagomag.com/chicago-magazine/september-1988/the-law-and-richard-m-daley/.
[156] Popkin et al., "Sweeping Out Drugs and Crime: Residents' Views of the Chicago Housing Authority's Public Housing Drug Elimination Program," *Crime & Delinquency* 41, no. 1 (January 1995): 73.

and increase their sense of social cohesion and empowerment in public housing.[157] Chicago police, CHA police and security, CHA management, social service providers, and residents collaborated to deploy new security measures, tenant patrol, and drug prevention services. 24-hour security booths and metal detectors were built, residents were required to check in and out of their buildings with legal identification, and the CHA developed its own security force.[158] In practice, however, these facets of the program placed residents under the watchful eye of law enforcement and corroded their freedoms. Elizabeth Hinton aptly refers to such styles of crime control as "policing of the ordinary."[159] PHDEP embraced two initiatives in particular that immediately and permanently altered public safety procedures in public housing: Operation Clean Sweep and the Anti-Drug Initiative.

Operation Clean Sweep was in large part enacted in response to the killing of Dantrell Davis in 1992. According to CHA chairman Lane, only "standards and controls will lead to changes in behavior" in public housing like Cabrini-Green.[160] It was a program of joint inspection by CHA staff and police to search public housing units for illegal weapons and drugs, ensure that all residents were legal tenants, install new security systems, and implement a restrictive visitation policy.[161] As hinted at by its name, Operation Clean Sweep entailed unannounced, unwarranted door-to-door sweeps of apartment units, which were not well-received by tenants. A second major piece of PHDEP was the Anti-Drug Initiative, a program through which the agency funneled millions of dollars into police, security guards, and metal detectors. The initiative extended the goals of the PHDEP and Operation Clean Sweep with

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[157] Ibid., 77.
[158] Ibid., 81.
[159] Hinton, *America on Fire: The Untold History of Police Violence and Black Rebellion since the 1960s*, 22.
[160] Popkin et al., *The Hidden War: Crime and the Tragedy of Public Housing in Chicago*, 16-17.
[161] Popkin et al., "Sweeping Out Drugs and Crime: Residents' Views of the Chicago Housing Authority's Public Housing Drug Elimination Program," 79

"drug elimination" grants from HUD.[162] By the 1990s, the CHA had created a world-class crime control program that combined law enforcement personnel and resources with resident-assisted prevention and intervention programs; however, it failed to fulfill its promises of social cohesion and tenant empowerment, and it led to severe violations of privacy and tenant rights.

Evaluating the PHDEP, Operation Clean Sweep, and the Anti-Drug Initiative

These repressive public safety programs in Chicago received overwhelming support in the *Chicago Tribune* but yielded mixed opinions by residents of public housing. "Anyone who thinks [the PHDEP sweeps are] harsh, several giant steps down a slippery path towards a police state," wrote the *Tribune*, "should talk with the CHA families terrorized by gangsters in their midst."[163] Another article titled "Gang Sweep Brings Hope to a Project" cited numerous laudatory accounts from residents in Rockwell Gardens.[164] For those outside of the CHA projects, sources like the *Tribune* were the only commentaries to which they were exposed, and their endorsement of such dramatic policies largely informed public and political life in a manner consistent with the tough on crime consensus. But among those subject to PHDEP and its programs, such praise was far from the norm.

Residents tended to have more nuanced perspectives on PHDEP. According to Popkin, tenants generally perceived that the sweeps and other procedures had an overall positive impact, and across the developments, they reported that they observed less drug dealing within their buildings, less shooting outside the buildings, and fewer issues with vacant apartments.[165]

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[162] Popkin et al., *The Hidden War: Crime and the Tragedy of Public Housing in Chicago*, 17.
[163] "CHA Finally Gets Tough with Gangs."
[164] Casuso, "Gang Sweep Brings Hope to a Project."
[165] Popkin et al., "Sweeping Out Drugs and Crime: Residents' Views of the Chicago Housing Authority's Public Housing Drug Elimination Program," 84, 89; In Popkin's study, there was significant variation between Harold Ickes and Henry Horner Homes. However, these differences were credited to the structural, economic, social, and

Numerous tenants still saw a benefit to re-sweeping the buildings and noticed a moderate reduction in crime after the implementation of PHDEP.[166] Yet, many residents complained about the sweeps and likened the new security procedures to "lock down."[167] One Henry Horner resident noted that the security program had fallen apart and that the guards "ain't searching nobody. [The drug dealers] can bring in anything. If people are just doing it, they're going to keep doing it."[168] Marion Stamps, a community activist from Cabrini-Green, stood vehemently opposed to the new sweeps and security, comparing, perhaps with slight exaggeration, the police infiltration of Cabrini-Green to Operation Desert Storm, a military mission from the Gulf War. More convincingly, she put forth that the Chicago authorities treated everyone in Cabrini-Green as if they were all murderers by subjecting them to unnecessary and egregious invasions of privacy.[169] What seems to be the most concerning aspect of the PHDEP, though, was not its impact on perceived crime and gang activity, but rather the blatant infringements on personal space and trespasses onto property that such protocols forced onto residents.

PHDEP's sweeps entailed serious violations of resident privacy and tenant rights. These inspections were unannounced and conducted without warrants or consent, and the CHA staff and Chicago police searched all personal items: dresser drawers, bedding, gifts, and other personal effects. If residents were not present, inspectors would drill open their door to search their apartments. Additionally, one PHDEP policy that prohibited tenants from having guests in their homes between midnight and 9 A.M. prevented residents from having out-of-town relatives

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cultural differences in the two developments. Popkin et al., "Sweeping Out Drugs and Crime: Residents' Views of the Chicago Housing Authority's Public Housing Drug Elimination Program," 94-95.

[166] Ibid., 86, 88.

[167] Ibid., 86.

[168] Ibid., 88.

[169] "Response to Dantrell Davis Death at Cabrini-Green," Media Burn Independent Video Archive, filmed 1992 at Cabrini-Green Homes, Chicago, IL, video, 12:42, https://mediaburn.org/video/cabrini-green/.

for the holidays or overnight babysitters.[170] Such intrusions and abuse drew the attention of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), who filed a lawsuit against the CHA on behalf of the residents in 1988.[171] The case, *Summeries v. Chicago Housing Authority*, was decided by consent decree in 1989 and allowed for the continuation of the searches but with restrictions on the CHA's actions during the search.[172] The ruling stood until 1994 when leaders of public housing developments managed to overturn the decision and achieved the prohibition of the warrantless searches.[173] Despite this singular tenant success in the early 1990s, Chicago's public housing had already gained a reputation as a hub of gangs and crime, and President Clinton latched onto it to promote his tough on crime stance, welfare reform, and housing agenda.

National Attention in the 1990s

If the police violence and riots in Chicago in the late 1960s had not yet proven the city's availability as a model for the tough on crime consensus, by the late 1980s and 1990s, Chicago had made its mark as the locus of crime-ridden public housing and became a spectacle for the nation to watch deteriorate into crime and destitution. President Clinton, after having witnessed the dire state of CHA housing firsthand, emphasized the importance of removing drug users and criminals from public housing. In his 1996 State of the Union Address, Clinton called for a 'One Strike and You're Out' law in public housing nationwide. "From now on," he stated, "the rule

[170] "CHA's Sweep Searches Went Too Far," *Chicago Tribune*, January 4, 1989, https://www.chicagotribune.com/1989/01/04/chas-sweep-searches-went-too-far/.
[171] Summeries v. Chicago Housing Authority, No. 88-C-10566 (N.D. Ill. 1988).
[172] David E.B. Smith, "Clean Sweep or Witch Hunt: Constitutional Issues in Chicago's Public Housing Sweeps," *Chicago-Kent Law Review* 69, iss. 2 (December 1993): 505-546, https://scholarship.kentlaw.iit.edu/cklawreview/vol69/iss2/12.
[173] Popkin et al., "Sweeping Out Drugs and Crime: Residents' Views of the Chicago Housing Authority's Public Housing Drug Elimination Program," 80; Pratt et al. v. Chicago Housing Authority, 155 F.R.D. 177 (N.D. Ill. 1994).

for residents who commit crimes and peddle drugs should be 'one strike and you're out.'"[174] After the speech, he promptly passed the Housing Opportunity Program Extension Act of 1996 which mandated the eviction of an entire unit from public housing if anyone on the tenant lease or in their family was convicted of a crime. Additionally, the mandate held housing agencies accountable to sanctions if they did not uphold the laws, and to help them, they were granted access to FBI databases to screen applicants and tenants.[175] While intellectual movements and federal policies impacted public safety and crime control in American cities across the country in the late twentieth century, Chicago was one of the few that reversed this relationship and influenced the entire nation.

These harsh, unforgiving policies completely abandoned the preventative and rehabilitative measures of the sociological reformers as well as the community-based initiatives of Mayor Washington's years. The one-strike policy in particular marked a departure from any community-based public safety programs to a more oppressive system that essentially codified the pathology of criminality of public housing residents. Such policies punished not only individual offenders, but their entire families and communities, further violating their rights to privacy, criminalizing poverty, and contributing to the long-term deterioration–and eventual demolition–of public housing.

Relations between Residents and Law Enforcement

[174] Bill Clinton, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union," online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-before-joint-session-the-congress-the-state-the-union-10.
[175] The Housing Opportunity Program Extension Act of 1996 allowed housing authorities to deny public housing to convicted felons, evict criminals who already lived there, and deny public housing on the basis of drug activity, alcohol abuse, and criminal behavior. Housing Opportunity Program Extension Act of 1996, Pub. L. 104-120, 110 Stat. 834 (1996).

Urban communities, particularly low-income and African American communities, have historically had difficult relationships with law enforcement, and this was especially the case for public housing in Chicago. From the beginning of the late twentieth century, relations were strained between CHA residents and police officers. In 1962, the citizens of Robert Taylor Homes "felt that police were insensitive or brutal; the police, in turn, complained of unprovoked attacks on them."[176] Residents understood that rather than arriving on scene or patrolling neighborhoods as agents of conflict resolution, CPD and CHA police officers were inherently adversarial, which was evident from the disproportionate amounts of police brutality and negligence by the officers. Yet, being a police officer in the CHA neighborhoods was no easy job and entailed immense danger–in fact, CHA police forces were fifty times more likely to be killed on duty than a police officer in any other part of the city.[177] With the influx of police officers and security guards in public housing complexes from both community-based programs and the more repressive policing practices, frequent clashes between CHA residents and police officers molded their relationships and the ways in which law enforcement interacted in residents' space. This culture of conflict came to characterize relations between residents and officers in nearly all Chicago public housing developments.

Chicago has a long history of violence between citizens and law enforcement, police brutality, and ineffective policing that continued throughout the twentieth century regardless of public safety agenda. In 1972, Ralph Metcalfe, a congressman from Chicago, supported police brutality, stating that "aggressive police conduct toward citizens is desirable and legitimate. Abusive treatment of a citizen is viewed as merely over-zealous conduct within the scope of

[176] Wilson, *Thinking About Crime*, 73.
[177] Popkin et al, "Sweeping Out Drugs and Crime: Residents' Views of the Chicago Housing Authority's Public Housing Drug Elimination Program," 90.

accepted police behavior."[178] Recalling Mayor Richard J. Daley's shoot-to-kill order of the late 1960s, excessive police force was not only common, but encouraged by local authorities. Public housing was far from exempt from this reality. Donnell Furlow, a resident of Rockwell Gardens, reported multiple instances of police brutality as a young black man in Chicago public housing during the 1980s. One on occasion, officers beat him on the street and planted drugs on him, and at the police station, more officers took turns beating Mr. Furlow while others held his arms back.[179] This is only one instance of countless violent encounters between public housing residents and police and the inhumane use of force against citizens.[180]

Residents also complained that the police were not doing their jobs properly, if at all. Cabrini-Green's Ms. Wilson claimed that in August 1991 detectives and police officers refused to investigate the murder of her son by a sniper.[181] Similarly, after the 1998 shooting of Chicago police officer Michael Ceriale in Robert Taylor Homes, the officers looking for potential perpetrators reportedly harassed CHA residents. Animosity rose so high that some residents of nearby Stateway Gardens believed that the shooting of a 23-year-old by police officers at a traffic stop not too long afterwards was retaliation for Officer Ceriale's death. According to one officer interviewed on the street, "everybody is on edge and should be…people should just stay inside for a while until it all passes."[182] These stories characterize the complicated, tense

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[178] Balto, *Occupied Territory: Policing Black Chicago from Red Summer to Black Power*, 204; Blue Ribbon Panel, *The Metcalfe Report on the Misuse of Police Authority in Chicago*.
[179] Petty, *High Rise Stories: Voices from Chicago Public Housing*, 67.
[180] For more examples of police brutality in Chicago, see Balto, *Occupied Territory: Policing Black Chicago from Red Summer to Black Power;* Hinton, *America on Fire: The Untold History of Police Violence and Black Rebellion since the 1960s;* and Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime*: *The Making of Mass Incarceration in America*.
[181] Petty, *High Rise Stories: Voices from Chicago Public Housing*, 36.
[182] David Mendell, "Tensions High at CHA Sites: Man Fatally Shot by Officers; 4th Ceriale Suspect Arrested," *Chicago Tribune*, August 29, 1998, 5, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

relationships that residents had with police officers that lasted the entirety of the late twentieth century.

Conclusion

There was a clear shift among criminologists and federal politicians in the 1970s, but in cities like Chicago, the competing approaches blended and overlapped. As a result, separating sociological reform-based public safety from tough on crime programs and other forms of crime control is an impossible task for Chicago's public housing in the late twentieth century. Both community-based public safety and repressive policing worked in tandem to criminalize those in poverty and to produce a pathology of criminality for those in public housing. Among Mayor Washington's archived papers at the Harold Washington Library Center is an executive report that summarized the combined testimony of hundreds of people whose lives had been affected by gangs and crime. They suggested that the city promote community and parental involvement, crime prevention through youth support, and enforcement of laws that lock up drug dealers.[183] Such sources complicate our analysis of how the policy proposals of the sociological reformers and the tough on crime consensus were implemented in low-income communities and understood by Chicagoans through the late twentieth century. It forces us to question how often the true meanings behind the ideological appeals were lost through inadequate translation from sociological reformer and tough on crime rhetoric into their policies and practices. Nonetheless, by exploring the realities of community-based public safety and repressive policing in Chicago's public housing, we have uncovered internal and external perspectives on crime control in CHA

[183] "Final Report and Recommendations of the Juvenile Justice Committee: Mayor's Task Force on Youth Crime Prevention," May, 1985, Harold Washington Archives & Collections, Mayoral Records: Public Safety/Regulatory Sub-Cabinet Records, box 8, folder 3, Harold Washington Library Center.

communities, linked Chicago's early tough on crime approach to national politics, and explored the relationship between public housing residents and law enforcement–both a determinant and byproduct of public safety.

Conclusion

This thesis has taken us from university studies to presidential politics to public housing in Chicago. While the sociological reformers led crime control policy in the 1960s with support from scholars like Sutherland, Cressey, Cloward, and Ohlin, a departure from prevention and rehabilitation occurred during Nixon's presidency. Fueled by an expanding carceral state, a decisive turn away from progressive social policy, and increasing fear of crime and drugs, the early tough on crime consensus found a home in the Republican Party in the early 1970s. Justified by the criminological research of Hirsch, Becker, and Wilson, being 'tough' on crime attracted both Democrats and Republicans and provided them with convincing rhetoric and punitive policy proposals throughout the final three decades of the century. Across this major shift, the relationship between crime and poverty grew closer, and low-income communities were adversely affected by these harsh crime control policies that broadened surveillance of low-income communities and expanded the reach of law enforcement.

In Chicago, CHA public housing suffered from inadequate maintenance and management, changing economic composition, and pervasive crime that terrorized residents and attracted national attention. By the 1990s, these housing projects were symbolic of poverty and crime, gaining notorious acclaim across the country and inspiring some of the most punitive federal policies in American history. Some residents fought for their stories to be heard by the public while others recognized how negatively their communities were being portrayed in the media and sought internal solutions to their struggles. Regardless, the crime and poverty in Chicago's public housing was weaponized by local and federal politicians to support policies

against the interests of the residents while welfare, housing, and crime policy underwent major reform in the 1990s.

Chicago, unlike the rest of the United States, was 'tough' on crime much before the rhetorical and political shift in the 1970s. Mayor Richard J. Daley's words and policies in particular inspired federal politicians like Richard Nixon and provided them with a new vocabulary to speak about crime and public safety. Chicago's public safety and policing initiatives were, from the beginning, aggressive and punitive, but as the tide turned at the federal level, they became even more invasive and threatening to low-income communities and public housing. Both the community-based public safety initiatives and repressive policing practices targeted, criminalized, and pathologized public housing communities. As a result, residents from various CHA developments had diverse opinions on how their communities should be policed, yet their voices often went unheard and the programs often were ineffective.

The Greater Importance of Chicago, Its Public Housing, and Its Public Safety

Public housing, often situated in economically disadvantaged areas, became a focal point for crime control and policing debates. Facing the issues of crime and poverty even after surrendering the CHA to HUD for five years, Chicago's Mayor Richard M. Daley rolled out the Plan for Transformation in 2000 to demolish all of the city's public housing developments and to relocate all of the residents to mixed-income housing. While the Plan signaled the defeat of the CHA, there is still much to be learned from its tragic trajectory not only for future public housing projects, but for public safety, too. Public safety initiatives and policing, the most visible and far-reaching part of the criminal justice system, shape how people experience their daily lives and act as the arms of the political bodies dominating local and federal governments. While it may be

influenced by presidential agendas and is often reliant on federal funding, public safety is a uniquely local phenomenon targeting perceived issues in a specific area. In a sense, federal policies are filtered through local networks and touch citizen life differently depending on individual contexts. Given the repetitive failures of federal crime control policy throughout the late twentieth century, it is difficult to understand how and why American politicians continued to pursue such sweeping policies time and time again.

Legacies of Crime, Poverty, and Public Safety in Chicago

Figure 7: Demolition of Cabrini-Green Homes.

Today, Americans must confront the consequences of the choices that our predecessors made with regards to crime, poverty, and public safety as they denigrated the federal welfare state and public housing, criminalized entire low-income urban communities, and locked up so many young Americans with extensive prison sentences. Mass incarceration disproportionately affects people of color, police brutality still ravages our streets, and the pathology of criminality that stigmatizes poor Americans still reigns supreme in public consciousness. And in recent years, the virulent tough on crime rhetoric of the past has reemerged into national politics. Donald Trump, while president, famously Tweeted "LAW AND ORDER!!!" in an attempt to garner support against alleged lawlessness in Democrat-led cities ahead of the 2020 presidential election.[184] President Biden, too, is no saint

[184] Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), "LAW AND ORDER!!!," X, August 30, 2020, https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1300041598449917953.

himself when it comes to crime control policies and rhetoric. In the 1990s, he made a name for himself as one of the tough on crime Democrats supporting the 1994 Crime Bill. In November 1993, Biden urged Congress that "we must take back the streets" from "predators," claiming that he did not even "want to ask what made them [commit crime]. They must be taken off the street" and "[cordoned] from the rest of society."[185] More recently, during a televised debate in September 2020, Biden and Trump accused one another of not supporting law and order and of being accountable for increases in violent crime.[186] Clearly, the tough on crime consensus has found footing in American politics once again, but this time around, we are better informed about what being 'tough' on crime means, who politicians target with their policies, and what they might wish to change.

In Chicago, little has improved for those in low-income neighborhoods. While Chicago's gangs honored a three-year truce after Dantrell Davis was killed in 1992 and vowed not to harm children in their wars, gang violence in Chicago is still a serious problem today, even for children. "When Danny died," Dantrell's mother Annette Freeman said 28 years after his death, "I'm telling you - these Black kings, these Black men, they stood up, because they looked at Danny: 'This is my son. This could be my nephew, my grandchild.'"[187] But during two weeks of June 2020, at least eight children under ten years old were shot in the city, including a one-year-old and multiple three-year-olds.[188] Even more upsetting, in January 2023, eight-year-old

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[185] Joe Biden, speech to the United States Congress in support of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, Online by Andrew Kaczynski, *CNN Politics*, video, 3:28, https://www.cnn.com/2019/03/07/politics/biden-1993-speech-predators/index.html.
[186] "Donald Trump and Joe Biden Debate Law and Order," *New York Times*, September 29, 2020, video, 0:57, https://www.nytimes.com/video/us/elections/100000007368637/trump-biden-law-and-order-debate-video-clip.html.
[187] "7-Year-Old Dantrell Davis' Murder Led To Gang Truce In 1992; Those Who Were There Call For New Effort With Multiple Children Shot Recently," *CBS Chicago*, July 2, 2020, https://www.cbsnews.com/chicago/news/7-year-old-dantrell-davis-murder-led-to-gang-truce-in-1992-those-who-were-there-call-for-new-effort-with-multiple-children-shot-recently/.
[188] Ibid.

Melissa Ortega was shot in the head and killed by stray gunfire from a gang member while holding her mother's hand in Chicago.[189] Just over thirty years later and in an eerily similar way to Dantrell's death, Melissa's young life was cut short by gangs in the city. Her mother Aracely Leaños, a recent immigrant to the United States, mourned the loss of her daughter who "was a girl full of hope and had her whole life ahead of her" and who "hoped for a better life here: she wanted to learn English, she wanted to experience Chicago snow, she wanted to get a build-a-bear, she wanted to make Tik Tok dances with her friends."[190] Melissa "sought to achieve the American Dream but was instead given American Violence."[191] Even though all of the public housing complexes like Cabrini-Green were torn down by 2011, crime continues to ravage Chicago communities and the misguided crime control policies of the past carry on their sad and frustrating legacy.

Looking Forward

America and Chicago have hope for a better future. In Illinois, the tide seems to be turning back towards the initial ideas of the sociological reformers and criminal justice that seeks not to punish but to rehabilitate. In an effort for more equitable criminal justice and safer policing, Illinois passed the Pretrial Fairness Act and the SAFE-T (Safety, Accountability, Fairness, and Equity) Act in September 2023, which mandated that all police officers constantly wear body cameras, abolished cash bail, prohibited pretrial detention for most defendants, created a new pretrial hearing process, limited the conditions that may be thrust on defendants

[189] "7-Year-Old Dantrell Davis' Murder In 1992 Brought Promises Of Change Just As 8-Year-Old Melissa Ortega's In 2022, But Is It Just Politics?," *CBS Chicago*, January 26, 2022, https://www.cbsnews.com/chicago/news/chicago-child-murders-melissa-ortega-dantrell-davis/.
[190] Michelle Gallardo, et al., "'American violence' took life of 8-year-old girl months after moving to Chicago from Mexico: family," *ABC 7 Chicago*, January 24, 2022, https://abc7chicago.com/chicago-shooting-girl-shot-in-little-village-melissa-ortega-killed/11504016/.
[191] Ibid.

released pretrial such as electronic monitoring, and limited revocation and modification of pretrial release.[192] Moreover, Brandon Johnson's mayoral victory last year in a close competition against Paul Vallas hints at a more equitable, citizen-conscious path forward. Vallas, a staunch tough on crime advocate, called for more expansive policing and harsher prosecution while Johnson has promised to target the root causes of violence by "investing in youth, mental health care, affordable housing, violence prevention organizations, and restructuring the focus of law enforcement."[193] The success or failure of such changes in politics and policy is yet to be seen, but the support pushing back against the punitive policies of the past shows that there is hope for a safer, brighter future.

[192] David Olson et al., "Tracking the Pretrial Fairness Act," *Loyola Chicago Center for Criminal Justice*, https://loyolaccj.org/pretrial-fairness-act.
[193] Rita Ocequerra, "Brandon Johnson Is Making Progress on Gun Violence. But Some Chicagoans Still Feel Forgotten," The Trace, February 22, 2024, https://www.thetrace.org/2024/02/chicago-gun-violence-brandon-johnson/; Mitch Smith. "A Shifting Mood on Crime Propelled Chicago's Leading Candidate for Mayor," *New York Times*, March 1, 2023, https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/01/us/paul-vallas-chicago-mayor-election.html.

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Appendix

Figure 1: A Tower at Cabrini-Green in Chicago's Near North Side.
Source: Eric Allix Rogers, Flickr; Shepherd, Carrie. "Cabrini Green: Life Before and After the High Rises." *WBEZ* Chicago, June 5, 2012. https://www.wbez.org/stories/cabrini-green-life-before-and-after-the-high-rises/01b2c548-ae85-429c-a2ea-e9aff26312b0.

Figure 2: Cabrini-Green Resident.
Source: "Notorious CabriniGreen Public Housing Complex Comes Down in Chicago." *wbur*, December 16, 2010. https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2010/12/16/cabrini-green.

Figure 3: Violent crime (murder, robbery, aggravated assault) and property crime rates in the United States from 1960 to 2015.
Source: Tcherni-Buzzeo, Maria. "The 'Great American Crime Decline': Possible Explanations." In *Handbook on Crime and Deviance,* edited by Krohn, Marvin D., Hendrix, Nicole, Penly Hall, Gina, and Lizotte, Alan J., 309-335. Springer, Cham, August 29, 2019. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20779-3_16; Data sourced from Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reports.

Figure 4: Incarceration and Crime Rates from 1981-2013.
Source: Roeder, Olivia, Lauren Eisen-Brooke, and Julia Bowling. "What Caused the Crime Decline?" *Brennan Center for Justice*, February 12, 2015, 16; Data sourced from Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reports and U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Figure 5: "State Street Corridor" of the CHA where high-rises were wedged between the Dan Ryan Expressway and State Street on the South Side of Chicago. This was the longest contiguous series of public housing in the United States, and it included Robert Taylor Homes, Stateway Gardens, Dearborn Homes, Harold Ickes Homes, and Hilliard Homes.
Source: Alex S. MacLean/Landslides; Vale, Lawrence, J. and Yonah Freemark. "From Public Housing to Public-Private Housing: 75 Years of American Social Experimentation." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 75, no. 4 (2012): 379-402. doi:10.1080/01944363.2012.737985.

Figure 6: Political cartoon depicting Mayor Daley's "shoot-to-kill" order.
Source: Balto, Simon. *Occupied Territory: Policing Black Chicago from Red Summer to Black Power*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2019, 218; Political cartoonist Bill Mauldin. Original source unknown. Clipping found in American Civil Liberties Union, Illinois Division, Records, box 536, folder 1, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Figure 7: Demolition of Cabrini-Green Homes.

Source: Rumore, Kori. “Cabrini-Green Timeline: From ‘War Workers,’ Jane Byrne and Demolition.” *Chicago Tribune*, April 29, 2022. https://www.chicagotribune.com/2020/12/20/cabrini-green-timeline-from-war-workers-to-good-times-jane-byrne-and-demolition/