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LARRY VALE: When it comes to public housing, current concept of mixed income housing really appear very late in the game even though public housing proponents were very focused on incomes right from the start. Public housing was not always for the poorest and has had a complex relationship with ideas about neighborhoods and neighborhood renewal.

It's really too simplistic to think of US public housing as a single failed experiment and as something that's now been replaced by mixed income housing. I like to think of it as really a three faced social experiment. There's a first phase that lasted I think from about 1935, when the program started, up until 1960 or so.

And it was not about finding the poorest people from the worst slums and re-housing them. It was more about finding the worst slums and tearing them down but not really re-housing large numbers of the displaced. Rather, it was a chance to seek out large numbers of the barely poor and to build public housing communities selectively from those people.

We don't call them low income because they probably had incomes between 50% and 80% of the area of median, but they're not very low income and they're not extremely low income the way that we would talk about it today. But by 1960 or so, and lasting until 1990 at least, public housing really took a different attitude towards those who ought to be housed.

By the mid and late 1960s, public housing was predominantly serving a very low income constituency. And by the 1980s, an extremely low income constituency, meaning that it went from 50% or 60% of the area median into between 30% and 50% and then all the way down to about 15% or 20% of the median income by the 1990s or so.

And so that's the phase of welfare housing that we think about as a second phase. And since 1990 or so, there's really been a third face, a series of initiatives to return more of public housing to that first phase of selectivity to really try and find again the people who have less extremely low incomes to give work preferences and things like that and to engage in mixed income housing.

And that's really had a lot of demolition, new communities that are built with different income structures, and rule structures. The images that you see show three phases using Chicago's Cabrini Green as an example. I'm not going to talk much here about Cabrini, but when we get to class, it'll be one of the key case studies, especially since I've recently completed a book that features this place.

But you can see it's a slum. The blueprint's to build high rise public housing that you see in the middle. And more recently, the demolition that that has occurred. A lot of people have had different responses to public housing. And I think it's worth looking at three of them.

First is that journalists and scholars did have some initial enthusiasm for the program and then a lot of controversy, leading to a second phase that one might call the design in decline and fall literature, where everybody seemed to be telling a story about failures of one kind or another, whether it's a failure of design or management or something else.

But since the late '90s, 2000 or so, there's been a series of revisionist efforts, to really rethink the complexity of public housing and the values of what has taken place. And not see everything as a complete disaster. I tend to go really far back in thinking about it. And you don't have to do it entirely to the 1600s to make sense of this.

But I think it's important to talk about ideology and institutional origins of public housing and not treat this as simply something that emerges in the 1930s out of nowhere. You may not want to go all the way back to the 1630s as I tried to do in my book. And you certainly don't need to do that if you come from places that are very distant for many Puritans, but I see a long continuity in housing over questions of really moral judgment.

On the one hand, there's a reward tradition, a sense that the government can help low income people in ways that reward them for certain kinds of behaviors. So in the upper right, you can see an African American family taking advantage of the Homestead Act in the mid 19th century. The system that enabled you to get entire plots of land if you would promise to work and live on it and then it would become yours after a certain number of years.

So there's a tradition that goes with pensions for veterans and other kinds of reward that tie housing to good behavior and particularly good working behavior. And then there's another tradition that I might call the coping tradition. If you look at the bottom right, there's a picture of one of the [INAUDIBLE] houses in Boston.

This one's from about 1800, designed by Charles [INAUDIBLE], the same guy that did the State House just a few years earlier. And it had a wing for men and a wing for women and a chapel in between. And this was the place where people went if they really couldn't afford to live on the town. They didn't have friends or family that could support them.

So the state built a grand edifice and built a lot of them. So you have on the one hand, certain housing that is given as a reward for certain behavior and then another tradition that's really about coping with a set of people that are not behaving as needed.

By the end of the 19th century, you get one of my favorite books. This is called *Civilizations Inferno-- Studies in the Social Cellar* by a man named Benjamin Orange Flower. It's the equivalent of the Jacob Riis book about New York, *How the Other Half Lives*. But this one's about Boston.

And if you look at it, it's a kind for the society, the frontispiece piece of the book here. It shows the happy, wealthy people in the top dancing in their town home while increasingly levels dire circumstances of poverty lurking below them. The immediate next lower level are the well intentioned men that are out of work. The Depression of 1893 was happening.

And they were people for whom no fault of their own, they were out of work, in trouble, and poor for that reason. And then there's a second deserving poor. The widows and orphans that you can see in the third lower level. And those two were a piece of the poor of a city like Boston.

But then there was the social cellar. They the undeserving poor. The criminals, the misbehaving masses tht couldn't quite be trusted. And this is the kind of thing that made it very complicated to decide what is the role of the government when it comes to housing.

So when you get housing authorities, and here's a picture of the men who formed the five person Boston Housing Authority, meaning the board of the authority in the 1940s, you had a sense of judging poverty in a different sense. They wanted to make sure that the people who came into public housing were from that second and third tier and not from the fourth tier.

And even better, they wanted to find people that were ready to move up into the top. That were not going to be employed very long and were not just deserving poor, but actually ready to move onward into the middle class and wouldn't need public housing very long. So you can see if you look at a variety of graphic imagery from all over the country, the different housing

reports and other city agency reports were setting a contrast between public housing and slums that was really very important.

The 1930s and '40s were a time when people focused on sub clearance and employment in the building trades. And so when you got to the Housing Act of 1937, it linked all new low rent housing to slum clearance. It mandated an equivalent elimination agreement.

In other words, public housing construction had to be accompanied by what they called elimination by demolition or condemnation or effective closing or the compulsory repair and improvement of unsafe or insanitary dwelling situated in the locality or metropolitan area. And that that was going to be substantially equal the number to the number of newly constructed dwellings provided by the project.

So in other words, public housing was intended not to compete with anything in the private sector because it wasn't going to make any gains in the low rent housing stock. Even if elimination was achieved by rehabilitation rather than demolition, the improved properties were probably going to cost a lot more and demand substantially higher monthly rentals.

So what this did was to require or at least encourage public housing construction in inner city neighborhoods rather than the more affluent peripheral areas. So it was almost a form of neighborhood renewal in the form of replacement housing even though many other neighborhoods were cleared for other purposes that included more private purposes rather than public ones.

So the Newark example, the green one near towards the bottom right, is a pretty good one. It's a booklet that shows the changes between people in the slum in the upper left side of it and the public housing in the bottom right side. It's almost an environmental determinism from badly behaved people that need the police and sit on stoops and don't do the things they're supposed to do to the Boy Scouts and the happy woman at her sink and the people playing in their yard and the sunshine and the lighter colors that predominate.

It's almost implying that the new appliances are leading to new behavior. But it's really in practice more changing of people rather than changing in them. At least it's worth thinking about. It may be just a different set of people. I was struck by that constantly when I looked at this. So slum clearance had multiple forms of justification, mostly having to do with issues of crime and health.

Chicago, in this brochure, depicted itself, meaning the housing authority, depicted itself as having what they called a dirty backyard. And it is a very revealing evidence for how one thinks about the relationship between the haves and the have nots and the sense that the dirty backyard had to be cleaned up for the benefit of those that were valuing it.

The goal was to deal with what were called streets of dreariness and the dangerous people that lived in them. It's a sense that these were a menace to themselves. So they did charts like once that compared the prevalence of fires and tuberculosis and violence and juvenile delinquency between slum areas and non slum areas.

And there's a picture on the left of a family that has a caption and another place that makes clear that this is supposed to be telling you about the evils of broken families in the slums because the husband has run off and abandoned these women and girls in that place.

So these attitudes towards the slums of people and places to get rid of were implied largely to do with things like disease. The health risks of bad housing were promoted constantly in all the brochures and annual reports and report-- and other documents that came out during the '30s and '40s.

The health risks were paramount. But there was also a set of rewards that were still part of the tradition. The public housing had really inherited from both sides of that reward and the coping mechanism. For the most part, in the '40s, it was still part of the reward tradition. It was used to reward returning veterans, like you can see in the upper left in Los Angeles. It's an effort to, as the middle one says, make juvenile gangsters take a back seat.

And it's still that 19th century sense of public housing as a reward for good behavior and an accompanying mistrust for many of the poor. It really is constant across the country. Here's one of my favorite examples. In Boston, the Boston Housing Authority used dramatic photographs in their annual report.

This is from the 1940s or so. And these binary juxtapositions. Out of the shadows, into the sun. It says, if you can't quite read it, after they built the first eight of these projects, the housing authority wanted to take stock in the 1940s. And they said it beheld eight, clean shining developments rising fresh to the sun where once, in dreary dirt filled dilapidation, slum dwellings had shambled in contaminating hopelessness against a gray and somber sky.

So even the weather was going to get better from public housing. But something's really

missing here, or at least it's very misleading. The implication of the text and the image is that the children from the shadowy alleys are being rescued by transporting them into the sunshine and the openness of public housing.

But I guarantee you none of those kids in the left picture ended up being the happy kids in the sunshine in the right. Or at least it's very unlikely. When I looked at the records, I saw that of the first four public housing developments in Boston, between 50% and 80% of the people actually sought entry into them that were the ones completed under the Housing Act of 1937.

But when I actually examined the lists of tenants in these places, I found that only between 2% and 12% of the projects had actually gained a place-- the people gained a place in the project. And this is not atypical. I've seen statistics for New York that showed that all the way up to 1957, only about 18% of the former residents of public housing sites were re housed in the new public housing.

If the patterns were consistent around the country as I think they may have been, it's more evidence then that the goals of public housing were not really centered on serving the people who were displaced to create it. There was just intense scrutiny about who was wanted in public housing. You had to have a head of the household that was a US citizen, it was segregated by race, it had family sizes that had to be between two and nine persons so you couldn't be a single person.

You couldn't have a large family or an extended family. You certainly couldn't be a gay or lesbian couple. There were no rooming houses available, no living with friends, nobody without a stable employment to pay the rent. It was a very selective effort to find a public citizen. And I like this image in the upper left of the young child and his picket fence in the new Norfolk, Virginia public housing called a citizen of Norfolk's Merrimack Park.

They were very pleased with the people that they got, whether it was toddlers or teens. In the upper right, the caption says boy meets girl in a Brentwood Park home. All three look nice. That's the thing that was going on. But if you look at the bottom chart also from Norfolk, it's an analysis of who really is intended to receive public housing.

They said they've got 47,000 dwellings and only 17,000 of them are substandard. But of those 17,000 that are substandard, which would seem to be the good place to look for public housing residence, they found that 4,000 earn too much for public housing, meaning they really weren't all that poor. But 7,000 earned too little.

In other words, only 6,000 of 17,000 were the target audience. What does it really mean to earn too little for public housing? It means that they were targeting not the lowest of the incomes, but a near poor group of people. And not worrying so much about the people at the bottom. They were more interested in seeing public housing as a social progression.

In many cases, all the way from a slum by way of public housing up to home ownership. This thing appears repeatedly, whether in text or in graphics. The upwardly mobile working class were intended. Built in a mixed income community, if you want to call it that. It's just that nobody was very rich and nobody was very poor.

The assumptions were there about upward mobility towards home ownership. Race is undergirding all of this, of course. This is a Miami example of the situation prevailing in what they inelegantly called the central negro district, not the central business district, but you can see that off to just the right of that.

But actually an area that was seen as a district defined by race. And really vilified by race. If you look at the bottom right the section of the Coconut Grove negro area as they called it, the blocks are classified by what was called the block median penalty score, with red and black being-- red and brown being the worst cases.

And so you could see a lot of it was there. And that had to do with lending and the things that were going on and a way of self-fulfilling a prophecy of disinvestment in the place. So this kind of a situation where white and race were tied into it were really important. And there certainly were efforts going on into the '40s and '50s to cope with white racism and deal with the extent to which public housing still needed to be seen as entering into a segregated city.

The right side is the Baltimore urban league's effort to try and downplay the fears of a changing neighborhood. But those things were very much a part of it. And so public housing gets built. And after a short while where many people were very positive about it, you enter into decline and fall literature, where a lot of the scholarship from the 1970s and '80s was just relentlessly negative about public housing.

Lee Rainwater's book *Behind Ghetto Walls* from 1970 about Pruitt-Igoe, written just before the demolition of it. Or the book by Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto* in the 1980s. And then by the 1990s, Alex Kotlowitz's book, *There Are No Children Here*, about the impossibility of childhood in the Henry Horner Homes of Chicago. Those things were happening.

But what I find really interesting is that there have been revisionist lenses that really do matter. Since about 2000, new ways of looking. Thinking about what success has been or could be, taking the role of tenants much more seriously. And also really thinking about the role of design. So if we say a little bit about each of those.

In 2008 and 2009, I was fascinated to see two books with almost diametrically opposed titles come out. Brad Hunt wrote about Chicago with the title *Blueprint for Disaster-- The Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing*. At almost the same time, Nick Bloom is writing a book called *Public Housing That Worked-- New York in the 20th Century*.

Now, one could think it's just the time period. The middle volume here, *When Public Housing Was Paradise* is a book about Chicago in its first 20 years of public housing. But Bloom's book says public housing worked in the 20th century, meaning all the way up until pretty recently.

Since 2000, I think there's been a lot more publicity for New York and [INAUDIBLE] problems. And it suggests that some places, including the city that has the most public housing, is very far from the worst case situation. But Chicago was probably the worst for the longest. Though several other cities had lawsuits and receiverships and HUD takeovers and all sorts of things like that.

In Boston, for instance, there was a receiver, really the first of this who took over in 1980, Harry Spence. And the court put him in charge and told him to try and fix a very broken system. The *Boston Globe* magazine cover here says that, I think, in some really interesting ways. Think about what you're seeing here.

What is this suggesting about how positive change comes about? Can this man save public housing? Is that the right question? What is it actually asking? I want to return to this image when we get to class and talk about it and try to deconstruct it a little bit more. So think about it. Think what you're seeing here.

I think that picture and that sentence is encoding the whole history of American housing very neatly in a single composite image. So think about what you're seeing here. It's not the only picture like, that strangely. A decade later, another housing authority in crisis, another newspaper, *Sunday Magazine*, is asking a similar question. Can this man save the CHA, the Chicago Housing Authority.

This time, the man is the head of the CHA, Vincent Lane, a former developer. And at least he

gets to pose on top of the buildings, it's Cabrini Green. I'm not sure that's an advantage, though. Is he dwarfed by the challenge or is he on top of his world? You can make your own guess. He didn't last very long despite making some very highly publicized interventions of the mixed income housing at Lake park place.

The anti-drug sweeps that brought him national and international attention. And by 1995, the CHA was taken over by HUD from '95 until 1998. And then they launched the famous Plan for Transformation in 2000, which we'll talk about a bit in class. So there's a very mixed record of achievement from the successes to the failures to the ambitious plans to try and turn failure back into success.

But one of the things that I find so striking in recent years is that there's a latter day reevaluation and revaluating the activism of the tenants, the residents. It's really a change in the scholarship about public housing. More of it has become tenant centered. It's not just about public politicians and housing authority leaders. But it's about the coping mechanisms of tenants who've had to endure terrible conditions.

It puts people like Thelma Smith, who's in the middle picture, a tenant leader at Boston's Franklin Field development, it puts them at the center of the picture and not shunted to the margins. Rhonda Williams's book about Baltimore, *The Politics of Public Housing*, is one. Roberta Feldman and Susan Stall's book, *The Dignity of Resistance*, about women tenant activists at Chicago's Wentworth Gardens.

Sudhir Venkatesh's complex view of the complexities of gang culture and politics and economics at Robert Taylor Homes in Chicago, American Project, a project that is now demolished and we'll talk about what's happened to that as well. My own reclaiming public housing book about the 50 year struggles of three communities in Boston to try and get past dire conditions and return to desirable communities.

And I think a lot of people have started asking the question that's posed in the title of the book by Larry Bennett, Janet Smith, and Patricia Wright, *Where Are Poor People To Live?* It's not so obvious as public housing itself has come to change. The last of the real changes that I think is starting to take place is a more complex view about the role of design.

More of the thinking and the writing has emphasized the importance of design. There was always a long history emphasizing the negative consequences and design was always a key

part of that. The fact that it was initially built to emphasize the distinctiveness of public housing, not to just be bare and austere and off putting, but to appear as a security and safe and modern alternative to the wooden fire traps of the aging slums.

You can see in the middle of the picture of the Orchard Park development built in 1942 in Boston, although the pictures from 2000 and then a picture just a few years later of Hope Six redevelopment of Orchard Gardens. Pretty much the same spot in the place. But there have been other aspects to the conversation.

When I see the design centered revisionism that's taking place has often taken, again, an environmental determinist stance. There was a book that is little remembered now by [INAUDIBLE] and the better known Christopher Alexander, called *Community and Privacy*, that's 1965. But it also had the attack on project centric mentalities that was much more wildly and widely influential by Jane Jacobs in 1961.

And then by 1972, there was Oscar Newman's work, *Defensible Space-- Crime Prevention Through Urban Design* that really was trying to suggest that it was possible to use design and urban design to shape behavior. It was about crime reduction and showed early cases of how public housing projects could be retrofitted and redesigned to make them safer through residence by encouraging a territoriality.

And it was fascinating to me in the mid 1990s the way HUD embraced Oscar Newman's defensible space ideas and had him author an entire manual in the 1990s. And soon after that, HUD embraced the new urbanist wing. You can see a co-authored publication, *Principles for Inner City Neighborhood Design* at the left.

And particularly emphasizing the neo traditional development side of new urbanism and was really trying to rethink the whole overall image of public housing developments. So rather than public housing being this deliberately different looking modernist alternative to decrepit and ill provisioned rows of wooden or brick townhouse that that seem to signify mid century blight and slum conditions, the new urbanist paradigm wanted to sanitize and update the reputation of the pre modern urban models and make future public housing look much more like private sector neighbors.

Not standing implacably, in part from the [INAUDIBLE], the colors in the Orchard Garden look pretty different than anything you'd find in that part of the neighborhood. It still stands out, but it stands out in a different way. The goal if you take defensible space and new urbanism

together is a tableau of middle class Americana, that normalizes the appearance of public housing to a point where it really could be accepted again into the fabric of existing, market friendly neighborhoods.

And that's pretty necessary if you want to start thinking about mixed income. But it raises a question. Does Hope Six and HUD's program with its picket fences and pastel facades, it's a new look for public housing and it's buried within a larger concept of mixed income housing, it's managed by private firms rather than the public sector, but is it actually displacing the poorest again just like they were displaced from the slums to build public housing back in the '30s and '40s?

There's a book by Edward Goetz that's coming out in 2013 called *New Deal Ruins-- Race, Economic Justice, and Public Housing Policy*. And I had a chance to look at an advance copy of it. And it's an entire book about public housing demolition. And it really strongly critiques the extent of displacement caused by Hope Six and suggests that displacement has been disproportionately born and has had a disproportionately negative impact on African Americans.

My own book, which is also due out in 2013, is called *Purging the Poorest-- Public Housing and the Design Politics of Twice Cleared Communities*. And despite its title, it's probably a little more evenhanded than the Goetz book, but it's attempting to understand why the leadership of some cities, particularly Atlanta and Chicago, has been so intent on introducing mixed income communities to replace the public housing projects of the past.

So really, what I've wanted to do here is to frame some of the current challenges of mixed income housing. I hope you're going to keep in mind some of these deeper cultural issues that I've been discussing here. It's not just public housing about our attitudes towards the housing that is important. It also matters what we mean by the public in public housing and which parts of that public are expected to benefit from housing redevelopment and what form those benefits ought to take. And those are the things that I hope you'll think about in the days up to class and we'll get a chance to talk in person very soon. Thanks.