

THE BIRTH OF THE PROJECTS

To alleviate the growing population pressures, Chicago - and other northern cities - began to build some public housing. The original plans called for integrated projects to be built on vacant land scattered across Chicago. But whites violently resisted integration. Black families moving into white neighborhoods were commonly greeted with rocks and firebombs. When the new Fernwood Park Homes project, designated to be 8% black, opened in a white neighborhood in 1947, 5,000 whites rioted for two weeks. Caving in to white fears, Chicago - and other cities - soon decided to build up rather than out, constructing massive, hi-rise housing projects within the South Side ghetto, including Cabrini Green and the Robert Taylor Homes (28 identical 16-story buildings, the largest public housing project in the country), ensuring the projects would be segregated.

Clory Bryant remembers that when she first moved into the Cabrini Green projects, it was home to school teachers, policemen and secretaries and she kept the door open at night. But new Housing Authority income ceilings soon forced out anyone who made more than a minimal income and within a few years the projects became known as warehouses for those without jobs and education.

QUESTION:

Why didn't Chicago and other municipalities scatter public low-cost housing throughout the city? How did the projects end up as warehouses for the poor?

QUESTION:

What, if anything, should government do to provide adequate low-cost housing today?