

**IMMIGRATING TO PUBLIC HOUSING: HAITIAN IMMIGRANTS AND THE
TRANSFORMATION OF WASHINGTON ELMS AND NEWTOWNE COURT**

by

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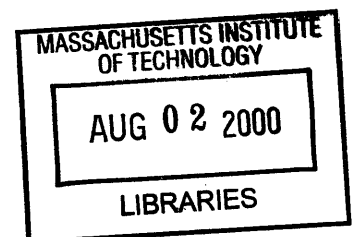
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ABSTRACT

For centuries the United States has received waves of immigrants. In fact, many scholars would argue that America *is* a nation of immigrants. At the height of foreign migration to the US – late nineteenth, early twentieth century – many of America’s Northeast cities became gateways or ports-of-entry for generations of immigrants. Upon arrival in these gateway cities, most immigrants, but particularly low-income immigrants, could rely upon the existence of the port-of-entry neighborhood – a neighborhood in which the affordability of the housing stock afforded recent migrants the opportunity to live in close proximity to someone with whom they shared a common culture, experience, and language. After World War II, however, the US rapidly expanded, and with this expansion came the destruction of many port-of-entry neighborhoods. In fact, because many port-of-entry neighborhoods were often situated in more economically depressed urban communities, under programs like Urban Renewal they were labeled “slums,” which hastened their decline.

Today, many port-of-entry neighborhoods are still under assault. In more recent times, however, the economy – rapid gentrification and stronger real estate markets – has replaced Urban Renewal. This has caused many low-income immigrants to seek alternative affordable housing solutions for themselves and their families. One area of the real estate market that some immigrants have chosen to occupy has historically been home to different waves of low-income individuals: public housing. Public housing has experienced many different types of residents; newly arrived immigrants present themselves as a new group.

This thesis is a case study of a current example of the process by which a recent immigrant group, Haitians, has transformed two public housing developments in Cambridge, MA – two of the oldest government housing developments in the US: Washington Elms and Newtowne Court. I use archival and face-to-face interview data to answer two questions: Is public housing becoming a port-of-entry neighborhood for recent immigrants? (in this case, for Haitians) and, if so, what does it mean for Housing Authorities across the nation to take on the role of housing immigrants, particularly those in traditional port-of-entry cities? I find that as was the case in the old port-of-entry neighborhood, the availability of low-cost housing – in this instance public housing – provides low-income immigrants the opportunity to create *new* port-of-entry communities.

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To embark on any research project that involves “real world” actors, rather than simply the “books and pages,” a student must be prepared to be a good listener and then a competent conveyor of oral information. It is also true, that as one is able to piece together information from those that are integral players in the project studied, a strong sense of attachment and closeness for the research investigated is developed. Any researcher that is fortunate enough to have individuals not only make time in their busy schedules, but actually exceed what has been asked of them, can “count his/her blessings.” There are facts and stories that can be clarified and conveyed from primary research that any secondary source of information can not do as well. Such has been the case for me.

Being a lifelong Cambridge resident gave me a rare perspective from which to start this study. For the research I have been able to conduct, I am indebted to a number of individuals in the Cambridge Housing Authority. First, I would like to thank Steve Swanger, the “Saint of the Work Force.” Steve was the first person I befriended in the CHA and if weren’t for his initial lobbying, I might have never gotten, “my foot in the door.” Without his help, this paper would not have been possible.

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The many individuals that I interviewed who were long-time resident of The Port were great sources of inspiration. Many times, one or two sentences from their interviews kept me thinking for days. Some of the individual were previous friends: Tyrone, José, Dennis, the Colons, Lena, and Donnie. Other individuals were people with whom I was familiar, but with whom I never had the opportunity to become acquainted: Susan, Jane, Janet, and Gerard.

The Haitian immigrants with whom I have become familiar were a major source of inspiration to this project. I have enormous respect for their culture, their people, and their place in history. I admire the Haitian for his courage to “throw-off the chains of slavery” and to become the first independent nation led by people of color in the Western Hemisphere. I am fortunate to have befriended Mura Joseph. Without his help this project would have been unexciting. He translated for me on multiple occasions, shared some of the intricacies of Haitian culture, and also invited me into his home to meet his family as well as to his class where he teaches Haitian immigrants. His partner at the CEOC Mary was also very helpful. The other Haitian immigrants Jeane, Yanick,

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PROLOGUE

As a young child I moved with my family from Iran to Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1980.

Cambridge is the environment in which I was reared and the city in which I have spent three quarters of my life. Today, I am a reflection of the combined experiences of growing up in a racially, economically, socially, and ethnically diverse city. My continuously evolving political beliefs and values have been shaped by the experiences and lessons I have encountered in Cambridge.

Cambridge, like any other urban area, is comprised of neighborhoods and sub-neighborhoods that are as different from one another as are the fifty states. In this city, there are many distinct “neighborhood stories.” Each story tells us something unique about the neighborhood, its people, their ancestral home, and their experience in Cambridge. For example, there are the stories of two diametrically opposed neighborhoods, both worlds apart, but yet a part of the same city. One story is of the Brattle street neighborhood and its residents, the descendents of some of the earliest settlers of the United States, the English Yankees or “blue bloods”, and the wealth they have inherited. Another extremely different story takes place in a neighborhood called The Port, where some of the most recent immigrants from the Caribbean Basin, with little actual wealth, have come with the hope of attaining the “American Dream.” It is this neighborhood that I have come to love as my own, although I was raised on the other side of town in North Cambridge.

The story I have embarked upon telling is one that I have had personal experience with from the time I was little boy. In 1983, at age ten, I first stepped into the “projects,”--as they were called back then. I didn’t feel, see, or smell anything different, except I was worried that one of the older boys was going to steal my bike or at least take it for a “joy ride.” This was something I feared no matter

where I was because my bike had been stolen incessantly and my mother had bought me a new *Huffy* from Zayres.

I came to know different public housing developments as I got older and made more friends from different parts of Cambridge. The grammar school I attended, the Peabody, was fully integrated in 1981 when I was in the third grade. Children from different races, socio-economic backgrounds, and neighborhoods in Cambridge attended my school.

I first stepped foot into Newtowne Court in 1985 to spend the night at my friend Derek's house. Newtowne Court is in The Port, on the periphery of MIT, and a neighborhood with which I was unfamiliar. Without a full push for an integration policy, Derek and I would never have become friends. He was from The Port, and if the neighborhood school policy was still in effect, Derek would have gone to the Fletcher School which is down the street from his home.

Newtowne Court was rough back then, and all I can remember that first night was that the heat in Derek's apartment was unbearable. I stayed awake half the night! My mother, being from rural Texas, had trained us to sleep without any air conditioning, so for me this was also a new experience. In 1985, Newtowne Court was the type of "project" that every Housing Authority despised, and one in which tenants struggled to survive. The doorbells were completely broken, the hallways often smelled of urine and trash from the old incinerator chutes, and the common spaces and landscape were void of grass, shrubs, or any beauty that I could recognize. The Cambridge Housing Authority seemed to be unable to maintain this development, and the place felt much like an institution. The tenants were left to live in a development that seemed to get worse and worse as the days went by.

During my first two years of high school, '87 and '88, I became more mobile. With my mobility I started to visit more and more public housing developments in Cambridge. In fact, because many of my friends lived in these developments, I visited every major project in the city. Although my family is middle class, my mother raised me to judge people by their character and not by their race, socio-economic status, or ethnicity. I never made the distinction as a young boy; I did realize my family had more wealth, of course, but this was of little consequence to me. I lived in a condo and many of my friends lived in an apartment building that happened to be owned by the city – that was it.

During this time my first “love” lived in Washington Elms as well as one of my first friends in high school, Jamel. I first visited this development one year after the CHA had turned this site into a public housing “townhouse” development. Washington Elms is directly adjacent to Newtowne Court, but back in the mid-80's it felt like they were two different worlds. All of the buildings seemed spacious, but were void of detail – detail that makes a place have life and uniqueness. You still knew you were entering public housing, as the interiors lacked any aesthetic detail that would give the units character. Once I heard the horror stories describing what the new structures replaced, I began to rethink my initial responses.

The late '80's in Cambridge's history paralleled that of many other urban areas. Crack cocaine began to invade the projects and The Port with force. Many of the teenagers were quickly attracted to the large sums of money that could be made by selling a few pieces of rock to customers for \$10 and \$20; these customers would return within minutes to get high all over again -- a process that seemed unthinkable! Unfortunately, many of the people I knew and sat in class with every day were enticed

by the lure of this game. Many of these same individuals ended up behind bars. I was saddened by this fact, but motivated to learn some of the causes of this plague.

In retrospect, there are many reasons that I have embarked upon telling the story of The Port neighborhood through the lens of Washington Elms and Newtowne Court, two of the nation's oldest public housing developments. I am driven by a passion for a neighborhood that I have come to know in many capacities: as a young boy learning how to handle myself in an environment where your “manhood” was tested constantly; as a friend to many of the people and families who reside in this part of Cambridge; as a campaign manager for a failed State Representative race; as a math literacy worker for the Cambridge Algebra Project/Young People’s Project teaching students of color the skills necessary to survive in the technological revolution currently taking place ; and finally as a student at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, one of the world’s most powerful institutions of higher learning, that is technically located in The Port, but has rarely given anything back to this neighborhood or its residents.

There are three ways that I came upon my thesis topic. All three converged around the same theme: immigrants and public housing. As a student in a housing and human services class last year at MIT, I embarked upon a topic that investigated the history of a Workforce Unemployment Program run out of the Cambridge Housing Authority. This program was designed for children of public housing aged 14-18 years old. In the course of my interviews I consistently heard staff members remark how their target population had transformed to mainly Haitian Immigrants.

The second way was through reflection upon my failed state representative campaign. I recalled the day when we were campaigning in an elderly public housing development, and how we consistently came across residents without proficiency in English.

The third way was also through reflection on my childhood. As a young child many of my neighborhood friends lived in public housing. It was only later that I realized that many of them were Haitian immigrants or the children of Haitian immigrants.

I guess my thesis topic has been inside me for many years. It is only now that I am able to articulate it.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION & RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Part I. Background

The United States of America, beginning with thirteen colonies, has received waves of immigrants for over four centuries. Many of these immigrants, who hail from all parts of the world, have not always been met with “open-arms.” In fact, from the moment many low- to moderate-income immigrant groups set foot in this country they are confronted with multiple obstacles. In some cases these obstacles include language barriers, insufficient education and skills, lack of transportation, inaccessible jobs, and more recently a lack of affordable housing. All of these barriers prohibit many immigrant groups from achieving the so-called “American Dream,” or a better life for themselves and their families -- the motivating factor for many groups to choose to come to this country. The “American Dream” can simply mean a safe place to live, a decent education, and a steady job. But to many it is symbolized in the purchase of a home.¹

In the early twentieth century, many immigrant groups could rely upon the existence of a port-of-entry neighborhood, particularly the waves of immigrants that chose an urban environment (Handlin, 1951, King, 1981).² A port-of-entry neighborhood is a neighborhood in which the affordability of the “housing” gives the newly arrived groups an option to live cheaply, the possibility of future home ownership, and the security of living in proximity to someone with a common history and culture. Other important characteristics of the port-of-entry neighborhood

¹ There are many definitions of the “American Dream” and a simple definition is provided here. For a more in depth discussion see James Truslow Adams, *The Epic of America*. Adams is credited with coining the phrase “American Dream.”

² Mel King, *Chain of Change*, uses the term “port-of-entry” to describe Boston's South End as an entry port for waves of immigrants beginning in the late 19th and early twentieth century, pg 19. Although he might not be credited for creating the term “port-of-entry,” he is one author who I have found to have used the term early.

include religious and educational institutions, immigrant-owned small business clusters and networks, and cultural activities used to reaffirm the unique ethnic group of the community.

Today, port-of-entry neighborhoods are still prevalent in many urban areas across the country that have historically received waves of immigrants: Washington Heights, The Mission, Maverick Square, Boyle Heights, and Ukrainian Village are synonymous with New York, San Francisco, Boston, Los Angeles, and Chicago, respectively. Much of the housing stock in port-of-entry neighborhoods, however, is dilapidated, in disrepair, and often, is in a highly neglected part of town. The overarching characteristic of these neighborhoods remains the affordability and accessibility of the housing, but as listed above, there are other important variables that define the port-of-entry.

In some cities, urban neighborhoods that traditionally filled the role of a port-of-entry have become increasingly attractive to young and old professionals. In cities like Boston, New York, and San Francisco the urban middle-class migration to a suburban utopia, that was once the norm in some neighborhoods, is reversing.³ All of these cities, however, always retained a certain mix of incomes, but the underlying factor is that the pendulum has begun to swing back to a time when middle-class professionals populated the urban landscape in abundance. Middle-class individuals are entering many cities in record numbers; urban neighborhood gentrification is rampant, and thus, some port-of-entry neighborhoods are being “taken over,” and might disappear altogether. Boston's South End, San Francisco's The Mission district, and New York's Lower East Side are current examples.

³ Recent trends in the real estate markets in all of the cities listed are strong indicators of how quickly some of the traditional port-of-entry neighborhoods are gentrifying.

Are they truly disappearing, or are port-of-entry neighborhoods shifting to other areas? In recent years it has been discovered that public housing, housing that has had its share of tumultuous years, is beginning to take on the responsibility of receiving a growing number of immigrants. In a sense, immigrants are being “forced” to “immigrate to public housing.” (Vale and Dobrow, 1997).

Public housing from its inception was intended to serve a population in transition. Beginning by serving a submerged middle-class and World War II veterans, public housing has gone through many lives. Later due to a relaxation in Federal and local laws, the abolition of legalized segregation, and the dynamics of urban renewal, public housing began to receive the “poorest of the poor” and became housing of last resort (Wilson, 1987).

This thesis explores the convergence of two stories: The first story begins with the creation of port-of-entry neighborhoods in urban areas. I ask some simple questions: What are the traditional elements of port-of-entry neighborhoods, how do these neighborhoods function, and how have these neighborhoods evolved over time?

The second story begins with the evolution of public housing and its residents. I begin this story by asking more simple questions: For what segment of society was public housing created, how has this population evolved over time, and ultimately, what is the current population of public housing today?

In the process of investigating these two stories I will look closely at the traditional residents of both kinds of neighborhoods, those of public housing, and those of traditional port of entry neighborhoods.

In this thesis the convergence of these two stories attempts to answer two main questions. First, *is public housing becoming a port-of-entry for immigrants?* And second, if it is, *what does it mean for public housing to take on this new role of housing immigrants?* I attempt to answer these questions with a case study of a neighborhood in Cambridge, Massachusetts known as Area IV by the city government. To its residents it is known as The Port. It should be noted, however, that what I uncover in the process of describing The Port is often anecdotal and descriptive, but not necessarily applicable to housing authorities across the country.

Historically, The Port has been home to many low- to moderate-income residents. As Cambridge began to grow -- in a process that began in the early part of the nineteenth and carried into the twentieth century -- many of the wetlands that lined The Port and the Charles River going toward Boston were filled, thus making room for the expansion of industries and housing to support working-class families. By the late nineteenth century The Port was one of the most fully industrialized neighborhoods in New England (Cambridge Historical Commission, 1971).

This development, and particularly the opportunities for jobs, attracted people from all over the world in such large numbers that The Port became home to many immigrants as it took on the characteristics of a port-of-entry neighborhood. At the same time, The Port became a blue-collar neighborhood as most of its residents created high social, racial, and economic diversity. This diversity caused many of the city's politicians, during the New Deal Era, to fight for the Port to be home to some of the nation's first Public Housing developments: Newtowne Court, 1938; Washington Elms, 1943, located on adjacent sites.

In recent years, because of boom in the real estate market in Greater Boston in general, and Cambridge in particular, The Port has begun to feel the effects of gentrification and thus begun to lose many of its affordable rental units and home ownership opportunities.

Table 1. Comparing Area Four with Citywide Rents 1991⁴

Rent Level	Area Four	Cambridge
\$300 or less	4%	22%
\$301 - 450	37%	23%
\$451-600	22%	20%
\$601-750	19%	14%
Over \$750	19%	20%

Note: Rents are for all size units

Source: CCDD, 1991

A quick survey of the rents in The Port in 1991, indicate 82% of the rent controlled apartments were under \$750 a month. Today, it is almost impossible to find a unit that rents for under \$900 per month. This fact has sent many of The Port's lower income residents searching for new places to live, particularly Haitian immigrants who comprise the single largest immigrant group making Cambridge their home; Haitian immigrants have surprisingly begun to fill one area of The Port many social scientists would never have predicted: both Washington Elms and Newtowne Court.

In the following chapters I will use the current situation of Haitian immigrants in both Washington Elms and Newtowne Court to uncover why, when, and how, Haitians have come to occupy both developments, as well as to answer both of the questions central to this thesis posed above.

⁴ This survey was taken from , *Area IV Neighborhood Study*, produced by the Cambridge Community Development Department , Fall 1991.

Part II. Outline

Slums of Hope: Residents of Port of Entry Neighborhoods and Public Housing

In an attempt to put the port-of-entry neighborhood in its historical context, Chapter 2 begins by exploring the story of how a great number of low- to moderate-income immigrants have adapted as they have reached the United States. It focuses on two periods in history when the port-of-entry neighborhood has been dominant: the late nineteenth/early twentieth century, and the late 1970's and '80's. It investigates how port-of-entry neighborhoods have evolved historically and, in particular, it illuminates the different variables that comprise this type of neighborhood and how many immigrants have used these communities.

Chapter 2 continues by introducing the idea of how public housing has gone through many lives. This chapter narrowly focuses on the type of residents that have occupied public housing from its inception in 1937 up to the present: the submerged middle class, the former slum dweller, those displaced by urban renewal, the dependent poor, the underclass, and – in some locations today – the low-income immigrant. It then poses and attempts to answer the question, “What is the role of public housing, and how has it evolved?” This chapter ends by introducing the idea of how some port-of-entry neighborhoods are in proximity or surround public housing developments, and how some public housing developments are beginning to take on the role of port-of-entry neighborhoods, particularly the case illuminated later – The Port and its two public housing developments, Washington Elms and Newtowne Court.

The Port: Washington Elms & Newtowne Court

Chapter 3 delineates the history of The Port neighborhood in Cambridge and tells this story through the lens of its two public housing developments, Washington Elms and Newtowne Court. It begins in the period these two developments were created: the mid 1930's and early 1940's and moves to the present. It discusses in depth the many changes the neighborhood has experienced.

Throughout the last sixty years The Port has experienced rapid demographic shifts, in particular race and ethnicity, as well as massive physical conversion, from a major industrial center to a place where some of the most well known bio-tech firms reside. This chapter concludes by introducing a new group of residents that currently hold the dominant position in both Washington Elms and Newtowne Court: Haitian Immigrants. One of the central elements of this chapter is to show how, in the context of The Port, different ethnic groups have replaced one another, and how the dominant group of today – Haitian immigrants – was not always prevalent.

The Haitian Experience in Particular

Chapter 4 delineates the history of Haitian Immigrants in the United States and discusses how this community has developed three main satellite communities outside of Haiti: New York, Miami, and Boston in respective order of size of population. It then explores the question of what it means to be an immigrant of color as opposed to a European immigrant in the United States, in conjunction with the consequences of entering a society where individuals are judged by the color of their skin. It then moves on to explore reasons for the development of a Haitian community inside of Cambridge, defining the path this community follows to reach Cambridge, and how this population has risen to the single largest ethnicity in both Washington Elms and Newtowne Court. This

chapter attempts to answer the first question: Is Public Housing (in this case Washington Elms and Newtowne Court) becoming a port-of-entry neighborhood?

Final Discussion: Future of Immigrants and Public Housing

The final chapter attempts to draw some conclusions. Is the particular trend of the convergence of immigrants and public housing in The Port only case specific, or is this something for other Public Housing Authorities and traditional port-of-entry cities to be on the look out for? It will try to answer the final question, “Can public housing take on the role of housing immigrants, and if so, what adjustments must be made for public housing to be equipped to become a quasi-port-of-entry neighborhood?” This chapter concludes by proposing policy changes and recommendations that Housing Authorities might follow to help them properly handle their new immigrant population.

Part III. Research Methodology

The methodology that I used was multifaceted:

- I investigated the necessary historical, sociological, and anthropological information through journals, newspapers, and relevant texts.
- I analyzed census data provided by the city of Cambridge and the US census, as well as archival and historical data provided by Cambridge Housing Authority and the Cambridge Community Development Department.
- I interviewed current and former neighborhood residents, city officials specifically from the Cambridge Housing Authority and the Community Development Department, current and former residents of Washington Elms & Newtowne Court, and recent immigrants from Haiti. I also conducted phone interviews with public housing officials in other large immigrant cities.
- I made utilized photographic documentation from The Port, Washington Elms and Newtowne Court to supplement the frequent site visits made during this study.

CHAPTER 2. SLUMS OF HOPE: RESIDENTS OF PORT-OF-ENTRY NEIGHBORHOODS & PUBLIC HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

Although the great mass of immigrants spent out their days in the great cities, there was always an unorganized quality to settlement in such places that left a permanent impress upon every fresh arrival. Chance was so large an element in the course of migration, it left little room for planning..Consequently the earliest concentrations of the foreign-born were in the chain of Atlantic seaports: Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, New Orleans, and most of all New York, the unrivaled mart of Europe's commerce with America.

Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted*, 1951, pg.145

The United States of America is a country in which successive waves of immigrants have placed their hopes, dreams, and aspirations for “a better way of life” for centuries. In fact, every individual -- whether he/she is a citizen or not -- is either, a recent immigrant, or a direct descendant of an immigrant. The only individuals who are not foreign to this nation are the Native Americans, and some scholars argue, that they are the descendants of Asiatic people who crossed the Bering Straits at the end of the Ice Age; either directly or indirectly people who occupy the US today are of immigrant stock.

For many immigrants, the search for a better way of life simply meant (and continues to mean) escape from oppression, subjugation, and torture in societies that had used these mechanisms of control for centuries.⁵ Many immigrants found the opportunities offered in America for freedom and for escape from control as profoundly novel. The US became attractive to many different people from all over the world because it offered many “unalienable rights,” famous words codified in the Declaration of Independence, “ Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” These words

⁵ The point here is to underscore the attractive political climate in the US as opposed to many other societies. Many immigrants, however, have entered the US in search of better economic opportunities. The search for employment has constantly drawn immigrants to America. The reader is directed to Sylvia Pedraza-Bailey, *Political and Economic Migrants*.

seem simple today, however, in the late 18th century no nation in the world offered its citizens the opportunity to achieve such progressive ideas.

Port-of-Entry Cities

Nineteenth Century: Newcomers and Internal Strain

Inside of Europe, one of the major forces to propel first thousands, and later, millions of people to the US was the end of the system of feudalism and the rise of the system of capitalism (Handlin, 1951). In Europe feudalism had been the way of life for centuries, but with the rise of the Industrial Revolution many former peasants were quickly forced to urbanize. Under the system of capitalism, repressive conditions and lack of political freedom became the norm for the European proletariat, just as they had been for the peasant under the feudalistic system. During this epoch, however, the proletariat had an option for escaping repression and political control. This option was migrating to a newly developed and liberated country: The United States of America.

During the beginning of the nineteenth century, many cities along the Atlantic seashore of the US were growing at a gradual pace. By the middle of the century, however, the US was in the midst of its own Industrial Revolution. Because enslaving individuals (or any other group for that matter) was no longer an option to the new class of US capitalists, this group quickly became desperate for cheap labor; Europeans filled this void.

Because of the historic relationship between the United States and Europe, that had consisted of trade, wars, and migration, most of the first large waves of immigrants to the US during the nineteenth century were of European parentage (Handlin, 1951, Winnick, 1990). People who were

English, Dutch, German, Irish, Scottish, and Scandinavian, and later Italian, Polish, Jewish, Greek, Portuguese, and Hungarian came to search for jobs and later to make the US their new home. Following old trade routes, and migrating to cities where employment was plentiful, European immigrants quickly filled communities along the Atlantic seashore of the US. Upon collision with the large mass of newcomers from Europe, however, cities like New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, and New Orleans experienced levels of phenomenal growth that never have been repeated in the history of the United States (See tables 2-4). These cities quickly became the port-of-entry for thousands of Europeans, starting a tradition of receiving immigrants that continues to this day. These cities, however, were not equipped to handle the large waves of immigrants from Europe (Handlin, 1951).

A quick glance at the population of the major port-of-entry for most immigrants, New York, prior to the first large wave from Europe, exhibits that its inhabitants numbered 312,710 in 1840, quickly rose to 1,200,000 by 1880, and 5,600,000 by the 1920. Close to 40% of the population in 1920 was foreign born (Winnick, 1990)! These new immigrants placed such an enormous strain on the receiving cities that services and living conditions quickly crumbled.

Old Port-of-Entry Neighborhoods

The majority of European immigrants who came to the US were formerly peasants (Handlin, 1951). Upon arrival in the US they had few resources from which to draw. With little education, little or no capital, and in many cases an inability to speak English these immigrants were left with few housing and employment options. Along with these limited options, they were in a new cultural environment with which they were unfamiliar, and which left them vulnerable to exploitation and

Table 2. Population of the 10 Largest Urban Places in US: 1840

	Population
1 New York city, NY	312,710
2 Baltimore city, MD	102,313
3 New Orleans city, LA	102,193
4 Philadelphia city, PA	93,665
5 Boston city, MA	93,383
6 Cincinnati city, OH	46,338
7 Brooklyn city, NY	36,233
8 Northern Liberties district, PA	34,474
9 Albany city, NY	33,721
10 Charleston city, SC	29,261

Table 3. Population of the 10 Largest Urban Places in US: 1880

1 New York city, NY	1,206,299
2 Philadelphia city, PA	847,170
3 Brooklyn city, NY	566,663
4 Chicago city, IL	503,185
5 Boston city, MA	362,839
6 St. Louis city, MO	350,518
7 Baltimore city, MD	332,313
8 Cincinnati city, OH	255,139
9 San Francisco city, CA	233,959
10 New Orleans city, LA	216,090

Table 4 Population of the 10 Largest Urban Places in US: 1920

		Square Miles*	Density*
1 New York city, NY	5,620,048	299	18,796
2 Chicago city, IL	2,701,705	92.8	14,013
3 Philadelphia city, PA	1,823,779	128	14,248
4 Detroit city, MI	993,078	77.9	12,748
5 Cleveland city, OH	796,841	56.4	14,128
6 St. Louis city, MO	772,897	61	12,670
7 Boston city, MA	748,060	43.5	17,197
8 Baltimore city, MD	733,826	79	9,289
9 Pittsburgh city, PA	588,343	39.9	14,745
10 Los Angeles city, CA	576,673	365.7	1,577

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Internet Release date: June 15, 1998

<http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027.html>

* Neither square miles or density were reported prior to 1910.

abuse. Because of the extreme culture shock, and the comfort gained by living in close proximity to someone with whom they shared a common culture and language, many immigrants started to create gateway communities or neighborhoods in which a majority of one ethnic group resided. These communities became port-of-entry neighborhoods and were filled with an enormous amount of cultural characteristics and elements that made them unique or peculiar to their particular European sources (Handlin, 1951, Winnick, 1990). The different variables that made up the old port-of-entry were numerous and will be described below.

Chain Migration

One of the strong social forces that added to the development of port-of-entry neighborhoods and tight-knit ethnic communities was the process of chain migration. Chain migration is defined as the movement in which immigrants migrate to a particular neighborhood or community to achieve initial employment and housing arranged by relationships with individuals of the same ethnic group who have previously immigrated (MacDonald & MacDonald, 1964). Many early port-of-entry neighborhoods not only contained immigrants of the same ethnicity, but also immigrants from the same village, town, or region of Europe. For instance, in New York it was not uncommon to find Italians from Avigliano in East Harlem, and people from Cinisi in Midtown (MacDonald & MacDonald, 1964). This process was practiced consistently by the different ethnic groups of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Another aspect of the chain migration process was delayed family migration. Many communities in Europe, as well as Asia, because of their relative poverty would send only men to work in the US with the promise of returning home with greater wealth (Chan, 1986, MacDonald & MacDonald,

1964). After a short taste of “freedom,” however, many immigrants decided to make the US their permanent place of residence and soon decided to send for their wives and children.

Tenements and Slum Housing

The first priority for most of the immigrants who came to the shores of the US, and that which determined the neighborhood in which they would reside, became the search for an affordable place to live. Many immigrants quickly discovered, however, that the housing that they would have access to was less than desirable (Handlin, 1951). The housing conditions that developed for this new class of residents was a product of the Industrial epoch. Industry and real estate have always maintained a symbiotic relationship. As work expands in an area, so does the demand for housing. Thus, as the Industrial Revolution expanded in the major port-of-entry cities for immigrants -- Boston, New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Baltimore, New Orleans -- so did the immediate desire to house individuals in proximity to their place of employment, and to house as many families as cheaply and compactly as possible. It was during the late nineteenth century that the US saw the rise in tenement and slum housing in many of port-of-entry neighborhoods.

Lawrence Friedman argues that there is no scientific definition that can be applied to the word “slum.”⁶ Much of what society attributes to the definition of a slum is either cultural or based on class (Friedman, 1968). By describing the living conditions of such housing including whether or not it has adequate plumbing, if the size of the rooms is large enough for people to live in, if the number of inhabitants per unit does not reach a level of extreme overcrowding, and if the overall physical

⁶ For a further discussion on slums, the reader is directed to Charles Abrams, *The Future of Housing* (Harper, 1946).

shape of the building can support people -- whether the structure is dilapidated or not -- we can attempt to reach a standard definition of a slum (Friedman, 1968). The attempt to reach a definition of a slum, however, always remains subjective and is never precise -- one person's slum, becomes another person's home.

In the mid- to late nineteenth century tenement housing was created to house working class families. The rise of tenements coincided with the rise of industrialization, and it was the cities of New York and Boston that pioneered this type of architecture. Emphasizing function over form, these buildings crowded an unthinkable number of immigrants and their families into one building. Oscar Handlin had this to say about the dumbbell tenements of the nineteenth century:

*On a floor space of approximately twenty by ninety feet, it was possible, within this pattern, to get four four-room apartments. The feat was accomplished by narrowing the building at its middle so that it took on the shape of a dumbbell. The indentation was only two-and-a-half feet wide...it created on each side an airshaft five feet wide. In each apartment three of the four rooms could present their windows to the shaft, draw from it air and light as well...The stairs, halls, and common water closets were cramped into the narrow center of the building so that almost the whole of its surface was available for living quarters. These structures were at least six stories in height, sometimes eight. At the most moderate reckoning, twenty-four to thirty-two families could be housed on this tiny space, or more realistically, anywhere from one hundred and fifty to two hundred human beings.*⁷

As the cost of real estate increased, the push for higher and higher density allowed the tenement to flourish. A review of the ten most populated cities in the US in 1920 shows extreme density levels as more and more individuals were crowded into the same space (see table 4).

Many historians were highly critical of tenement housing and equated it with the slum. It was believed that tenements were sources of disease, political corruption, all sorts of criminal activity, and generally, were extremely negative for society (Riis, 1957). Much of the overall negative attitude

⁷ Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted*, pg. 149-150.

towards tenement and slum housing was that it housed predominantly the poor, and this often meant newly arrived immigrants (Abrams, 1946, Handlin, 1951, Friedman, 1963). “In one form or another, the available housing gave the districts to which the immigrants went the character of slums.”⁸

Religion, Employment and Cultural Life

Many of the newly arriving immigrants felt alienated in the US. Most experienced some form of discrimination by the preceding and then established ethnic communities.⁹ Because they longed for activities that reminded them of the Old Country, as well as activities that would ground them culturally, many immigrants began to create institutions specific to their ethnicity. One of the dominant institutions was the ethnic church. This particular institution is steeped in tradition as its cultural practices are quite specific. The ethnic church, however, led to high levels of neighborhood segregation amongst immigrants in port-of-entry neighborhoods. For instance, an Italian Catholic did not feel at home in an Irish Catholic parish. “The result was a struggle, parish by parish, between old Catholics and the new, a struggle that involved the nationality of the priest, the language to be used, the saints' days to be observed, and even the name of the church.”¹⁰ The result was many immigrants chose the neighborhood in which they would live based solely on the church and the ethnicity of its followers (Handlin, 1951).

⁸ Ibid, pg. 150.

⁹ A large overgeneralization, but one that serves the purpose of providing a vague example, would be the following: people of English and Dutch background migrated to the US first, then came Irish and German immigrants who were discriminated against by people of Dutch and English descent; the Irish and Germans were followed by Italian and Greek immigrants who were then discriminated against by the Irish and Germans; then came Hungarian and Polish immigrants who were discriminated against by Italian and Greek immigrants. This type of discrimination, unfortunately is still extremely prevalent to this day.

¹⁰ Ibid, pg. 135.

Many immigrants used religion to recall what defined who they were back in Europe. From the church sprang all types of cultural practices that were used to continue in the US what had been second nature in Europe and what no other ethnic group could replicate: holiday processions, large festivals, native language training, and importantly, funerals and the practice of caring for the deceased. Many religious institutions continued the practice of teaching second generation immigrants the language of their parents and ensured that the deceased were handled in a proper manner (Handlin, 1951).

Another important creation in port-of-entry neighborhoods was the small business. The businesses that were prevalent in port-of-entry neighborhoods often catered to the specific needs of the ethnic community. Ubiquitous in many Italian, German, Jewish, Scandinavian, Polish, Greek, Irish, and all the other immigrants neighborhoods of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was the formation of what Portes has called the ethnic enclave. The ethnic enclave is simply a cluster and network of businesses owned by the same ethnic group (Portes, 1995). These enclaves produced high levels of social capital for the European immigrant where strong social networks were developed upon which many individuals could rely (Handlin, 1951,). Some examples included the barber shop, the bakery, the deli, the grocery store, and the restaurant (King, 1981). In the old port-of-entry neighborhoods, no Italian enclave was missing a barber shop, just as no Jewish enclave was void of a deli.

One particular area of employment that served a vital function in old port-of-entry neighborhoods was the development of the ethnic press. Countless port-of-entry neighborhoods were served by a newspaper printed in the native language of the immediate immigrant group. This type of press was

not only used to keep ties to the Old Country, but to keep port-of-entry residents informed of the current activities in their present communities. For instance if two residents were married, if an individual died, and if a new child was born the community was kept informed (Handlin, 1951).

For the most part, however, most immigrants toiled in factories and for the major industries that were in close proximity to their port-of-entry neighborhoods. These communities were lunch-bucket neighborhoods, as people did not travel far to their place of employment (Winnick, 1990). Transportation was limited, thus most port-of-entry communities developed as industry expanded.

Xenophobic Immigration Legislation

As is evinced by the Table 3 & 4, from 1880 to 1920 the number of individuals populating the ten largest urban areas in the US was continuously growing. After World War I, many Americans – forgetting the origins of *their* families – felt that immigrants were placing an undue burden on US society. By the early 1920's, xenophobic emotions became codified in national policy with the passage of the Immigration Quotas Act of 1924 (Winnick, 1990). The basis for such racially discriminatory immigration legislation is found in the previous century when the country passed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This legislation extremely limited the ability of the US Chinese population to grow by shutting the doors of immigration to people of Chinese descent. The fact that the majority of Chinese in the US prior to 1882 were men, 20:1 ratio of men to women, and that no women would be allowed into the US, made it impossible for these individuals to procreate. The numbers of Chinese in the US quickly dropped and did not begin to grow again until this law was repealed in 1943 (Chan, 1986).

The Immigration Quota Act of 1924 set extremely favorable quotas for immigrants of Northern European countries. The immigration quotas for all countries were limited to 2% of their population already in the US by the year 1890. This law was designed to discriminate against immigrants of Southern and Eastern European stock who, prior to 1924, had been migrating to the US in large numbers (Winnick, 1990). Furthermore, the law once again codified discrimination against individuals of Asian heritage, as it forbade the immigration of Japanese citizens altogether and reaffirmed discrimination against people of Chinese lineage. It was not until the years of, “The War for Civil Rights,” had reached its climax – middle and late 1960’s – that this discriminatory legislation was repealed.

New Port-of-Entry Neighborhoods, 1965 to the Present

1965: Progressive Immigration Legislation – New Wave of Immigrants

1965 was a monumental year in the history of the United States was 1965. In 1965, the Hart-Cellar Immigration and Naturalization Law was passed by Congress. Before being signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson, it had traveled through four presidents and eight sessions of Congress. Hart-Cellar can be seen as one of the worst attempts in demographic forecasting this nation has ever experienced (Winnick, 1990). As a result of what is seen by some as a failure, but by others as a success, many new immigrants – mainly people of color – have been given the opportunity to partake in a system of democracy and economic freedom from which generations of newcomers before them profited. Simply stated, US demographers did not predict the Third World would send such significant numbers to America. Louise Winnick commented in 1990:

The 1965 statute was a climactic event in U.S. social history, more momentous than any of its sponsors had imagined. Together with subsequent laws and amendments, it touched off a flow of people, far greater in volume and vastly wider in geographic origin than had been projected by any lawmaker or demographer. Nationally, the estimated total – legal and illegal immigrants plus refugees – is nearing 12 million....America's New Immigrants come from more than 160 countries. Before 1914, 80 percent or more of newcomers were European; since 1965, 80 percent or more are from the Third World (Latin America, Asia, the Caribbean, and Africa) and that proportion is rising.¹¹

Because many European countries had strengthened their economies and reformed their political environments, Europeans no longer desired to migrate to the US in large numbers (Winnick, 1990). Instead many Third World nations – newly liberated from under the oppression and control of colonialism – were experiencing a period of neo-colonialism and economic disorder (Rodney,1974). These nations had become mainly client-states of their former colonial rulers, only to be ruled under dictatorial regimes. The result was economic chaos and disorder, political oppression and strife, massive military campaigns and wars, and overall suffering in most Third World nations. These forces, along with many others, have propelled millions of people post-1965 to immigrate to the US.

During this epoch, some of the cities historically known for receiving newcomers: Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, and most importantly New York continued to receive a large share of immigrants. New cities, however, emerged as catchment communities for many of the new immigrants: Miami, Seattle, San Francisco, Washington D.C, and most importantly, Los Angeles. The new wave of immigrants has helped to shape the direction of our cities, as well as to change the complexion of their residents.

¹¹ Louise Winnick, *New People in Old Neighborhoods: The Role of New Immigrants in Rejuvenating New York's Communities*, pgs. 19-20.

Demographic Renewal

Demographic renewal is the dynamic role that people, rather than policies or programs, can play in shaping the “re-birth” or “revitalization” of a neighborhood or a specific community. Demographic renewal is a better indicator of an urban area’s health and strength than is any large-scale physical revitalization or development. Prior to the passage of the Hart-Cellar Act in 1965 – coinciding with white middle-class flight and civil and racial unrest – many urban areas were experiencing a period of social and economic decline. With the new wave of immigration, however, many newcomers have helped to achieve the policies and programs promoted in the Urban Renewal and Great Society programs of the 1960’s. In short, immigrants have been a positive, rather than a negative force on American society (Winnick, 1990). It is the importance and value that immigrants have brought to the urban landscape, through demographic renewal, that many policy makers have failed to realize.

Religion and Cultural Life

Many of the characteristics that old port-of-entry neighborhoods took on have carried over to new port-of-entry neighborhoods. Although Hart-Cellar was passed during the Civil Rights Movement, today many of the newly arriving immigrants continue to feel alienated and most still experience different levels of discrimination. The centuries’ old practice of discriminating against the most recent immigrant community has survived, however, added to this is the fact that most immigrants of today are people of color. The experience of not only being foreign-born – in most cases not being able to speak English – but also being a person of color in a society where “race does matter,” adds to the heightened sense of alienation and discrimination experienced by the newly arrived

immigrant (Zephir, 1996, Laguerre, 1999). The topic of being an immigrant of color in US society will be revisited in Chapter 4.

The desire by post-1965 immigrants for activities and cultural practices that remind them of the Old Country – today Latin America and Asia more so than Europe – has endured. Added to this desire, however, is the search for mechanisms by which they can assert their cultural identity in a society of which they do not feel a part, and by which they feel oppressed (King, 1981, Paz, 1985). One of the enduring institutions among newly arriving immigrants is the ethnic church. Along with the development of new port-of-entry communities has been the proliferation of new ethnic churches. Just as the Europeans, many gateway communities have continued to use the ethnic church to reground their cultural identity and the numerous practices that were important in the own countries. From the church and other neighborhood institutions, such as non-profit organizations, continuously emerge activities such as holiday processions, large festivals, and cultural and native language training (Winnick 1990, Laguerre, 1999).

One difference today, however, is that both the price of housing and the proximity of a neighborhood to areas of employment have driven the development of port-of-entry neighborhoods. In the past, the location of the ethnic church was in many cases the single-most determining factor in neighborhood choice for European immigrants. New immigrants of today find the search for an affordable place to live as being a paramount concern (Winnick, 1990).

Housing and Employment

Immigrant workers post-1965 have played a vital role in filling special economic niches in all of the gateway communities that they have populated (Waldinger & Bozorgmehr, 1996). Both New York City and Los Angeles, the two largest port-of-entry cities, would not have prospered in the past twenty years without the large input of immigrant labor. In fact, the newly arrived immigrant – post 1965 – comes with a relatively higher level of education, a strong entrepreneurial drive, and a penchant for small business development and occupational specialization. The immigrant business of today remains co-ethnic, as did the immigrant business in old port-of-entry neighborhoods, and the development of the ethnic enclave still prospers. The ethnic enclave remains a reliable source of social capital and networks upon which many newly arrived immigrants can rely.

One major deviation from immigrant businesses of the past is the certainty that many immigrant businesses of today are not relegated solely to their own ethnic neighborhood. In fact, many have developed outside of port-of-entry neighborhoods. Today, Jewish, Italian, and Greek businesses are continuously being replaced by Caribbean, Asian, Latino, and Middle Eastern businesses. The businesses of the newcomers, just like those in the past, are the barber shop, the bakery, the restaurant, the immigrant press, and the grocery store. However, new examples include the taxi service, the driving school, the money transfer house, the travel agent, and the real estate agent and broker (Winnick, 1990, Laguerre, 1996, Waldinger & Bozorgmehr, 1996). In the new port-of entry neighborhoods no Korean neighborhood is void of a green grocer, and no Haitian enclave is without a money transfer house or bakery.

For the most part, however, most immigrants remain stuck on the lower rungs of the employment ladder. Like their predecessors, many of the new immigrants toil in areas of the economy that the average American no longer occupies—the service sector and in factories, particularly the garment industry. The major industries that employ the newcomers of today remain in close proximity to port-of-entry neighborhoods. With the advent of mass forms of public transportation, however, many immigrants of today travel far distances to reach their district of employment, and many work for more than one employer (Winnick, 1990, Waldinger & Bozorgmehr, 1996).

In port-of-entry neighborhoods of today, two distinguishing characteristic that have vanished from the past are the tenement and slum housing. With new and strictly enforced housing regulation, the tenement of the turn of the century has given way to a new class of more inhabitable affordable housing – both private and public apartment buildings as well as Section 8 units.¹² A large segment of tenement and slum housing that would have served the role of the port-of-entry housing for immigrants has been demolished through urban renewal programs.

In the latter part of the twentieth century, however, because of the rising cost of real estate, the lack of new real estate development, and the tight real estate market many immigrants began to fill neighborhoods that were once deemed uninhabitable. Many immigrants began to occupy the older districts and the more dilapidated neighborhoods of urban areas, and – through the process of demographic renewal – began to revitalize their character (Winnick, 1990). In many cities, however, the process of urban revitalization has not been without negative affects. Because many of the new

¹² Many housing activists would argue that at times the condition of affordable housing today, both public and private market housing, has parallel characteristics to the conditions of tenement and slum housing of the past. I would agree. The major difference, however, is that the overall condition of affordable housing today and the rate at which building codes have been enforced has improved considerably.

immigrants have a limited number of housing options, but need to be in relative proximity to areas of employment, many newcomers have begun to search for affordable housing in more traditional areas of the real estate market – in many cases, public housing.

To understand why public housing has become an option for many immigrants, we must first investigate the multiple “lives” through which this government agency has lived over the past sixty years; many different types of residents have occupied public housing, and it is to their story that we now turn.

Public Housing and Its Residents

1930's – 1940's: The Early Years

The history of public housing in the United States began during a time of national crisis. A time in US history when unemployment was rampant, when the banking industry was on the brink of collapse, and when slum and tenement housing were beginning their waning years. During the beginning of the 1930's the federal government was convinced by a strong national coalition of affordable housing supporters that it needed to play a leading role in the real estate market on behalf of low-income and temporarily low-income families. More than anything, however, the climate of the national economy dictated the federal government's involvement in supplying public housing (Bratt, 1992, Friedman, 1968).

With the complete collapse of the US economy during the years of the Great Depression, the Roosevelt Administration began programs under its New Deal to put millions of Americans back to

work. One of the New Deal initiatives that was able to gain momentum was the Public Works Administration (PWA). Some of the first public housing developments in this country were financed by the federal government and built under the auspices of the PWA (Journal of Housing, 1962).

Public housing developed under the control of the PWA did not last for long, however, as a coalition of affordable housing activists lobbied Congress and the Roosevelt Administration to create a permanent federal housing authority – a body that would be committed to the development of public housing (Friedman, 1968). The coalition of affordable housing supporters was led by Senator Wagner of New York and included local level housing specialists, organized labor, the minority leaders in Congress of the time, the Roosevelt Administration, and importantly, the top officials in the home financing field (Journal of Housing, 1962). The US economy needed a stimulus, but also – as was argued by housing specialists – thousands of individuals needed clean safe places to live. Thus, one of the policies the federal government chose to promote was large-scale real estate development in the form of public housing, along with slum and sub-standard housing removal in small amounts. The pursuit of real estate development by the Federal government seemed an appropriate policy to help shape the immediate economic conditions of the newly formed coalition of public housing supporters.

Wagner-Steagall Act: September 1, 1937

1937 was a monumental year in the eyes of many affordable housing activists. 1937 marked the official beginning of the federal government's permanent role in the development of public housing with the passage of the Wagner-Steagall Act – later known as the US Housing Act – on September 1

of that year. Furthermore, 1937 was the year in which the United States Housing Authority (USHA) was created. With the passage of this new legislation (or anticipating it), many communities across the US created local housing authorities to administer the federal monies allocated to them by Congress and to create public housing developments.

The initial language in the Wagner-Steagall Act implacably called for the housing of the *temporary poor*, i.e. the *submerged middle-class*. The submerged middle-class are individuals who, for reasons of a weak economy or a lack of jobs, need government support for a temporary period of time.

Lawrence Friedman commented:

Indeed, the concepts of potential and submerged middle are central to an understanding of housing history in this country [US]. The key notion is that there are unfortunate individuals who are culturally members of the middle class but who have been prevented from taking their proper place in the social order or who have, through no fault of their own, dropped down a notch in society. American housing programs, by and large, have been designed for these people and not for the “true” poor.¹³

A clear distinction must be made between the submerged middle class and what Friedman has called the true poor (Friedman, 1968). The true poor were initially excluded from public housing units because public housing officials determined rents by the total operating expenses per unit, and not by what tenants could afford to pay. If an individual family was not “wealthy” enough to be able to afford the rents set by the Housing Authority, then they could not afford to live in public housing; lower-income families were relegated to the remaining slum and derelict housing in the private market. In the early years of public housing it was not uncommon to find the majority of the tenants as working families. Tenants were required to have incomes (i.e. stable jobs) sufficient to afford fixed rents, but could have incomes no greater than five times the rent (or six times the rent for larger families) determined by the Housing Authorities (Vale, unpublished manuscript, A).

¹³ Lawrence Friedman, *Government and Slum Housing: A Century of Frustration*, pgs. 20-21.

It is precisely the fact that public housing was created for the submerged middle class that led to its early political support. The submerged middle class, however, did not occupy public housing for long. In the beginning years of development, the submerged middle-class were accompanied by former slum dwellers as the first tenants of public housing. In fact, the initial language of the US Housing Act legally established, "...slum clearance as a public function," and explicitly stated, "...for every public housing unit built, a slum unit must be removed."¹⁴ As soon as the initial composition of public housing residents began to change, so did the type of support it received from federal, state, and local government bodies (Bratt, 1992, Friedman, 1968).

Prior to, and directly after, the passage of the US Housing Act of 1937, many private interests in the real estate development industry were continuously organizing against government involvement in housing development. "In a country where the tradition of private ownership of land and home was firmly entrenched, it [public housing] was viewed as a revolutionary concept and, in most audiences, it met a stone wall of resistance."¹⁵ However, despite consistent pressure – and the loss of the submerged middle class – the federal government continued to play a major role in the development of public housing. The aesthetic quality and value placed on public housing, however, quickly transformed as most public housing developments built post early 1940's lacked physical beauty and amenities. This was done to ensure a lack of competition with private sector housing (Friedman, 1968).

¹⁴ Journal of Housing, "Legislative History of Public Housing Traced Through 25 Years," in *Journal of Housing*, No. 8, 1962, pg. 436.

¹⁵ Ibid. pg. 431

The beginning of World War II changed the direction of public housing in the US, if only for a brief period. With the advent of US involvement WWII in 1941, the majority of resources and programs controlled by the federal government were shifted towards the war effort. Public housing was quickly transformed into war workers' housing and, upon their return, housing for veterans. During the post-war years, income ceilings were overlooked for a short period of time. This period lasted until 1949.

Because the different levels of government did not continuously receive pressure in the same manner as they had from submerged middle-class, and because forces from the private sector consistently fought against public housing – at times labeling it a form of socialism – the years ahead would prove to be tumultuous for government housing (Journal of Housing, 1962).

1950's – 1960's: Beginning of Change

During the late 1940's and the early 1950's public housing continued to receive support from Congress and the federal government. On July 15th, 1949 President Truman signed into law the second monumental US Housing Act. The US Housing Act of 1949 was extremely pivotal in the history of public housing, as well as in the history of urban neighborhoods. It authorized the construction of over 800,000 units (though many were never actually built), but it also established a new form of subsidy for slum housing removal – direct subsidies to local authorities to facilitate the destruction of *blighted* neighborhoods (Journal of Housing, 1962).

During the 1950's and 1960's, many former slum dwellers displaced by the destruction of their homes, particularly individuals living in what became known as Urban Renewal neighborhoods, were

forced to migrate to public housing. Urban Renewal, and its source the Housing Act of 1949 and later the Housing Act of 1954, greatly reduced the immediate affordable housing options for low-income urban families as well as the affordable housing options for the future urban poor. The Housing Act of 1954 inextricably tied Urban Renewal and public housing developments (Bratt, 1992, Friedman, 1968).

During the same year as the US Housing Act of 1949, the federal government authorized a mortgage lending program that benefited war veterans. It was known as the Wherry Housing Program. This program, and later the Capehart Program, facilitated the flight of the submerged middle class from public housing, often times, directly to newly developed suburban homes (Bratt, 1992).

Beginning in the mid 1950's and moving into the early 1960's, simultaneously many of the first families that had occupied public housing began to move out, as the new group of displaced former slum dwellers – casualties of Urban Renewal's wrecking ball – began to move in. It is during this period that public housing began to receive many of its first welfare families, female headed households, and the dependent poor. It is also the period when public housing was built on a grander scale; when massive high-rise projects were built to replace many of the former slum neighborhoods (Friedman, 1968).

As the 1950's came to a close, low-income African-Americans – a group of citizens that previously had been denied access to many projects in many cities – slowly began moving into public housing. With the struggles of the Civil Rights Movement reaching their peak in the 1960's many of the old policies and practices used by local Housing Authorities were quickly dismantled. First the Executive Order of 1962 addressing discrimination in federally owned and subsidized housing, and later the

Civil Rights Act of 1964 made it illegal to exclude an individual from federal housing based on the criteria of race. This law was aimed at destroying the de facto, as well as the de juré, practices that local Housing Authorities had used to institutionalize racial discrimination, particularly against African Americans. Because of the fears and prejudices that white Americans held, public housing had long since been racially segregated – as African-Americans moved into public housing, many white families began to move out or into public housing developments reserved for populations with majority white families (Friedman, 1962).

As the 1960's came to a close, the leading housing intellectuals of the period – Charles Abrams, Jane Jacobs, Charles Ascher, Catherine Bauer, and Harrison Salisbury – that had supported public housing in its initial years of development, all decried the horrors it had begun to foster: crime, dependent poor, teenage delinquency and gangs, in short, institutional ghettos. Many of the same specialists called for the complete destruction of public housing (Friedman, 1968).

1970's – 1980's: The Underclass

As the 1960's came to a close a new piece of legislation was passed. In 1969, Senator Brooke from Massachusetts was able to move legislation through the Congress that dramatically changed the make-up of public housing. The Brooke Amendment, as it became popularly known, for the first time in the US history made it easier for the lowest income groups to afford the rent in public housing. Local housing officials effectively had to accept any tenant, despite their level of income, into public housing developments. The Brooke Amendment created a formula under which tenants paid 25% of their income toward rent and the federal government paid the remainder of the cost of

operating the unit through subsidies. The percentage that tenants paid was later increased to 30% of their income.

The law did not take effect until 1971, but after this time the majority of families that began to occupy public housing were single, female-headed households, and welfare dependant. This group of residents has come to be known in many circles, as the *underclass*. William Julius describes this group:

Included in this group are individuals who lack training and skills and either experience long-term unemployment or are not members of the labor force, individuals who are engaged in street crime and other forms of aberrant behavior, and families that experience long-term spells of poverty and/or welfare dependency. These are the populations to which I refer when I speak of the underclass. I use this term to depict a reality not captured in the more standard designation lower class.¹⁶

The passage of the Brooke Amendment was viewed by many local housing officials as the nail in the coffin for public housing, as the number of ‘underclass’ families continued to increase throughout the 1970’s and 1980’s. In many cities across the nation, the neighborhoods that were chosen as sites for public housing developments began to manifest similar characteristics: high crime rates, large concentrations of poverty, and large segments of underemployed men and women. Despite a number of social welfare policies, the underclass flourished in public housing and its surrounding neighborhoods, as families mired in cyclical poverty multiplied.

During the 1980’s, the condition of many public housing developments across the nation further deteriorated as drugs, violence and mismanagement continued to flourish. Public housing’s environment had degenerated so significantly that some local authorities were taken into

¹⁶ William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, pg. 8.

receivership by court order. In response, managers, local officials, police departments, policy makers, and concerned neighborhood residents organized to pressure Washington to reassert its federal authority over public housing developments; the intended outcome being the wide-spread revitalization of public housing (Wilson, 1987). It was not until the beginning of the 1990's, however, that public housing regained some of its former significance.

1990's – Present

During the 1990's the individuals seeking and occupying public housing for the past two decades remained highly impoverished. The underclass, along with many working poor families, continued to be the single largest resident group across the nation. The number of welfare dependent, single female-headed households persisted, and their numbers have not decreased dramatically. With the election of the 104th Congress in 1994 and its anti-welfare dependency stance, however, many things for public housing rapidly changed -- none of the proposed changes were as significant as welfare reform and the HOPE VI public housing revitalization program. It is beyond the context of this research to investigate the effects of welfare reform, but it is worth noting, however, that a large portion of households in public housing at the time of welfare reform, were welfare dependent.

The Proper Role for Public Housing: Hope VI?

In 1992, the first significant piece of legislation to affect the lives of public housing residents was passed since the early seventies. Auspiciously named "HOPE" VI (Home ownership Opportunities for People Everywhere), through this program the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) hoped to target Housing Authorities that might wish to revitalize many of

their most dilapidated developments; HOPE VI has become the single largest revitalization initiative used by local Housing Authorities across the nation. HUD summarizes the five key objectives of HOPE VI as follows:

1. Changing the physical shape of public housing by demolishing severely distressed projects and replacing them with garden-style apartments or townhouses
2. Reducing concentrations of poverty by encouraging a greater income mix among public housing residents
3. Establishing support services to help public housing residents get and keep jobs
4. Establishing and enforcing high standards of personal and community responsibility
5. Forging broad-based partnerships to involve public housing residents, state and local government officials, the private sector, non-profit groups and the community at large in planning and implementing the new communities.¹⁷

With the advent of policies such as HOPE VI, the federal government, for the first time in its history, is beginning to destroy more public housing units than it is building. In fact, one of the central elements of HOPE VI is the stated goal of dismantling densely populated, massive public housing developments and redesigning them into small scale mixed-income communities. Andrew Cuomo, the newly appointed director of HUD, had this to say at a recent ribbon cutting ceremony at a HOPE VI site in Baltimore:

We are transforming public housing projects with problems into new mixed-income communities with promise. We are making public housing a launching pad to opportunity, jobs and self-sufficiency - instead of a warehouse trapping people in poverty and long-term dependence.¹⁸

¹⁷ HUD Press Release No. 99-182, (<http://www.hud.gov:80/pressrel/pr99-182.html>)

¹⁸ Ibid.

It seems, as we begin to move into the twenty first century the mission of public housing has come full circle. Many local housing officials across the nation would like to return to a time when public housing served more diversified income groups, and not solely the *poorest of the poor*.

In an article written in the Journal of Housing in 1962 the discussion ends by posing two questions to the reader; two questions that have been hotly debated since the inception of public housing:

Can the provision of housing be a proper function of the government?

*Can public money and public power properly be used in ameliorating the living conditions of individual citizens?*¹⁹

To me it seems that public housing continues to struggle with these questions, and has yet to find an answer that is suitable to all stakeholders.

Conclusion: Public Ports of Entry?

A recent trend, one identified in the past twenty years, is the way in which many public housing developments are surrounded by or are adjacent to port-of-entry neighborhoods. Many of the port-of-entry neighborhoods mentioned in Chapter 1 Washington Heights, The Mission, Maverick Square, Boyle Heights, and Ukrainian Village – New York, San Francisco, Boston, Los Angeles, and Chicago, respectively – all have public housing developments within their borders. In fact, as will be touched upon in Chapter 5, it has been discovered that some of the housing authorities in these cities have begun to receive a large number of immigrants.

¹⁹ Journal of Housing, opt. cit. pg. 445.

In the next chapter a current example of a port-of-entry neighborhood in Cambridge, MA, The Port, and its two public housing developments Washington Elms and Newtowne Court will be discussed. Both public housing developments have a significant immigrant population. In fact, I will argue that the single largest immigrant group, Haitians, have begun to transform these public housing developments into a port-of-entry neighborhood.

CHAPTER 3. THE PORT: WASHINGTON ELMS & NEWTOWNE COURT

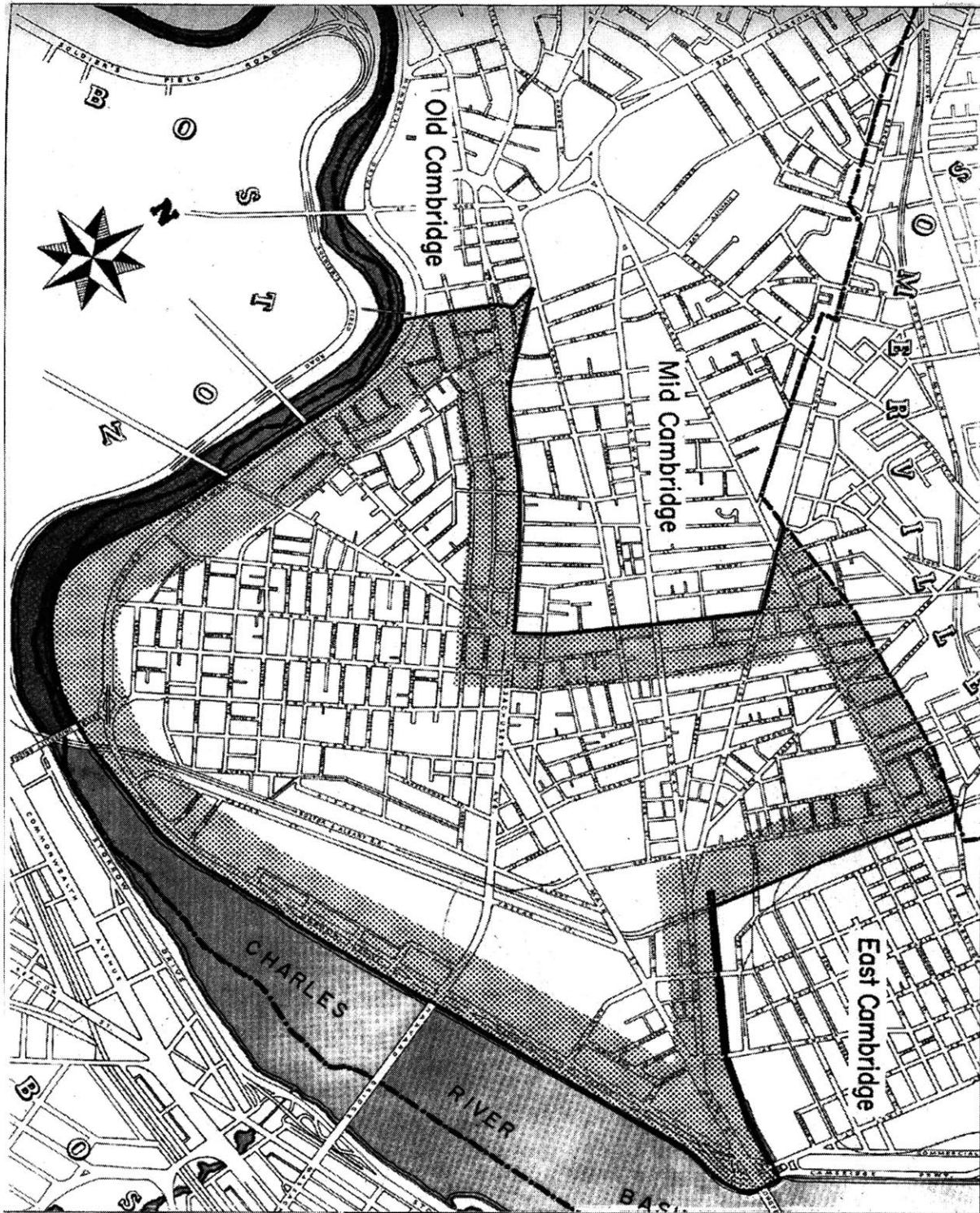
One hundred years ago, the neighborhood referred to by the city of Cambridge as Area IV, was part of the Cambridgeport neighborhood. In fact, the area directly east of Harvard University and mid-Cambridge along the Charles River, down through present day Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and running along the old Boston & Albany rail line up to the Somerville boarder, was generally referred to as “Cambridgeport” (see map 1). The name originates from a desire by the city in the early nineteenth century to establish a deepwater port along the eastern part of Cambridge near modern Kendall Square (Cambridge Historical Commission, 1971).

Today, although the city refers to the neighborhood as Area IV – very institutional or cell-block sounding – long-time residents, and particularly children, still refer to it as the “The Port.”²⁰ This is indicative of the way an identity of a neighborhood remains constant far past the endeavors of city government to change it. In fact, the neighborhood along Memorial Drive east of mid-Cambridge and south of Massachusetts Avenue is still referred to as Cambridgeport, but a clear distinction is made between it, and the current Area IV. Some time in the 1960’s the city began to refer to this neighborhood as “Neighborhood 4,” and then in the 1980’s as Area IV; many believe this name change took place because of the heightened number of arrests and criminal activities that took place during the 1960’s through the 1980’s.²¹ In keeping with the tradition of the long-time residents, I will refer to this neighborhood of Cambridge as The Port, rather than Area IV.

²⁰ Many of the WorkForce Unemployment participants that I interviewed consistently referred to Area IV as “The Port.” Also, when I was growing up in the city of Cambridge everyone that I knew from this neighborhood referred to it as The Port, and never as Area IV. In recent years, there has been the creation of The Port Life Foundation and Port Life Entertainment, two organizations paying homage to the neighborhood from which their creators hail.

²¹ Personal interview with lifelong resident of The Port, Dennis Benzan, 3/24/2000 neighborhood activist and former candidate for State Representative. Dennis’ family was part of the first wave of Puerto Ricans to enter The Port in the early 1960’s.

MAP 1. HISTORICAL BOUNDARIES OF CAMBRIDGEPORT²²



²² Cambridge Historical Commission, *Survey of Architectural History in Cambridge, Report Three*, pg.11 .

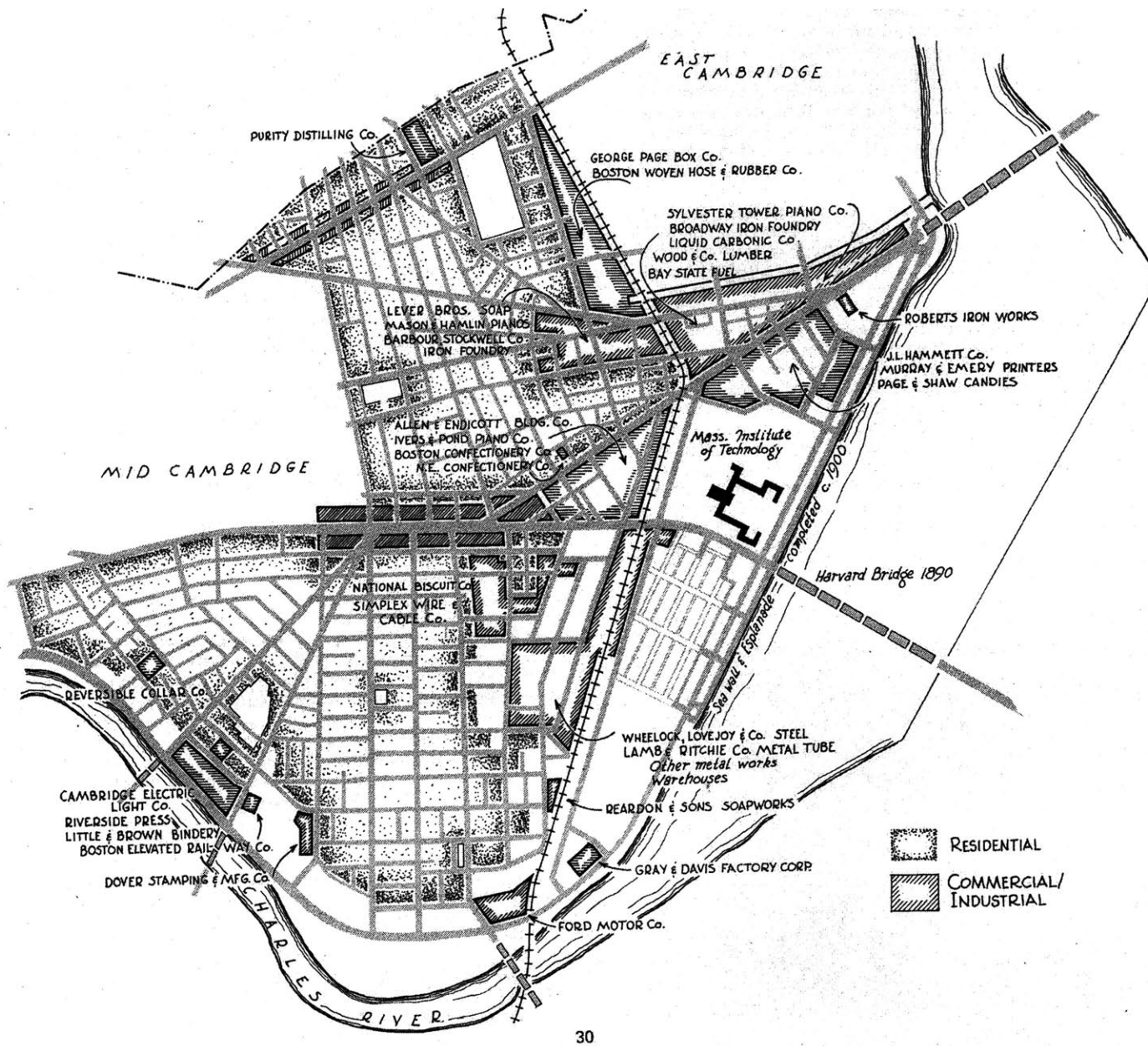
The Port has played an important role in the history and development of the city of Cambridge -- one that is deserving of attention and investigation. However, based on the way the many residents feel about the treatment their neighborhood has received from city government over the past thirty years, an outside observer might not quickly realize The Port's former importance.²³

Nineteenth To Early Twentieth Century, Early Importance

As the Industrial Revolution came to Cambridge, many of the former marshes and wetlands that lined Cambridgeport were quickly filled to make room for industries. By the late nineteenth century such a great number of industries had located in Cambridgeport, the housing industry could not keep pace. In fact, as mentioned earlier, during this period Cambridgeport was home to more industries than any other neighborhood in New England (see map 2). Some of the products for which the neighborhood gained recognition were cabinets, tobacco products, cars, organs, and soap, the most important being the practice of soap-making (Cambridge Historical Commission, 1971). Other early developments that brought prestige to The Port were the siting of the first City Hall and the first public high school within its boundaries. The fact that these two buildings were sited in The Port during the nineteenth century show the strength and political weight this neighborhood carried at the time.

²³ Personal interview with Janet Rose, 3/31/2000 neighborhood activist and one of the longest-standing residents currently living in The Port. Janet and her family lived in Newtowne Court from 1959-1968. Personal interview with lifelong resident of The Port, Don Harding, 3/27/2000 whose family has lived in The Port since 1918, is part of the first Black family (of Bajan decent) to have moved to Cambridge, and who currently lives in the same house his great grandfather bought in 1928. Don lived in Newtowne Court from 1964-1973. Personal Interview with Lena Dobson, 3/30/2000 a lifelong resident and neighborhood activist of The Port since 1956. Lena's parents were part of the wave of African-Americans to migrate from the south to Cambridge in the early part of this century.

MAP 2. CAMBRIDGEPORT LAND USE 1916²⁴



²⁴ Cambridge Historical Commission, opt. cit. pg. 30.

In response to the massive expansion of industry inside Cambridgeport, early developers promoted the development of the “triple decker,” a type of building that allowed for greater density. This density was used to provide ample housing for the working-class and the recent immigrant families that toiled in the factories. The triple decker, however, did not become prominent in the northern area of Cambridgeport, (The Port), because of its older housing stock which consists of one and two families homes. Instead, as the number of working class and immigrant families steadily increased, with them came the expansion and creation of tenements and large apartment buildings, mainly situated in The Port.

At the turn of the century, the immigrant population was significant. “By 1905 a full 31% of the Port’s population was of recent foreign origin.”²⁵ This early immigrant population mainly hailed from Ireland, followed by Canada, Great Britain, Germany, Sweden, Portugal, and Eastern Europe (Cambridge Historical Commission, 1971) . The pattern of housing individuals from all over the world in The Port is a tradition that has remained constant to this day, a topic of central focus to this thesis and one that I will discuss throughout.

Because The Port housed individuals from all over the world, along with a great number of working-class families, the neighborhood began to be known for its social, economic, and racial diversity. However, by the time the Depression hit the United States, and The Port with it, many of the buildings that had been hastily developed to house the burgeoning “working-class” were beginning to crumble. Many of these early tenements and large apartment buildings were labeled “slums” and prepared for clearance. In 1936, it was the clearance of one of the most blighted areas of The Port,

²⁵ Cambridge Historical Commission, *Survey of Architectural History in Cambridge, Report Three: Cambridgeport*, Cambridge, MA, 1971.

from Main to Harvard Street and from Portland to Windsor Street, that made room for what was then to become some of the first public housing developments in the US (see image 1 & 2).

1930's – 1950's, Neighborhood Strength

The politicians in Cambridge in the 1930's were greatly concerned with removing some of the city's most dilapidated housing. Their simultaneous desire for the prestige of acquiring one of the nation's first public housing developments and putting many of their constituents back to work, however, can not be overlooked. As described before, the Federal Government under New Deal programs, in this instance the Public Works Administration, began a massive movement to build Federal Public Housing with the passage of the National Housing Act of 1934 and later the Wagner/Steagall Act of 1937. These efforts were promoted first to employ individuals who were suffering under the extreme economic hardship of the Depression, and second to house individuals in safe, decent, affordable housing. In Cambridge, The Port was the logical neighborhood as it contained blocks of dilapidated housing. As a report in the *Cambridge Sun* headlined "Business Men Hear Talk on Housing Project," the business community fell in line:

Warren Rausch, director of the "slum clearance" project on Main Street told members of the Central Square Business Men's Association Monday night of some of the benefits which he believed they would receive from the creation of the project... Councilor Thomas M. McNamara of ward 2, in which the project will be located, spoke briefly on the need for employment... The benefits to the city and business men would include the \$544,000 in wages which would be paid to Cambridge men working on the project. These men would be taken from the relief rolls where they had been receiving only a small amount and would be given regular union wages. This would increase their buying power and would help them get back to normal.²⁶

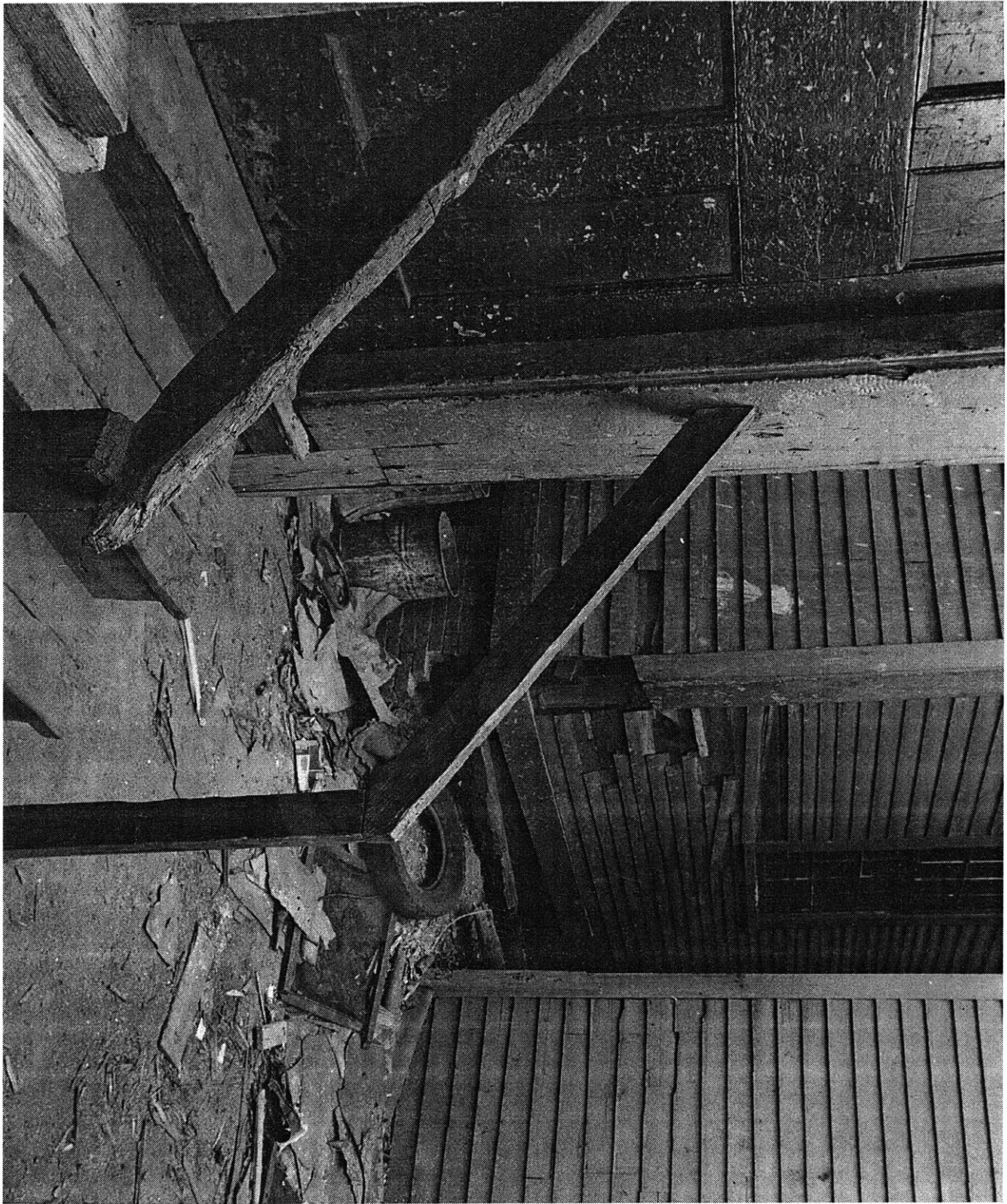
²⁶ The Cambridge Sun, *Business Men Hear Talk on Housing Project*, December, 1936.

IMAGE 1.²⁷ TENEMENT HOUSING OF THE PORT CIRCA 1920'S.
Demolished 1936.



²⁷ Historical Photography Archive, Cambridge Housing Authority.

IMAGE 2.²⁸ DETERIORATING TENEMENT HOUSING CIRCA 1920S.



²⁸ Ibid.

The mayor of the time expeditiously entered the fray:

Another aspect of the case presented itself to me in order. The purpose behind such building activities to provide work for the unemployed and so to stimulate industry. Of course I am aware that complications along the lines of employment will arise unless care is exercised, but 'Forewarned is forearmed,' and I shall see that as far as possible jobs and supplies shall be found in Cambridge.²⁹

After the early debates, and the lobbying of Congress and the Federal Administrators in the region, the newly created Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA) of 1935 received its first public housing development, one of the first in the nation: Newtowne Court, six three-story walk-up buildings. Construction began in the early part of 1936 and was completed in late 1937, however, residents did not begin to occupy Newtowne Court until the beginning of 1938. Newtowne Court, at a cost of \$2,300,000, was built well compared to the public housing standards of today. It contained hard wood floors, tile bathrooms, French-style windows, and an aesthetic that many apartment buildings of today lack. All in all, Newtowne Court was a step up from the apartment and tenement buildings from which many of its former residents came (see image 3.). One of its first tenants had this to say:

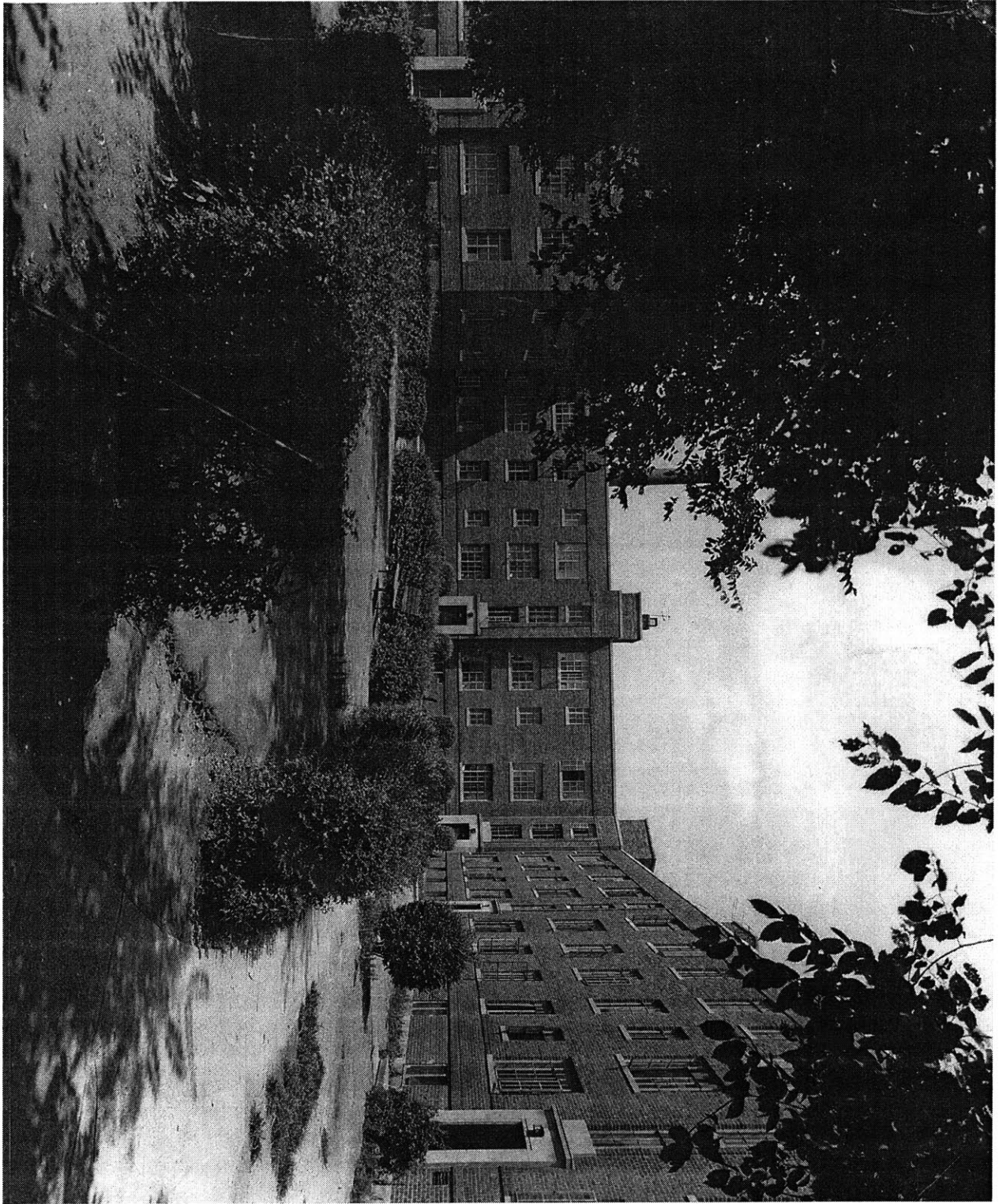
We were one of the first tenants – one of the first ten families – we had five children, and then two more came. Most of the families were Irish Immigrants, or Irish-American families, first generation. We had a lot of Veterans that moved on to buy homes... There were mainly nuclear families. Most of the men walked to their jobs in the neighborhood; there were enough blue-collar jobs to go around – you had Lever Brothers Soap Factory and so many others... My father was a truck mechanic, but most of the women didn't work... People were Catholic and went to the neighborhood parochial school, St. Mary's... We never had a fear walking back to Newtowne Court, it was 'The Court,' and you knew everybody.³⁰

Newtowne Court, as many of the first public housing developments, was created for individuals who had been struck by the Depression, as well as for former slum and tenement dwellers. All of these

²⁹ Ibid, "Mayor Lynch Asks Citizens to Investigate Benefits of Proposed Housing Project," February, 1936

³⁰ Personal interview with Jane Richards 3/27/2000, lifetime Cambridge resident and one of the first families upon completion to occupy Newtowne Court from 1938-1956.

IMAGE 3.³¹ COURTYARD OF NEWTOWNE COURT, CIRCA 1940S



³¹ Historical Photography Archive, Cambridge Housing Authority.

groups were deemed to be in need of transitional housing support, however, they were still required to meet the rents determined by Housing Authorities to cover its operating expenses; these tenants were not the poorest in society. As discussed earlier, these individuals have been labeled the submerged middle class or families that had middle class values but, for economic reasons, were in need of government support.

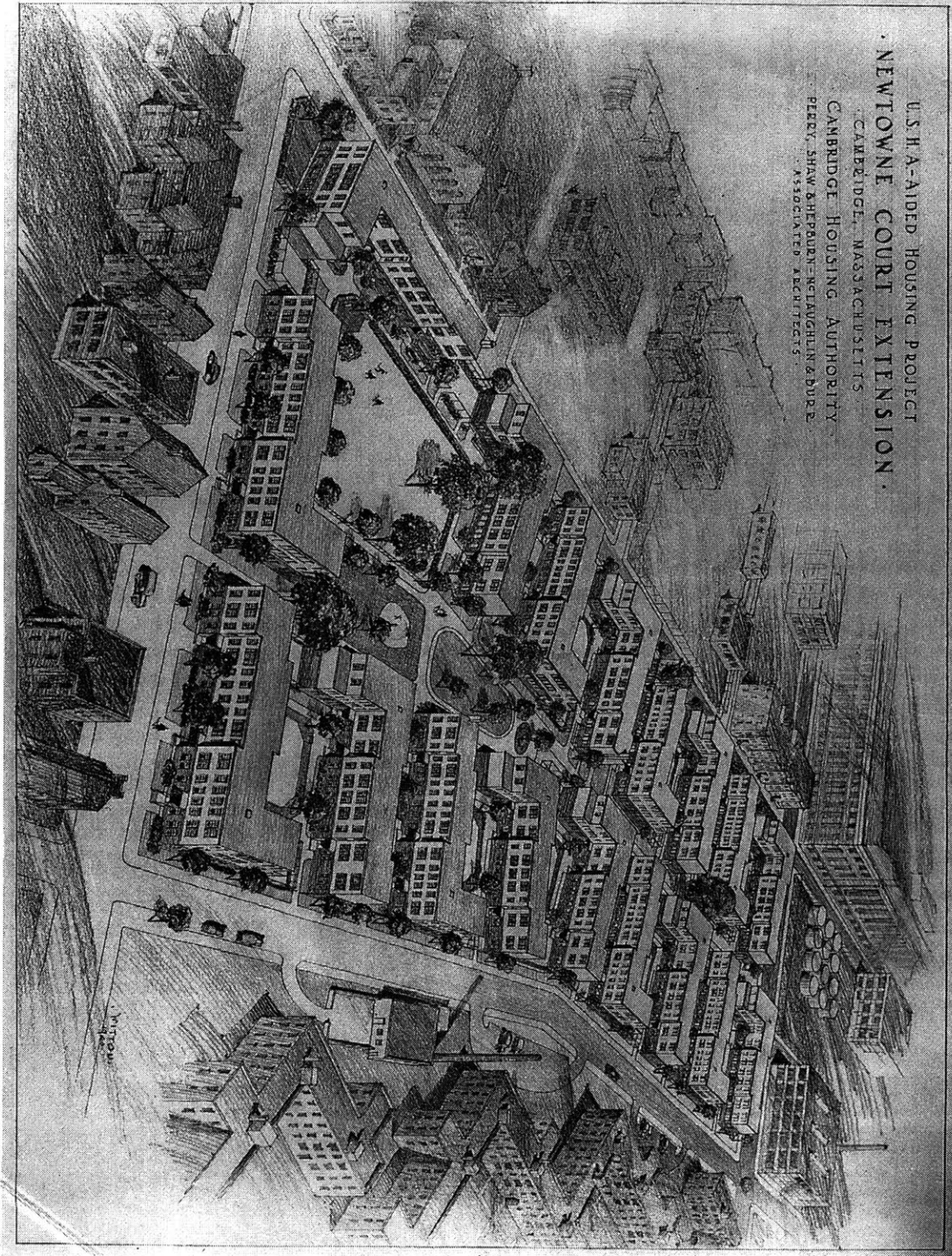
Directly following the development of Newtowne Court and adjacent to its site, the city of Cambridge received its second public housing development: Washington Elms. Washington Elms was primarily created for the submerged middle class, but quickly transformed into housing for workers involved in the effort of World War II and returning Veterans. This development was completed in late 1942 as an USHA development, but families did not begin to occupy it until early 1943. Overall, it lacked the attention to detail and the physical space afforded to Newtowne Court. The apartments inside Washington Elms were extremely small and none of the amenities inside of the apartments in Newtowne Court were included in Washington Elms (see images 4 – 7).

From their beginnings, the juxtaposition of these two developments did not predetermine a parallel nature of what would become of their residents, their respect, their aesthetics, and the value afforded to them by the CHA. In fact, the antithesis was true. There existed a clear demarcation between Newtowne Court and Washington Elms that continued for years.³²

³² Jane Richards interview, 3/27/2000. Don Harding interview, 3/27/2000. Janet Rose interview 3/31/2000. Lena Dobson interview, 3/30/2000. Personal interview with José Garcia, lifelong resident of The Port 3/30/2000, who's family lived in Newtowne Court beginning in 1965, and was part of the first wave of Latino immigrants to occupy CHA housing. José lived in Newtowne Court from 1972-1989.

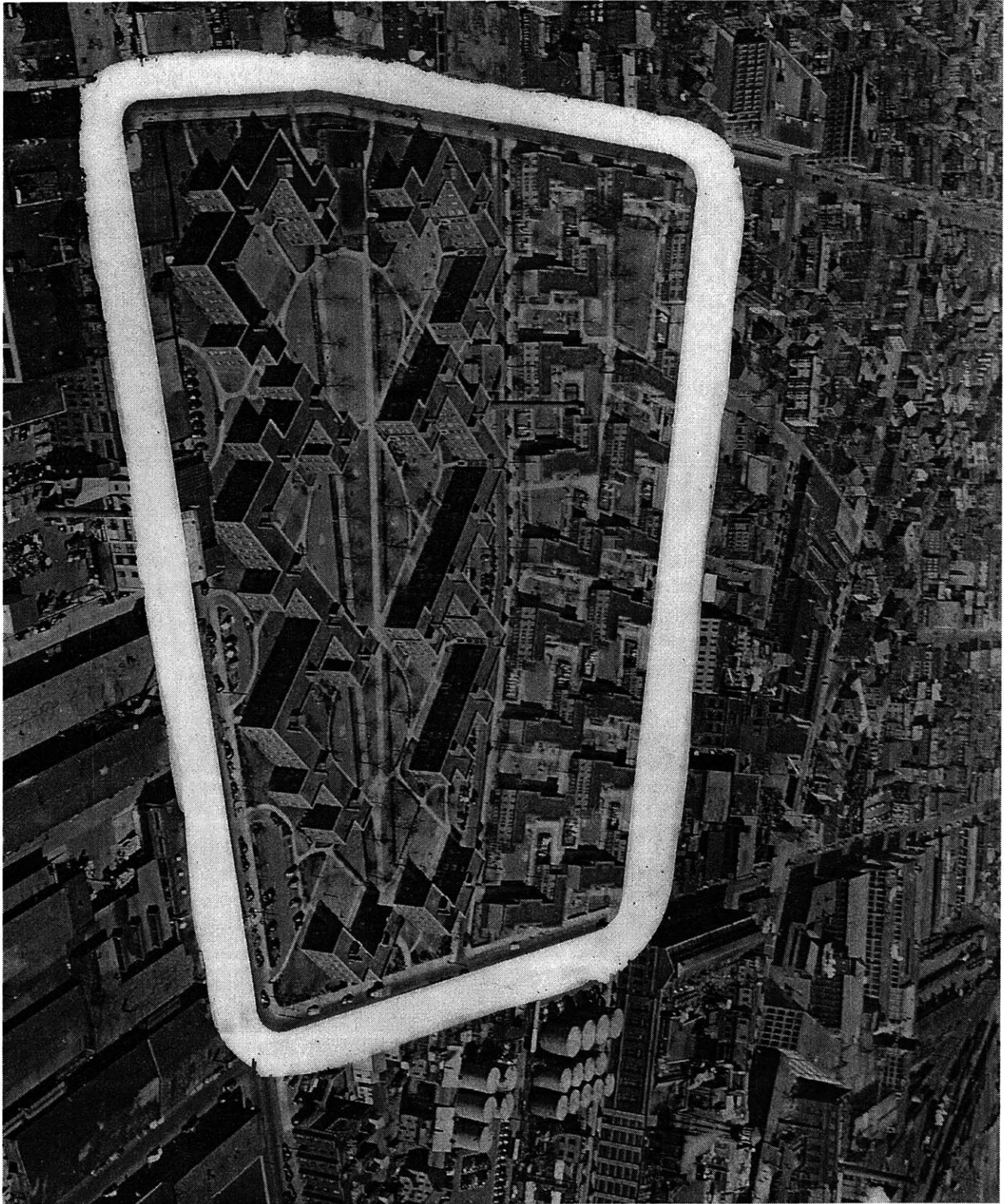
IMAGE 4.³³ U.S.H.A. DEVELOPMENT NAMED “NEWTOWNE COURT EXTENSION”

Later named Washington Elms



³³ Historical Photography Archive, Cambridge Housing Authority.

IMAGE 5.³⁴ ARIAL PHOTOGRAPHS OF WASHINGTON ELMS & NEWTOWNE COURT, CIRCA 1950S



³⁴ Historical Photography Archive, Cambridge Housing Authority.

IMAGE 6.³⁵ PATHWAY OF WASHINGTON ELMS, CIRCA 1950S



³⁵ Historical Photography Archive, Cambridge Housing Authority.

IMAGE 7.³⁶ COURTYARD OF WASHINGTON ELMS, CIRCA 1950S



³⁶ Historical Photography Archive, Cambridge Housing Authority.

Both developments and The Port in general, maintained a strong sense of community. As described above by former resident Jane Richards, the neighborhood was full of jobs for the fathers, the mothers tended to the family, and the children walked to both parochial and public school and played outside without fear. This was a general pattern throughout the entire United States, and The Port was no different. To exhibit the ethnic make-up of the time Mrs. Richards recalled some of the surnames of her closest neighbors:

We were very much dependent upon one another. Most of the families were Irish immigrants, or Irish-American families. In my two doorways you had the Wilkersons, but I don't know their background. You had the Shans, who were from Ireland. You had the McGuirks, one parent was Irish-American, and the other was born in Ireland. You had the Duffleys, the Harringtons, and the Malones who were all Irish-American. The Dias family who were Portuguese. The Laiffs who were Irish-American, and the Maloneys who were from Ireland. You also had the Sonis family who were the only Jews we knew. Also we had the McKays, the Kellabers, and the McArthys who were all Irish-American. And finally, my parents. My mother was born in Ireland, and my father was first generation Irish-American... Oh, I also remember on School St. there were some Black families, but altogether the Irish dominated the neighborhood.³⁷

The housing of immigrants in the CHA is a tradition that has its roots in the late 1930's, and a tradition that has continued to this day. During this period, it is interesting to note that the most recent immigrant population dominant in Cambridge – mainly first and second generation Irish – was of the same ethnic background as the people in positions of power all throughout Massachusetts. People of Irish background made up the largest single ethnic group in Massachusetts as they controlled both economic and political life. This had a dramatic effect on the manner in which Irish immigrants were treated, and the type of access to public housing they would gain (Vale, Forthcoming, A).³⁸ This presents a parallel that has never repeated itself again in the history of the CHA.

³⁷ Jane Richards interview, 3/27/2000.

³⁸ In Larry Vale's forthcoming book, *From the Puritans to the Projects*, he documents how at its inception, public housing in Boston was created to primarily house Irish families. The structure and dominance of the Irish in Greater Boston has been accurately documented by many scholars, see Steven Miller, option cited. This dominance in the politics and social life in Greater Boston greatly influenced tenant selection, development placement, and other quality of life issues in Boston Public Housing.

The Irish did not remain the dominant group in either Washington Elms or Newtowne Court for long. In fact, the population rapidly transformed as the population in public housing across the country transformed. With the passage of the US Housing Act of 1949, many former submerged middle-class and former WWII Veteran residents took advantage of the federal mortgage programs offered to them and moved out of public housing in droves. As the resident make-up of the CHA changed, along with the core of professionally trained upper-level CHA staff positions, so did the money, clout, and respect it received from the federal, state, and local level government agencies, a lesson the residents in the CHA would soon learn. The Port during this same period experienced a decline in the dominance of Irish-American families, as the neighborhood slowly received new ethnic groups.

1960's, Beginning of Change

My people came to Cambridge from Barbados for economic reasons and worked in the factories...The neighborhood was wicked, wicked integrated, but it was always, always integrated. We had Irish, Italians, Polish, Chinese, and of course Bajans...There was a separation between the parochial schools and the public schools, people in the neighborhood looked down on the kids who went to the public schools...I remember the fathers worked hard. They mainly worked in the neighborhood factories and when they finished their hard day they went straight to the bars: Charlies Tap, Duce of Clubs, The Original, The Cal Club, all local bars that are long gone. There was no going to the baseball game; fathers were not there...When I was younger in the late 50's you had to know somebody to go into Newtowne Court -- the older kids would chase me out; there was always more racism. On the other hand, Washington Elms was always more accepting.³⁹

My father was a military man, both he and my mother were from South Carolina...I remember I wish I lived in the projects -- they always seemed to have new stuff. Boy, I always remember being amazed that they always had a new bike or something...Newtowne Court always carried an air of a whole different society. The people in Newtowne seemed to have the misconception that they were better than the people in Washington Elms -- they had hardwood floors versus tile floors...The people in Washington Elms and Newtowne Court were 90% white, and it was like that all throughout the 50's and 60's...They neighborhood was mainly blue-collar, there were huge factories nearby: College Seal & Crest, Squirrel Nut Brand, a plate and steel factory, Boston Wove & Hose...I'll tell you in respect to parenting and child rearing both parents worked in the neighborhood, so at no time were the kids ever out of site of someone -- that was the beauty of it.⁴⁰

³⁹ Don Harding interview, 3/27/2000.

⁴⁰ Lena Dobson interview, 3/30/2000.

As the 1950's came to a close many different ethnic groups, other than the Irish, made their presence felt in The Port and added to its diversity. In the latter part of the 1960's, however, Black Americans, many of whom descended from Caribbean families and families from the southern parts of the US, moved into The Port in large numbers. Many of these Black Americans soon joined the ranks of those who populated Newtowne Court and Washington Elms and helped to transform their populations. During the 1960's, the neighborhood maintained some of its previous characteristics. The fathers and mothers worked within walking distance of their jobs, and the children went to local schools – more to public, and fewer and fewer to parochial. Another important tradition that continued during the 1960's was the power of the neighborhood's settlement houses: The Neighborhood House and the Margret Fuller House. Both of these settlement houses provided numerous activities for the children of The Port for decades:

They would sponsor 4th of July events, and everybody would walk over to the Neighborhood House for the races. If you missed the races you were a loser...The Red Cross worked out of there – it was quite the busy hub.⁴¹

The settlement houses were big. You had the Margaret Fuller House and the Neighborhood House, that's where we went for after school programs: woodworking, home economics, camp in the summer – good organized programs and good clubs. There was always an adult working with the kids in a supervisory manner...The Margaret Fuller had more Black kids, and the Neighborhood House had more white kids.⁴²

During the middle part of the 1960's some additional pieces of legislation were passed that helped to transform the state of public housing throughout the United States in a significant manner, and importantly for this study, helped to transform The Port and its two public housing developments. Some of those previously discussed include the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Hart-Cellar Immigration Reform Act of 1965. Both pieces of legislation initiated forces that led to more racial and ethnic diversity in The Port, and in particular Washington Elms as well as Newtowne Court.

⁴¹ Lena Dobson interview, 3/30/2000.

⁴² Don Harding interview, 3/27/2000.

As the numbers of families of color rose in the CHA in the mid to late 60's, the CHA began an unspoken policy of steering mainly Black and later Puerto Ricans, toward Washington Elms and reserving Newtowne Court for predominantly white families. Throughout the decade the face of The Port constantly changed and along with it the make-up of Newtowne Court and Washington Elms:

We moved into Newtowne Court in 1964 and lived there until 1973. My parents broke-up and we moved in, my three brothers and my mother. There was a lot of responsibility, people had to clean their hallway. The condition of the apartments were nice. I can't say anything negative about living in the projects...You started to see the bonds develop very quickly; my hallway was really close. You had the Frangos who were Greek-American, the Puszyns who were Polish-American, and the Warren's and the Baxter's who were Irish-American. You also had the DePasquelles and the Gallos who were Italian-American and the Monroes who were Irish-American. Finally I remember the Berrys, the Hewitts, and the Lignons who were Bajan-American. We also had the Casey's who were Irish-American. Pretty much all the kids went to public highschool, but a handful still went to parochial school...There was a lot of diversity.⁴³

In 1959, I moved into Newtowne Court with my husband and Ricky, Ronnie, and Randy. We lived there until 1968...The neighbors were great; we were so close when I had my daughter I made my neighbor her godmother. Some of my immediate neighbors included the Brown's and the Hart's who were Irish. Then we had the Souza's who were Portuguese, the Washington's who were Black, the Silva's who were Portuguese, and my kids who were Cape Verdean and Italian. We also had the Viola's who were Irish and Italian. Finally who had the Fields who were Irish...The development started to have a very poor image. What made me want to move out was a radio spotlight on the male youth living in public housing and how 4/5 would end-up using drugs or be in jail. By the time I was leaving in 1968, I noticed a change in the population. There were definitely more people of color, but most of the people of color started going into Washington Elms.⁴⁴

As the decade came to a close, much of what had been the norm in The Port rapidly changed, and the first place that felt the effects of this change happened to be both public housing developments.

1970s, Disinvestment and Decline

I do remember very distinctly when more Black people started moving in, and I would say that was in the late 60's and early 70's – it was an extremely short period of time. Most of the white families in private housing had one or two children and when they grew up, it made them more mobile. There was some white families who were part of a natural progression...I remember, I lost a lot of white friends in the early 70's...The factories were closing down, the Neighborhood House burned down in '70 or '72,

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Janet Rose interview, 3/31/2000.

white people were moving out, jobs were moving-out, and in 1974 the bus from Harvard Square to Kendall was closed down that a lot of people relied upon...I remember a lot of discussion in our house. I remember when the Neighborhood House burned down, and how our family said, if they don't rebuild that, they won't rebuild anything in our neighborhood...Washington Elms was first, it was a two year swing. I couldn't believe that the neighborhood had so many Black people in it! But it was still a status thing to get into Newtowne Court, they still wanted the two parent household, dinner at five – it was still hard in the early 70's to get into Newtowne Court.⁴⁵

In the early 70's a lot of the older generation and a lot of the white folks started moving out of the projects, mainly in Washington Elms...I guess racial tension started getting heavy, you had the Black Power Movement...This small gang of white kids from Roosevelt Towers [CHA] came into the neighborhood and started beating up any kid who was Black...It was the worst time in The Port, between 1973 and 1976. I'm talking heroin – the teenagers were going crazy. My grandmother got her pocketbook ripped-off...They could have organized the community if it had been Irish Catholic, but because it was Black and starting to be Latino they didn't try...Puerto Ricans started coming into the neighborhood in the early 70's...As long as I can remember we never had any representation at the city level...When I first got into Newtowne Court in 1964 it was lilly-white, but when I moved out in 1973, Washington Elms was predominantly Black and Puerto Rican, but Newtowne Court was still white – it was always majority white.⁴⁶

In a neighborhood and two developments that had once been the pride of the city, it is amazing to recall how fast and how drastically they changed. At the end of the previous decade Congress passed the Brooke Amendment in 1969. The Brooke amendment set a limit to the amount of rent individual could pay to Housing Authorities; no tenant could pay over 25% of their income for rent. Later this percentage was raised to 30%. Legislation, once again affected the type of tenant that would enter public housing.

With this Bill, the CHA could no longer solely rely upon rents to cover operating expenses, it had to look for subsidies; something its management was not capable of doing. Subsidies were distributed later by the Federal government, however, both Washington Elms and Newtowne Court started to receive poorer and poorer families; many families that were headed by single-mothers on welfare.

⁴⁵ Lena Dobson interview, 3/30/2000.

⁴⁶ Don Harding interview, 3/27/2000.

At the same time, the type of services offered to both developments by the CHA declined as residents saw apartments boarded-up, landscaping ceased, and tremendous mismanagement. During this decade, much of the former importance and concern given to both Washington Elms and Newtowne Court by the CHA waned, as the CHA itself was almost taken into receivership by the state of Massachusetts.

The receivership was avoided, however, as a major restructuring of upper level management was successfully initiated and completed. In the early 70's, led by Harry Spence, the CHA started a reform that has made it one of the most successful Housing Authorities in the US.⁴⁷ Dan Wuenschel, Executive Director of the CHA had this to say:

In 1974, the CHA was almost put into receivership. The place had almost fallen apart. The old management had stayed in their ways and hadn't pursued any modernization money...The units had fallen into disrepair, the place was nearly insolvent...I think they weren't able to deal with social upheaval of the 60's and 70's.⁴⁸

During the 1970's, City Hall was less interested in the neighborhood that had once been the seat of city government, as it began to view The Port as a nuisance. To add to its woes, The Port was directly in the path of the Inner Ring, a major urban highway planned to cut through all of the inner Boston Area cities, luckily, however, through massive opposition this was halted. Throughout the neighborhood the land and housing values had dropped, the nearby schools were performing poorly, crime and arrests had drastically increased – The Port and both Washington Elms and Newtowne Court were in disarray and no one in a position to affect change seemed to care.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Personal interview with Dan Wuenschel, Executive Director of the CHA ,3/24/2000. Dan has been with the CHA since 1975, and the director since 1978.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Janet Rose interview, 3/31/2000.

Rent Control

An important development that took place in Cambridge in the early part of the 1970's was the creation of rent control. Rent control had a dramatic effect on the make-up of the city of Cambridge, and particularly The Port. Because The Port is in proximity to the subway in Central Square, and because it has a historic reputation for receiving immigrants and having low-cost housing, it has always been an ideal location for low-income tenants. Rent control set ceilings on the amount of rent private landlords could charge tenants. To qualify for a rent controlled apartment there was no income-test administered to tenants, they simply had to pass standards set by landlords.⁵⁰ This law was applicable to both large and small buildings – from two family homes up to large apartment buildings.

An important point to recall is that rent control coincided with the beginning of the dramatic increase in the immigrant population to the US, as it was instituted only a few years after the historic Hart-Cellar Act of 1965. Because of the historic practice of housing discrimination many low-income immigrants and many people of color were both drawn and forced to reside in the parts of Cambridge that had traditionally received them. In Cambridge, this meant the Riverside Neighborhood and The Port; both neighborhoods are located in the historic boundaries of Cambridgeport and straddle Central Square.

⁵⁰ Rent Control was a program that lasted in Cambridge from 1968-1970, and then again from 1972-1994. The vast majority of apartments in Cambridge were affected by rent control and had their rents determined by the Rent Control Board in City Hall. Rent Control was a highly political topic as well as a highly charged policy to administer. It is estimated that up to 1/3 of the city's units were occupied by individuals who were far above the level of needing a rent control apartment. Many of the city's most highly sought after apartments in the Harvard Square area were occupied for professionals. The neighborhoods that had traditionally received low-income groups remained dominated by low-income individuals. And those neighborhoods that had traditionally been populated by people of color, remained populated by people of color. With the loss of rent control in 1994, many of the cities poorest residents, including its immigrant population, has been displaced. This is a sad fact for a city that for decades has been known for its racial, ethnic, and economic diversity.

As the 1970's came to a close The Port began to feel the effects of rent control – the rise in immigrants and other low-income families – the effects of disinvestment both from the private and public sector, and the impact of increased crime and decreased overall resident morale.⁵¹ Inside of this chaos were Washington Elms and Newtowne Court. Both developments were on the brink of collapse, however, Washington Elms was worse. Washington Elms started to feel the consequences of being isolated and the results of not receiving greatly needed redevelopment money. By the end of the decade, the CHA finally decided that both developments needed to be redeveloped, but that Washington Elms needed to be first.

1980's, Disillusionment and Rebirth

As the Executive Director Dan Wuenschel commented:

With this horrible situation of stabbings, bodies found dead in dumpsters, rampant drug-trafficking on Washington Street – which the police had decided to contain inside the two developments – I started to ask people outside the Authority to help me, help us, think through what we were going to do with Washington Elms. So we started to meet at CHAPA⁵², Lang Keyes, Sandra Graham, Bob McKay, Howard Cohen, and I, on a regular basis to discuss what we were going to do– would it be a large-scale redevelopment like King's Lynn which Lang had worked on?...We decided that because the social fabric was so fractured we'd have to move everybody out to facilitate a major modernization.⁵³

A tenet offers a similar assessment of the need for change:

By 1980, I knew I had to get out of here, I had my son in 1974, and by the late 70's and early 80's it was bad. People were coming down from Roosevelt Towers [CHA] and getting into fights with the kids from Washington Elms, that's when I saw outward racial tensions – a few Black families moved into Roosevelt Towers and people in Roosevelt Towers started to assert their whiteness...I saw beer bottles in the park and drugs were everywhere; I wasn't going to send my son to the Roberts [local school]...I remember when I first had my son thinking it would be nice to live in Washington Elms, but I'm glad I didn't. They displaced the entire community and I couldn't see any of the people I grew up with, I couldn't stand to see all the fences and construction going-on.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Don Harding interview, 3/27/2000. Janet Rose interview, 3/31/2000. Lena Dobson interview, 3/30/2000.

⁵² Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA) is the non-profit umbrella organization for affordable housing and community development activities throughout Massachusetts. Established in 1967, CHAPA is the only statewide group which represents all interests in the housing field, including non-profit and for-profit developers, homeowners, tenants, bankers, real estate brokers, property managers, and government officials (<http://www.chapa.org/>).

⁵³ Dan Wuenschel interview, 3/24/2000.

⁵⁴ Lena Dobson interview, 3/30/2000.

Many of the troubles that had begun in the 70's continued to plague The Port and its two developments – particularly Washington Elms – during the 1980's. Washington Elms, as opposed to Newtowne Court, had not been built with care, as the developers had not chosen sound building materials. With overcrowding and mismanagement, at the end of the 1970's Washington Elms was in a state of drastic disrepair – boarded-up windows, vacant apartments – while Newtowne Court's condition was maintained at a higher standard (see image 8).

Realizing the need for drastic change, the CHA, with Dan Wuenschel at the helm, decided to redevelop Washington Elms. Washington Elms had not only slipped into disrepair, but it had become known for its drugs, along with high levels of crime. Steve Swanger, the head of Tenant Services at the CHA for the past twenty years recalled, “When I first got here in the early 80's, people referred to Washington Elms as the inner city, and Newtowne Court as the suburbs!”⁵⁵ – to many people, this succinctly summed up their impression of the two developments.

By the late 70's and early 80's crime was a serious problem at the two developments. An internal report from the CHA shows the intense criminal activity that took place from 1978-1980 included: burglary, stabbing, vandalism, stolen license plates, threatening letters, unarmed robbery, arson, stolen motor vehicles, stolen taxi, rock throwing at police during arrest, gambling, hit & run, slashing tires, and many more.⁵⁶ Coupled with a higher level of crime, that many attributed to the abandonment and great number of boarded windows and vacant apartments (only 165 units out of 324 were occupied), was the CHA's earlier policy of racial steering. By early 1981, Washington Elms

⁵⁵ Personal interview with Steve Swanger, 3/13/2000, Director of Tenant Services. Steve has been with the CHA since 1981.

⁵⁶ CHA internal report, *Crimes Reported at Washington Elms and Newtowne Court*, 10/7/78 – 2/5/80.

IMAGE 8.⁵⁷ DILAPIDATED WASHINGTON ELMS CIRCA EARLY 1980S



⁵⁷ Historical Photography Archive, Cambridge Housing Authority.

had the highest concentration of residents of color in all CHA developments, at 63%.⁵⁸ Because of its reputation, and because it housed higher levels of residents of color, many prospective tenants began to refuse placement at Washington Elms. Even when the CHA threatened prospective tenants with losing their place on the waiting list, they continued to refuse to be placed at Washington Elms; nothing worked. Finally, the CHA stopped placements altogether in 1977.⁵⁹

Washington Elms Redevelopment

Confronted with many problems at Washington Elms, Dan Wuenschel and his team of professional planners and policy makers decided to drastically reduce the number of units that existed at Washington Elms from 324 to 175, in order to reduce the racial imbalance that existed between residents, and to move all remaining residents off-site during redevelopment. The rationale behind the CHA's goal of lower density included its desire to build new community space, and the belief that lower density produces fewer security and management problems. These proposals were confronted with severe resident opposition.⁶⁰

The 165 remaining households, who for years had been neglected by the city and particularly the CHA, needed to be convinced that any CHA proposal would be made with their best interests at heart. Also, many residents felt that the development and the neighborhood were being primed for gentrification and moving residents off-site ignited their fears – proposals from private interests to

⁵⁸ CHA internal report, *CHA Family Developments: Change in Racial Composition, 1976-1991*.

⁵⁹ Dan Wuenschel interview, 3/24/2000.

⁶⁰ Dan Wuenschel interview, 3/24/2000. Personal interview with Terry Lurie, Director of Planning & Development, 3/21/2000. Terri has been with the CHA since 1979 when she joined as an intern. Numerous internal CHA memos from the Tenant President of Washington Elms, Ron Daniels to CHA staff indicated the tenant's concern for allowing residents to stay on-site during construction as well as the tenant's desire to see no buildings demolished.

purchase Washington Elms did not allay their concerns.⁶¹ Dan Wuenschel had this to say, “Moving people off-site during redevelopment was a problem, because many believed that this was a plot for MIT.”⁶²

To win the support of the remaining residents and their supporters the CHA had to guarantee that only three of Washington Elm’s buildings would be demolished during redevelopment, and that all 165 households would be given a contractual right to return to the development once construction was completed. Through intense negotiations the CHA, along with the help of Councilor Sandra Graham⁶³, concluded a compromise agreement with the remaining residents. Approximately half of the 165 residents, through the assistance of the Housing & Urban Development (HUD) area office, were given Section 8 vouchers. The remaining half were transferred to other CHA developments. All were guaranteed that their rents would remain affordable while living off-site. They were assured that they would have the right to return upon the completion of the redevelopment if they abided by the structure of their lease, and that only three buildings would be demolished to ensure the CHA’s goal of achieving lower density.

Finally, between the years of 1982-1985, at a cost of 9.7 million dollars, Washington Elms was redeveloped.⁶⁴ Out of the 165 residents who moved during the redevelopment, only 71 decided to return. The justification for not returning given by these tenants was that they no longer needed to

⁶¹ Janet Rose interview 3/31/2000. Lena Dobson interview 3/30/2000.

⁶² Dan Wuenschel interview, 3/24/2000.

⁶³ Sandra Graham is a long-time activist and current resident of Cambridge who became famous for taking over Harvard’s commencement ceremonies due to the University’s intentions of buying up land in her Riverside community. During the negotiations with Washington Elm residents, Dan Wuenschel informed me, without her help, the residents would not have been convinced of the good intentions of the CHA. Sandra was a member of the Cambridge City Council as well as a State Representative who district included both Washington Elms and Newtowne Court.

⁶⁴ Internal CHA documents, *Getting it Done: Successful Development and Revitalization of Public Housing*, February 1999.

live in a public housing development to maintain a lower rent; they had useful Section 8 vouchers, or they preferred to live in the new development to which they had been transferred.⁶⁵ Many of the principles used by the CHA during the redevelopment and modernization of Washington Elms became precursors to HUD's national policies for the revitalization of all public housing developments across the country: lower density, greater open space, albeit more defensible community buildings, private entrances for residents, and town-house like structures. The theories of Oscar Newman and his "defensible space," also affected the policies and decisions of upper-level CHA staff.⁶⁶ The successful redevelopment of Washington Elms became the first hurdle surmounted by the CHA, and the city of Cambridge, in beginning to positively influence The Port during the 1980's (see image 9 - 10).

Newtowne Court

During the early part of the 1980's Newtowne Court fared far better than Washington Elms. Two of its former residents, Tyrone Bellitti and José Garcia, recall their neighborhood and their neighbors:

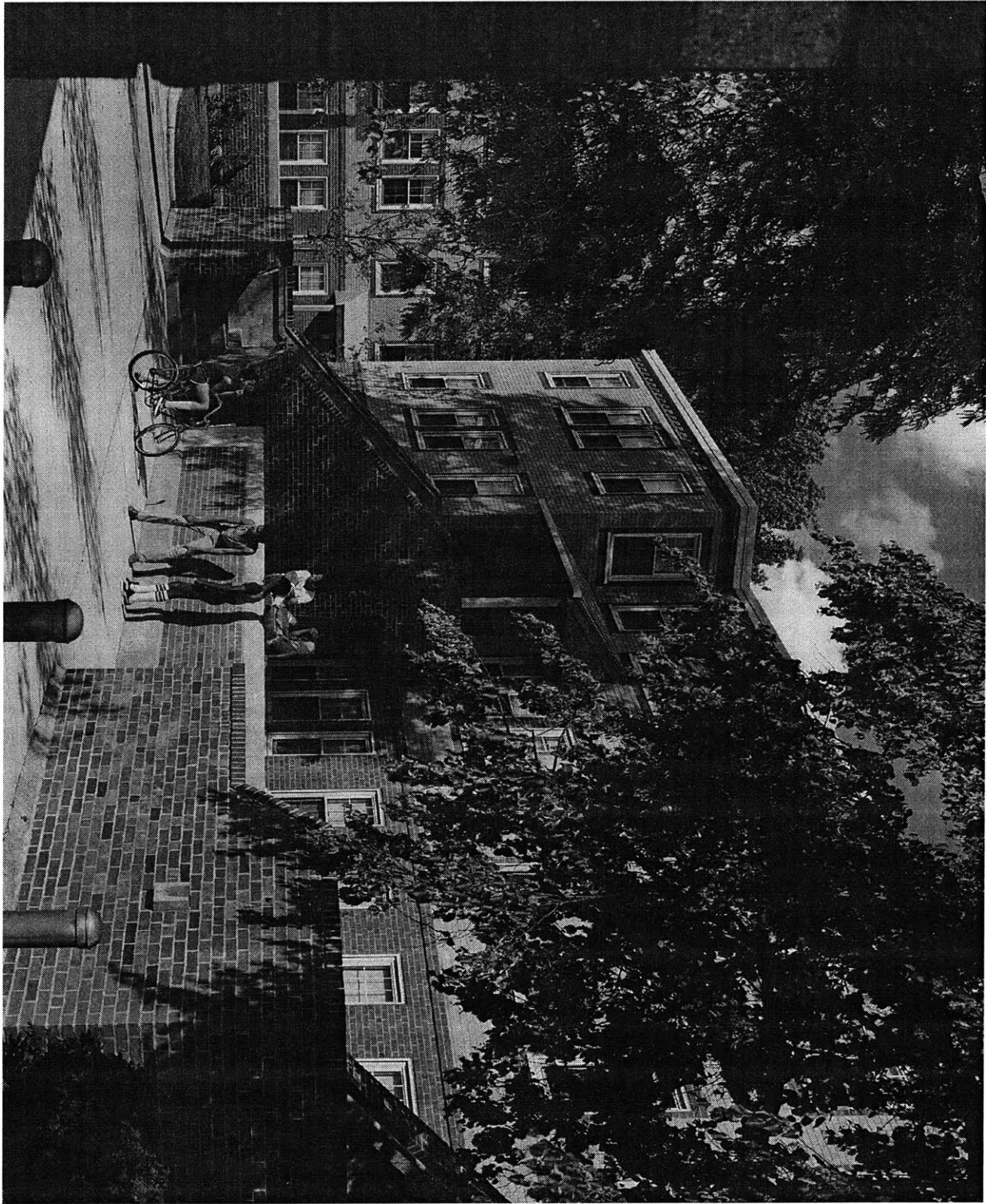
My mother moved into Newtowne Court in 1965, and there was seven of us in a three bedroom apartment...My brother and I were born in 1972...I remember the development had nice trees and the park outside had nice green blocks and a nice mosaic where people played bingo...We lived in the red doors, I'll always remember that red door!...I remember playing with a lot of kids when I was growing up in the 80's, we had the Friestas, the Gomes, the Andersons, the Upshaws, the Matos, the Scotts, the Gardners, the Prestons, the Pastells, the Chambers, the Estrellas, the Carrions, and the Hardings...I remember it was nothing but fun, kids riding bikes, playing football. To me it was a nice environment, but that was because people were always having fun. I remember the Community Art Center was amazing!...I remember I wasn't allowed to go over to the Elms, because my brother Julio said I couldn't go over there. There were people playing dice, smoking herb, shooting heroin — it was boarded up for a while.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Terry Lurie interview, 3/21/2000.

⁶⁶ Dan Wuenschel interview, 3/28/2000.

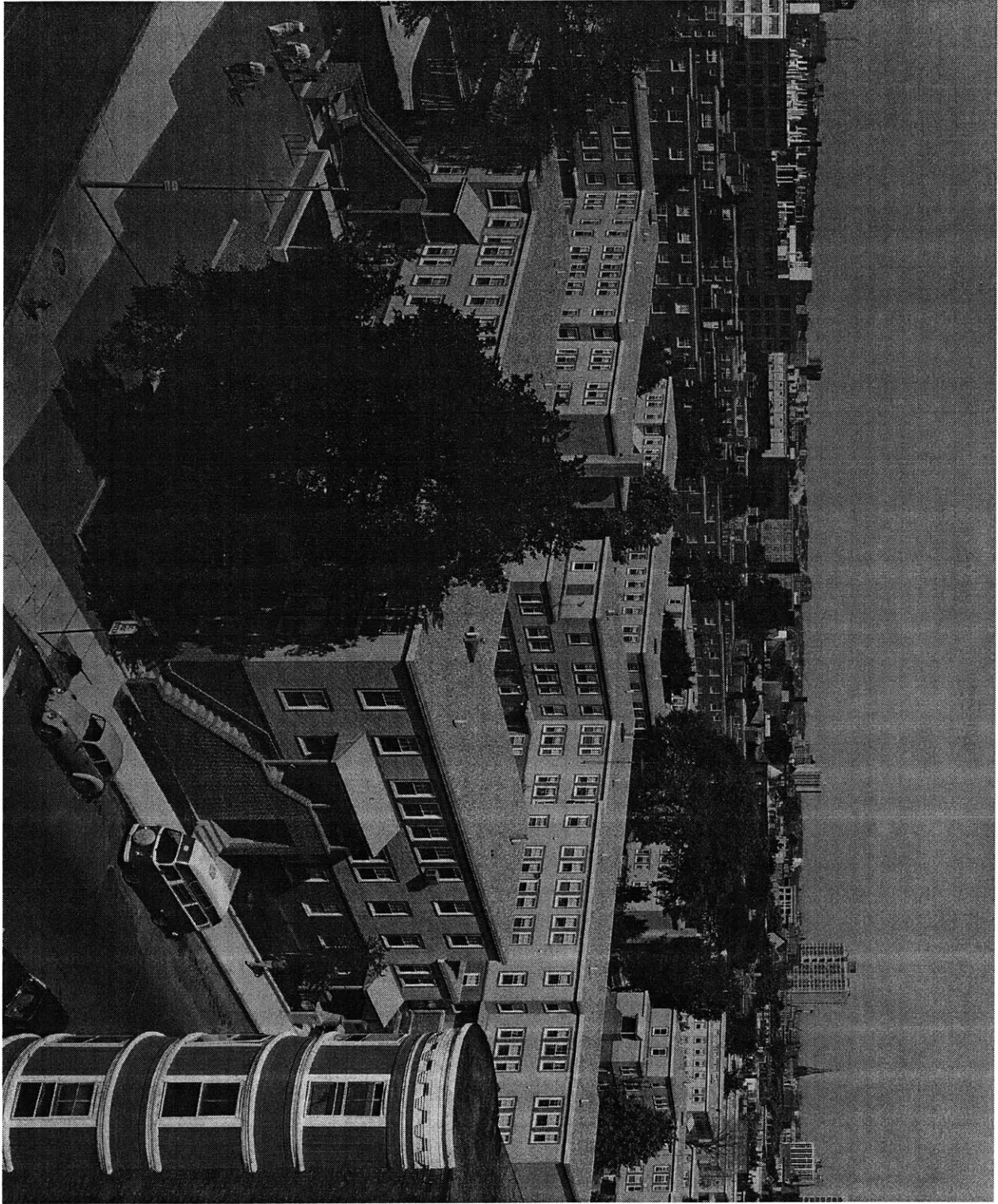
⁶⁷ Personal interview with José Garcia, 3/30/2000. José is a life-long resident of The Port and currently a community activist and Math Literacy Worker for an organization based in The Port, the Cambridge Young People's Project.

IMAGE 9.⁶⁸ COURTYARD OF WASHINGTON ELMS, CIRCA 1980'S



⁶⁸ Historical Photography Archive, Cambridge Housing Authority.

IMAGE 10.⁶⁹ AERIAL SHOT OF WASHINGTON ELMS, CIRCA 1980'S



⁶⁹ Ibid.

My mother, who was pregnant with my brother Torin, and I moved from Rindge Towers in 1976 to Newtowne Court. My first memories go back to playing baseball with all different types of families: white families, Black families, Latino families, and a few Asians – you saw a billion kids, and the older kids would set up horse shoes for us. You definitely felt the sense of community. I used to ride my bike; we had cookouts all summer long. They would have block parties, live music, games, food – it was an excellent community to live in. The children were free to run around with no worries. There were a lot of young, young mothers; my mother was a young mother...I got caught burning my sister's doll's hair, and I got told on, I got scolded. That's the kind of place it was, people looked after one another's kids.⁷⁰

Although Newtowne Court is directly adjacent to Washington Elms, it seemed to be a world apart. One of the forces that caused a dichotomy between the two developments was the physical shape of both structures, and the historic and continued strength of the tenants at Newtowne Court. Today, both developments have the same tenant organization and the same management structure, but until the early 1990's this was not the case. Up until the time of redevelopment 1982-1986, the CHA had a history of taking greater pride in Newtowne Court, and one of neglecting Washington Elms.⁷¹ By the end of the 1980's, however, Newtowne Court's situation had worsened. After the successful redevelopment of Washington Elms, Newtowne Court's condition was highlighted (see image 11.)

Crack, Increase in Violence

At the end of the 1980's both developments and the entire neighborhood, however, were engulfed by a pernicious and evil plague: crack cocaine⁷². Most urban environments around the country were

⁷⁰ Personal interview with Tyrone Bellitti, 3/27/2000. Tyrone is a life-long resident of The Port and currently a volunteer head coach for Cambridge Babe Ruth. A program for which he credits having a positive influence on his life during late 1980's when many young men in his neighborhood were being incarcerated for selling drugs.

⁷¹ Janet Rose interview, 3/31/2000. Lena Dobson interview, 3/30/2000. Don Harding interview, 3/27/2000. Tyrone Bellitti interview, 3/27/2000. Jane Richards interview, 3/27/2000. José Garcia interview, 3/30/2000.

⁷² Crack Cocaine : "To obtain crack-cocaine, ordinary cocaine hydrochloride is concentrated by heating the drug in a solution of baking soda until the water evaporates. This type of base-cocaine makes a cracking sound when heated; hence the name "crack." Base-cocaine vaporizes at a low temperature, so it can be easily inhaled via a heated pipe" (<http://www.cocaine.org/>).

IMAGE 11.⁷³ DILAPIDATED NEWTOWNE COURT, CIRCA EARLY 1990'S



quickly overwhelmed by crack and street level drug-dealing, while at the same time many Housing Development Authorities around the nation were transformed into laboratories from which this type of drug-dealing was given a genesis. Along with crack came extreme violence. A violence that affected both developments and the neighborhood. Tyrone Bellitti had this to say:

'86, '87, '88, is when crack hit and the neighborhood started to blow-up, things started to let loose...In '89 I was sitting in my living room window and these two kids I knew were walking through and all of a sudden guns came out and this kid Ricardo got shot...The drugs really started to ruin the neighborhood...The fiends [drug addicts], random white people, started asking any young Black male if they were 'holding,' if they had any drugs and that would really offend me; it was only because the color of my skin.⁷⁴

Jose Garcia added:

Right after they finished redeveloping Washington Elms that's when heroin and crack came in and all the people I knew started selling – a lot of teenagers. People started coming in to sell in Washington Elms and Newtowne Court...Five-O [the police] wasn't in the projects back then, so people would hide and do what they needed to do, so that's why people chose to sell in the projects.⁷⁵

⁷³ Historical Photography Archive, Cambridge Housing Authority.

⁷⁴ Tyrone Bellitti interview, 3/27/2000.

⁷⁵ José Garcia interview, 3/30/2000.

To the chagrin of Dan Wuenschel and many staff members at the CHA, the moment the redevelopment and modernization of Washington Elms was complete, they had to contend with another extreme problem, “The Elms were beautiful, newly redeveloped, and then we started to get complaints about the drugs – these complaints might not have happened before. We tried to cope, but we had only a few resources. It really broke my heart about the Elms.” Both developments and the neighborhood would suffer from the effects of crack – extreme violence – well into the first half of the 1990’s.

Conclusion: 1990s – Present: Neighborhood Renewal, and Haitian Immigrants

A concerted effort between the CHA, community residents, tenants activists, neighborhood organizations and churches, the police department, and a strong economy all resulted in The Port and its two developments rebounding from the violence of the “crack years” of the late 1980’s and early 1990’s. As soon as the violence and drug-dealing subsided, however, the neighborhood was shocked by yet another major challenge: the abolition of rent control in 1994.

The effects of losing rent control, not only in Cambridge, but in Boston and Brookline, continue to have a dramatic effect on Greater Boston. The result of simultaneously losing rent control and the economy strengthening has led to rapid gentrification in all of Boston Area neighborhoods. Since the late 1800’s The Port has remained a haven for low-income, blue collar, and many immigrant families. With the end of rent control, and the explosion in the real estate market in Cambridge, the certainty of finding an affordable place to live in Cambridge is no longer a reality, including in The Port.

Mr. and Mrs. Colon, both long time residents, who hail from Puerto Rico commented on this fact, “In the 1970’s you could find a three bedroom for \$160 to \$180. We bought our four family home for \$21,000 in 1978. Now the real estate market has gone crazy, I could never afford to live in Cambridge today. The house down the street sold for over \$300,000 and its not close to the size of ours.”⁷⁶

It is the rise in rents and real estate values that has caused many immigrants to search for new and creative ways to remain in Cambridge. Reputable public schools, racial and economic diversity, Harvard University and MIT, traditionally affordable housing, a multitude of employment opportunities, and a reputation for receiving immigrants in a welcoming manner, have all contributed to the high number of foreign born residents migrating to Cambridge.

Neighborhoods like The Port, that traditionally received large waves of immigrants, no longer house these groups in large numbers. Today, the newest wave of residents that is beginning to occupy The Port’s private real estate stock includes students, empty nesters, and many young professionals. It is the loss of rent control, coupled with a strong real estate market, that has led many immigrants who have migrated to Cambridge to seek out a section of the real estate market that their predecessors would not have chosen – an area of the real estate market in Cambridge that historically individuals have relied upon to remain consistently affordable: the apartments of the Cambridge Housing Authority.

First Wave of Haitian Immigrants

⁷⁶ Personal interview with Mr. & Mrs. Colon, 3/26/2000. The Colon’s were part of the first wave of Puerto Ricans to move to Cambridge in the 1960’s and have lived in The Port since that time.

Because Washington Elms had fallen into severe disrepair, and because the CHA decided only redevelopment would turn this site around, between the years of 1977 and 1985 no new residents entered the development. At the same time, the CHA was placing only a few families at some of its remaining developments. Out of the entire CHA family housing stock, only four developments have over 175 units: Washington Elms, 175; Newtowne Court, 268; Roosevelt Towers, 199; and Jefferson Park, 284. This made the redevelopment of Washington Elms, and the simultaneous redevelopment of Jefferson Park, extremely important. Once the redevelopment of both sites was completed, the CHA began to place individuals from its waiting list – a list that had essentially been dormant during the early part of the 1980's – to both sites.

Upon completion in 1985, however, only 71 residents returned to Washington Elms which left 104 available apartments. During the middle of the 1980's, the CHA chose to use a lottery system to fill its vacant apartments (HUD later ruled this practice to be potentially discriminatory and ordered the CHA to utilize a new chronological system) to allow every individual on the waiting list the opportunity of a similar chance at acquiring an apartment. This meant that recent arrivals to the city that had placed their names on the waiting lists would have an equal chance with individuals who were at the top of the line. This was fortunate for Cambridge's newly arriving low-income immigrants. The major immigrant group that took advantage of this opportunity was Haitian.

By the time Washington Elms and Jefferson Park were redeveloped in 1985 and 1987 respectively, there existed, for the first time in almost a decade, a good number of housing units available in the CHA. Unlike neighborhoods, that often change over the course of a decade or two – as evinced through our discussion of The Port – public housing developments, depending upon when tenants

are placed from the waiting lists, can transform at a rapid pace; sometimes in as little time as one or two years.

This is exactly what transpired at Washington Elms and Jefferson Park. The beginning of the 1980's saw the first major wave of Haitian immigrants enter Cambridge. Many of these Haitian immigrants suffered from such extreme poverty that they lacked the minimal financial resources to utilize the rent controlled apartments available in the neighborhoods that historically received low-income immigrants. Also, because of the extreme competition to acquire a rent-controlled apartment, many of these units were not readily available for newly arriving families to Cambridge. Despite these obstacles, many of the Haitian families established a residence in Cambridge, put their names on the waiting lists, and by the time Washington Elms and Jefferson Park were complete, their names were chosen from the waiting list for placement at both sites.⁷⁷

Some of the CHA staff described this process:

The largest immigrant group in Cambridge in the mid-80's was Haitians. They just poured into the city, got into rent controlled apartments, got onto the waiting lists, and then started to pour into the CHA developments.⁷⁸

The renovations caused people to move out on Section 8 vouchers, and stay out. They left, and in the mid 80's when we started to receive a large number of Haitian immigrants, mainly due to the political unrest in Haiti.⁷⁹

Around 1986, 1987 we opened up the waiting list CHA wide and about 350 individuals came off the list...At that time a substantial number of Haitian families started to apply for the CHA developments.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Dan Wuenschel interview, 3/28/2000. Terry Lurie interview, 3/24/2000. Personal interview with Jean Juene, 3/22/2000. Jean is a social worker, who is a Haitian immigrant himself. He has over twenty years of experience working solely with the Haitian community, and has considerable experience and knowledge about this community's housing needs, patterns, and its process of development. Personal interview with Gerard Jean-Leger, 3/22/2000. Gerard works in the Leasing & Occupancy Office of the CHA. Gerard is a Haitian immigrant himself and has considerable experience working directly with the Haitian immigrant community of Cambridge.

⁷⁸ Personal interview with Ann Arata, 3/20/2000.

⁷⁹ Steve Swanger interview, 2/28/2000.

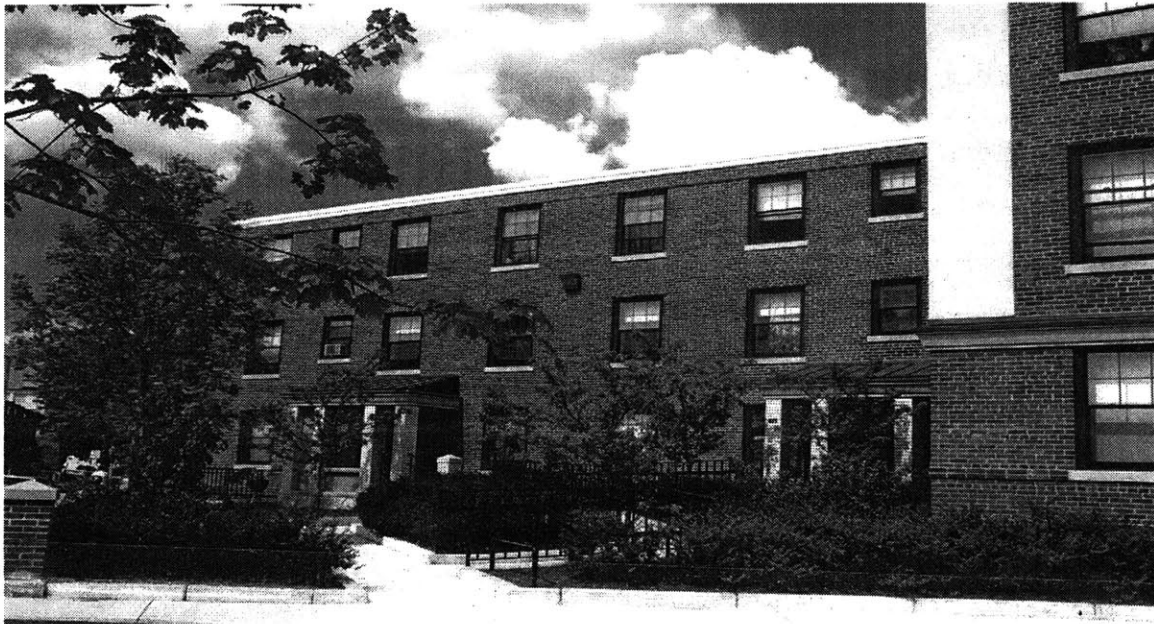
⁸⁰ Terry Lurie interview, 3/21/2000.

Many of the people moving into family housing in the mid to late 1980's, particularly at Jefferson Park and Washington Elms, were Haitian. That was the major influx of Haitian families into the CHA – 1987 through '91, '92, '93. Which meant that prior to these years they had been on the waiting lists and got placement – and continue to get placements.⁸¹

Second Wave of Haitian Immigrants

During the 1990's, the CHA received substantial funding to modernize and redevelop Newtowne Court. The process of revitalization began in the early part of the decade when the CHA was chosen by HUD to receive funding to de-lead the entire development. Prior to redevelopment only 60% or 167 out of 282 units were occupied. The de-leading program continued up to 1997 when a full-scale modernization program at the cost of \$24.4 million dollars began.⁸² The CHA completed the entire redevelopment in 1999.

IMAGE 12.⁸³ NEWTOWNE COURT REVITALIZATION



⁸¹ Dan Wuenschel, 3/28/2000.

⁸² Internal CHA documents, *Getting it Done: Successful Development and Revitalization of Public Housing*, February 1999.

⁸³ Historical Photography Archives, Cambridge Housing Authority.

Since the relocation resources that were available for the Washington Elms redevelopment were no longer available, the CHA chose not to remove tenants during reconstruction of Newtowne Court, but rather it moved families onsite and into revitalized units once they were completed. This proved to be successful. The redevelopment of Newtowne Court has turned one of the oldest public housing developments in the country, into one of the most aesthetically attractive public housing complexes. The use of copper roofing, private entrances, a mix of concrete and the original antique brick, as well as comprehensive landscaping has transformed Newtowne Court into an extremely desirable location to live.⁸⁴

IMAGE 13.⁸⁵ NEWTOWNE COURT REVITALIZATION



Upon completion of Newtowne Court in 1997, a substantial number of units that had been unoccupied as a result of to the redevelopment were made available to individuals on the CHA

⁸⁴ Over the course of my interviews with long-time neighborhood residents, some current tenants of Newtowne Court, as well as some CHA staff members I was continuously told how desirable Newtowne Court had become.

⁸⁵ Historical Photography Archives, Cambridge Housing Authority.

waiting list. Once again, a great number of individuals placed from the waiting list to live in Newtowne Court were Haitian.⁸⁶

Since the middle part of the 1980's up until the present many low-income Haitian immigrants, that can no longer choose to live in private rental housing, have continued to populate the CHA. This continued migration of Haitian immigrants to the doors of the CHA has left many upper level staff members asking the following questions:

- What does it mean for the Cambridge Housing Authority to receive immigrants in general, and Haitian immigrants in particular?
- Why are so many Haitian families migrating to Cambridge, and why are they leaving Haiti?
- What kind of policy adjustments must be made to handle large immigrant population?
- What is Haitian culture like and what does this mean for public housing?
- What kind of services are needed to deal with a Haitian clientele?

In the next chapter, I will attempt to answer these questions and to explore the story of the Haitian immigrant and how Haitians have transformed both Washington Elms and Newtowne Court.

⁸⁶ Terry Lurie interview, 3/21/2000. Ann Arata interview, 3/20/2000. Personal interview with Faith Walker, 3/28/2000, Senior Manager of both Washington Elms and Newtowne Court since October of 1997. Prior to this, Faith was an assistant manager at the site from 1995-1997, and she has worked in the CHA since 1993. Personal interview with Reyita Ramos, 4/3/2000, Teacher-Counselor of the CHA Workforce Unemployment Program. Reyita is a former resident of the CHA and has been the Teacher-Counselor at Washington Elms/Newtowne Court since 1997.

CHAPTER 4. THE HAITIAN EXPERIENCE IN PARTICULAR

Located between a country they are escaping from and a country that does not want to welcome them, the death of these Haitians at sea represents the maximal expression of their liminal citizenship status.

Michel Laguerre, *Diasporic Citizenship*, 1998, pg. 85.

To understand the forces that propel Haitians to flee their homeland, we must first understand a nation where historically the vast majority of its people have been controlled, oppressed, and subjugated purely for their ability to produce cash-crops (mainly sugar cane, coffee, and indigo). Traditionally, the average Haitian has not realized any profits of his own, but rather, his labor has been used mainly for the profit of others. Since the beginning of trans-Atlantic slave trade, enslaved West Africans were brought to the island of Ayiti, as the indigenous people referred to it, and were forced to cultivate crops under deplorable conditions. Inhumane treatment of the average Haitian peasant continued far past the destruction of the system of slave labor, well beyond the period of independence of 1804, and consistently to the end of the twentieth century. It is this system of oppression that the average Haitian seeks to escape (Laguerre, 1998).

US-Haitian Relations

Early Twentieth Century

Since the declaration of the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, the US has viewed the entire Western Hemisphere as territory under its hegemony. As a consequence, Haiti has been included in its list of nations persecuted by the US. However, it was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that the US occupied Haiti for the first time. The United States Marines were sent into Haiti to control the society from 1915-34, and it was during this period that Haiti shifted from under French control

to US hegemony. As a result of this occupation, Haiti was transformed as the US sought to modernize all facets of Haitian society: political, social, economic, and military. It wasn't until the period following US occupation, however, that Haitians began to immigrate in large numbers to the United States (Laguerre, 1998, Miller, 1984, Zephir, 1996).

1957-1986

The period following US occupation of Haiti saw the rise of the Duvalier Dynasty. Francois 'Papa-Doc' Duvalier (1957-1971) and his son Jean-Claude 'Baby-Doc' Duvalier (1971-1986) both ruled Haiti with an iron-fist. During this regime Haiti quickly transformed from a rural to an urban society. Port-au-Prince, the nation's capital, became the center of all activity in Haiti, as peasants from the countryside migrated to the capital and other urban areas. In the urban environments, Haitians sought better schooling, employment, and health care opportunities for their families. Urban squatter communities quickly developed as conditions inside of Haiti reached disastrous levels -- the Duvalier regime continued its reign of terror (Laguerre, 1998, Miller, 1984, Zephir, 1996).

Many Haitians peasants sought a way out of the deplorable conditions. As outlined in Chapter 1, however, in 1924 the United States had instituted the Immigration Quota Act of 1924 that lasted until 1965. As a consequence, many Haitian migrants first turned to the Dominican Republic for opportunities of employment. The conditions that Haitian migratory workers faced once they entered, and ultimately, remained in the Dominican Republic were beyond extreme. Some have argued these conditions mirrored the oppressive, inhumane, cruel, and indescribable situation of the enslaved Africans of Caribbean history (Miller, 1984).

Reasons for Migration to the US

What type of forces inside a country would motivate human beings to subject themselves to slave-like conditions? Why would Haitians leave the one system of oppression under the Duvalier Dynasty to be subjected to conditions that are unthinkable on the sugar cane plantations inside the Dominican Republic? These are questions that only a Haitian can answer, but those which deserve speculation. Inherent in the decisions we make to leave one place, and move to another, are both “push” and “pull” factors; factors that both push one to leave, and factors that, at the same time, pull one to move to another location. We must investigate the forces that both propel and draw Haitians to migrate to the US today.

As Michel Laguerre concisely describes there were, and are, many reasons that have caused Haitians to choose to leave their homeland:

Most Haitian immigrants who came to the United States in the twentieth century have done so in response to a periodic but sustained crisis in their homeland caused by the transformation from a traditional to a modern society, from a succession of ruthless and kleptocratic dictatorial regimes to a democratic government that is nonetheless corrupt, from the prominence of French culture among its elite to an incremental process of Americanization, from an economy based on agricultural production and tourism to one dependent on offshore industry and remittances, from a country in which the army served as the sole arbiter of national politics to one with no army and civilian-led police force, from a country in which the rural population constituted the majority to a country with a majority of urban residents, from a country with a stable sedentary population to one in a constant migratory motion.⁸⁷

Laguerre goes on to delineate what he believes were the three main events that caused a large increase in the number of Haitians leaving their homeland in the past thirty years:

⁸⁷ Michel Laguerre, *Diasporic Citizenship*, pg. 21

1. The transition of power from the previous military dictatorships to the Duvalier Dynasty caused an overall shock to Haitian society. When Francois 'Papa-Doc' Duvalier declared himself "President for Life" in 1964, many opposition groups fled the country. This period saw the first wave of highly educated and wealthier Haitians flee Haiti. The transfer of power from 'Papa-Doc' to 'Baby-Doc' or Jean-Claude Duvalier, the son of the previous dictator, only saw an increase in the political persecution, street violence, and the overall fear that plagued the society. Both of these ruthless leaders created a culture of terror that motivated many Haitians to flee their homeland, even the individuals who previously saw escape beyond their economic reach.
2. The change in government in Cuba in 1959 caused the Haitian migratory workers, who once sailed to Cuba annually to cut the sugar cane, to cease this activity. This led to severe consequences for the Haitian economy that once relied heavily upon this source of foreign capital paid by the Cuban government, as well as the capital these workers earned abroad and brought home to spend in Haiti. Jack Miller cites the annual number of these migratory workers to be well over 20,000! Without the prospect of annual employment, many Haitians began to search for other countries in which they could gain employment. As stated above, even the harsh reality they faced in the Dominican Republic did not sway their decisions.
3. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, once it passed the US Congress had world-wide consequences. Haitians, as well as many other potential immigrants of color around the world, saw the passage of this legislation as a sign that the racial tension that had marked the US political environment for centuries was beginning to relax. Haitians saw this as an opportunity to move to a country where so many immigrants before them had found "opportunity" and "freedom."

These are some of the forces that initially motivated Haitians to leave their homeland. However, it must be noted that this does not fully answer the question of why these immigrants chose the US as their primary place to relocate. While some Haitians looked to Jamaica, Bahamas, and the Dominican Republic as countries to which they could migrate, their focus would soon change to the United States (Miller, 1984).

Flore Zéphir states that it was the desire of the average Haitian to improve his/her personal standard of living. Most Haitians desired to transition into the modern era and receive the benefits of this epoch: better employment, stable shelter, food, clothing, education, and health care; none of which are ubiquitous in Haiti. Zéphir believes that it was a conscious choice of Haitians to leave

their nation, but also agrees with Laguerre about the degree to which oppression caused massive migration. The US seemed like a natural place to achieve these goals.

Jack Miller believes that a major factor that caused wide-scale migration of Haitians to other countries, was the overall level of overcrowding inside of Haiti, particularly inside its cities. The infrastructure and services were not modern enough, or capable enough, to handle the surge of the Haitian urbanization process. Thus, many Haitians sought other countries to use as a base for their means of employment.

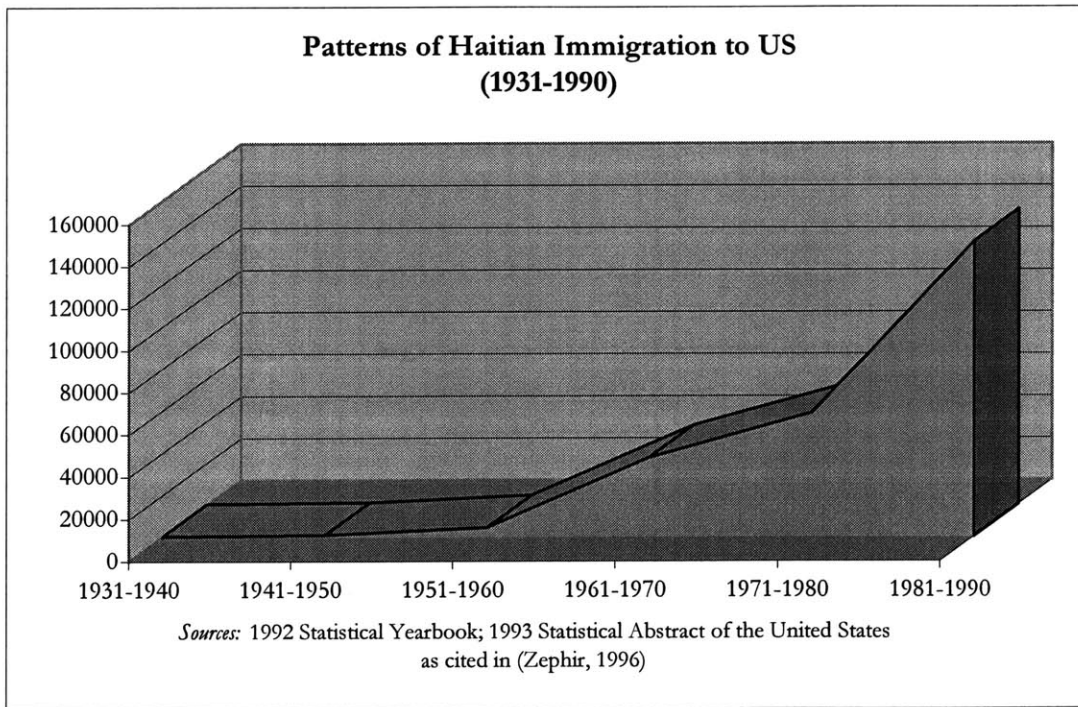
Once the Hart-Cellar Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 passed the US Congress, the immigrant floodgates opened, and Haitians were one of the groups that began their journey to the “promised land.” As stated earlier, from 1965 to 1990 12 million immigrants entered the United States. Well over two thirds have come from the Third World. The total number of Haitians that have been legally documented by the Immigration and Naturalization Service as entering the US during 1961-1992, is roughly 248,000.⁸⁸ It is not surprising that the monumental legislation of the Hart-Cellar Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 had the most profound impact on the decision of the first wave of Haitian immigrants to the US (see Table 5).

I agree with the opinions of Laguerre, Zephir, and Miller as to why Haitians left and continue to leave their country, however, only Zephir briefly mentions Hart-Cellar. In my opinion, this legislation had the strongest impact on the minds of prospective Haitian immigrants – going from a period of being totally denied entry (1924-1965), to a period of being initially accepted (1965-1975).

⁸⁸ As cited in Flore Zéphir, *Haitian Immigrants in Black America: A Sociological & Sociolinguistic Portrait*, pg. 5

Table 5: Total Number of Documented Haitian Immigrants to US, 1931-1990

Decade	Total
1931-1940	191
1941-1950	911
1951-1960	4,442
1961-1970	37,500
1971-1980	58,700
1981-1990	140,200
Total	241,944



It was the force that “pulled” the first group of Haitians toward the “golden doors” of the US and the force that allowed them to view this country as a viable option. The period during the mid-1960’s is when the first large wave of Haitians came to the US. Since then this wave has never subsided.

Haitian Perspective

I have been fortunate throughout this study to interview some of what Zephir called the “newest Americans,” as Haitians have become the dominant immigrant group in the Boston Area.

Throughout the course of my interviews I asked the Haitian immigrants the following question:

“What made you leave your homeland to come to the US?” I believe their comments shed light on the more personal reasons why Haitians leave their homeland.

There are three main categories into which the Haitian immigrants I interviewed fall: *political/* fear for their lives; *economic/* better jobs, better wages, a target income goal; *personal-familial/* better education, better quality of life, family reunification:

Personal/Familial

Gustave:

In 1994 my sister petitioned for my entire family, so we came to the US. I was interested in the benefits of a greencard – an opportunity for my kids to study in better schools. I have three daughters: 25, 23, and 20 years old. I don’t want to stay here permanently, I want to return to Haiti when I retire, but I want a better life for my children -- now.⁸⁹

Jean II:

My family sent me to the US for a better education. I came to Cambridge in the early 70’s to study. I can tell you one thing: If you are from one part of Haiti and you settle in an area, then everyone from that part of Haiti begins to follow...I think a lot of Haitians come to the US for better opportunities for their families.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Personal Interview with translator, 3/28/2000.

⁹⁰ Personal Interview, 3/22/2000

Economic

Jean:

I came to the US in 1983 when I was nineteen years old. I had family members and friends here(US). I was looking for better job opportunities. I think its better to have more of your family in one place.⁹¹

Political

Yanick:

I came to the US in 1978. Our family members had already come. My father left Haiti in the mid 60's because he fled for his life. He was a radio broadcast infrastructure provider. He had to leave Haiti or he would die, the government was after him. So when he came to Boston he bought a home. In '78 we got our documents and came to live with him. It was easier to immigrate back then.⁹²

Mura:

I remember the exact day I came to the US: on October, 26th, 1991 one month after the coup de-taut that installed Cedras as the military general of Haiti. Back home I was working as a community organizer/ social worker for Public Enterprise for Social Housing, that was funded by USAID, the Haitian government, and the World Bank. My responsibility was to stop the development of squatter housing...The reason I left Haiti was because I was involved in Democracy, organizing people to vote, and not everybody liked that – if you know what I mean. My life was in danger.⁹³

The last interview cites all three categories as reasons for Haitian migration to the US:

Gerard:

My mom came to the US in 1974 and my dad came in 1975. Then in 1979 my other sister and I came to Cambridge to live my parents. Family ties brought us to Boston. In 1974-1975, under the Duvalier Regime, the political situation was scary. People were scared to say anything about the government – back then it was more political, now its more economic. The economic situation is bad; people have a hard time trying to eat; a hard time trying to live. A lot of Haitians come here [US] for a better life on a short term, but their dream is to return to Haiti, build a home and live comfortably. I don't know about the younger Haitians that were born here, but if the economic and political situation was restored, they would go back.⁹⁴

It is interesting to note that not one of their responses includes the fact that the US is a viable option, as opposed to other nations that might not receive them as immigrants. In all but one of these responses the interviewee mentions family reunification as a part of the immigration process.

⁹¹ Personal Interview, 3/28/2000

⁹² Personal Interview, 3/27/2000

⁹³ Personal Interview, 3/25/2000

⁹⁴ Personal Interview, 3/22/2000

There is also consistent mention of a “better life” for their families. *Jean* talks about the process by which Haitians from one area of Haiti leave and relocate together in certain parts of the US.

Many of the images seen in the media of “Haitian Boat People” often skew the reality of migration. We are often told of the horror stories of migration, and not informed of the more subtle, more intimate reasons that motivate immigrants to migrate. The responses above shed light on why some Haitians have chosen to leave Haiti. It is the influence of the Haitian diaspora and the experience Haitians receive in the US that we must now turn to.

Experience of Immigrants of Color, US Context

The United States is a country full of contradictions. One of the most blatant contradictions is the practice of racism. This nation preaches equality and justice for all its citizens, but has a history filled with acts of aggression directed toward individuals who are not of European ancestry. This is not to say that European immigrants have not experienced discrimination, however, the discrimination perpetuated against Europeans has never been institutional. This is one of the major differences between racism and prejudice. Without having institutionalized discrimination practices leveled against them, however, many European immigrants faced multiple barriers (Riis, 1957).

The history of the United States is replete with periods that have institutionalized racism against individuals of color, such as enslaving Africans and bringing them against their will to this country, perpetrating genocide against Native Americans, legalizing segregation based on race to deny services to individuals of color, and the list goes on. It is within this racist context that many immigrants of color first confront what it means to be judged solely by the color of their skin and

their physiognomy. Racism can be defined as discrimination perpetrated by those in institutional positions of power that have the means to carry out discrimination against those who are not a part of dominant society (Hurwitz & Peffley, 1998). For many immigrants of color this is a rude awakening.

The United States is still ambivalent about its legacy with slavery. It was only recently that President Clinton became the first US president to apologize for the enslavement of African-Americans. However, no retribution has been offered to the descendants of families that were enslaved.

Historically, we are a nation that has deliberately ignored the contributions that African-Americans have made to the advancement of this society, and thus, the average US citizen has very little knowledge about African-American culture. Furthermore, members of dominant society view individuals of the African diaspora to be of the same ethnicity and the same cultural background, regardless of their country of origin, their native language, and their distinct beliefs and practices (Zephir, 1996, Kasinitz, 1992, Omi & Winant, 1986, King, 1981). A clear example of this is how many Jamaicans, Haitians, and Bajans are seen simply as “Black,” and not identified by their respective ethnicity first. Ethnicity can simply mean common cultural practices, shared beliefs, common history, and a sense of belonging to the same group (Kasinitz, 1992, Sollors, 1986).

For immigrants of European descent it has been much easier to discard ethnic labels and become what many self-identify as, namely “American.” However, when it serves their purpose Americans of European ancestry can choose to identify with an ethnic label because it does not affect their every day life. This ethnic label provides Americans of European ancestry with an opportunity to feel a sense of belonging, and a sense of being special or unique (Waters, 1990). Americans of

European ancestry are allowed a sense of freedom or latitude in self-definition, however, they ultimately become part of dominant society and inherit a position that enjoys control and power (Water, 1992, Zephir, 1996). Immigrants from Europe not only become American, but become “white” Americans (Zephir, 1992).

For immigrants of color it is quite the opposite. In fact, once they have entered the US, Latino, Asian, and individuals of African descent have experienced a qualitatively different experience from European Americans. Ronald Takaki (1987) wonderfully documents the historical discrimination against immigrants of color. The United States Congress in 1790 passed the American Naturalization Law that clearly stated only “white” immigrants were eligible to be naturalized as US citizens. In fact, Takaki shows how this was legally sanctioned for over 162 years! It wasn’t until the Walter-McCarran Act of 1952 that the right to be naturalized as a US citizen was no longer based on race.

In some instances legislation was passed to exclude the immigration of certain immigrants of color altogether. In the late nineteenth century, white Californians were quickly confronted with competition from Chinese laborers. As a result, the burgeoning Chinese community experienced discrimination, violence, and murder. Not long after the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was passed (Chan,1986).

Both the American Naturalization Law of 1790 and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 are insidious pieces of legislation that changed the course of US history. In denying non-white immigrants the same rights as immigrants of European ancestry, the US Congress put immigrants of color at a major disadvantage in the race to develop and strengthen their communities inside the US; many

European immigrant communities, provided with time to expand and to advance, have produced a cadre of individuals who have taken on major leadership roles in numerous institutions in our society (Waters, 1990). Being at the top of leading institutions has not only provided their communities with hope and role models, but it has also opened doors and developed networks upon which European Americans can consistently rely.⁹⁵ The same has not been true for immigrants of color.

Once immigrants of color entered the US they were and are confronted with another reality: a limited ability to define themselves on their terms. Mary Waters (1990) is direct on this issue. She shows that the same way European Americans have freedom and flexibility in defining their ethnicity, non-white individuals have no freedom at all. This is particularly true for people of the African diaspora. As individuals of European descent have latitude when it comes to self-identification, people of African descent have no latitude whatsoever. (Kasinitz, 1992). In fact, ethnicity theory is not extremely concerned with people of the African diaspora and views this group as simply being Black and not having any cultural distinctions (Omi & Winant, 1986, Zephir, 1992).

As stated above, Black immigrants are seen as Black Americans and as Zephir (1992) notes, are treated with discrimination. Because of this discrimination Black immigrants can not downplay their ethnic identity, in fact, they experience a heightened sense of cultural awareness. It is the reality of leaving a society where they are part of the majority and not judged on the basis of their skin, but rather their class, to come to the US context, in which they are part of the minority and confronted

⁹⁵ A wonderful case of this type of development is the example of the Irish community in Boston. The reader is directed to Steven E. Miller, *The Boston Irish political machines, 1830-1973*.

with discrimination and racism, that forces the Black immigrant to experience a growing sense of ethnic pride (Laguerre, 1984, Omi & Winant, 1986, Zephir 1992).

Haitian Journey

This history of Haitian immigration to the US is one that is filled with horror. Throughout the 1970's, 1980's, and 1990's there were successive waves of Haitian "boat people." The images of these helpless individuals fleeing the repressive conditions of their homeland, many times drowning at sea, were emblazoned in the minds of the average American. The reality, however, is that these refugees were turned back and, often times, forced to return to their homeland. For example, "...approximately 50,000 Haitians sought political asylum in the United States between 1972 and 1980; only twenty-five succeeded."⁹⁶ The US was not officially prepared to classify these Haitians as "refugees." In fact, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) forcefully denied refugee status to Haitians, while at the same eagerly applying it to Cubans who most often racially classified as white. The official position of the INS was that Cubans were escaping the repressive strictures of Communism, while Haitians were migrating to the US for "economic reasons" (Laguerre, 1998, Zephir, 1992). Even with enormous obstacles, the 1980's saw a rapid increase in the number of Haitians who continued to enter the United States (see table 1.2).

⁹⁶ Joyce A. Hughes and Linda R. Crane, 'Haitians: Seeking Seeking Refuge in the United States,' *Georgetown Immigration Law Journal*, 4 (7), 1993, pg. 766 as cited in Laguerre, option cited, pg. 82

Haitian Immigrants, US

“After Jamaica, Haiti is the second largest source of Black immigrants in this country.”⁹⁷ This is an amazing fact for a country that has a small population of 8,104,678,⁹⁸ smaller than the size of New York City. When entering the US context the Haitian immigrant must confront a triple form of discrimination: being a *foreigner*, a *Black*, and a *non-English speaker*. This is a harsh reality for Haitians to face, but a reality that is constant in their every day lives. As a result of this triple form of discrimination the Haitian, as stated above, experiences a heightened sense of cultural pride. However, there is some debate about this in the Haitian academic community.

Laguerre (1984) argues that the Haitian makes no conscious decision to form a distinct ethnic group, but the confinement of a racist society *forces them to*, whereas, Zephir (1992) argues that because of pervasive racism in the United States, Haitians make a *conscious decision* to identify themselves as a distinct ethnic group or a “self-conscious” group “who value and affirm their traditions.”⁹⁹ Either way, it is clear that Haitians do not like to be defined as solely Black, but rather, they like to be defined in terms of their nationality. A Haitian, most often claims to be Haitian first, and anything else second. This is not to say that Haitians are uncomfortable with their racial category, in fact, they are well aware of their great history of being the first Black nation in the Western hemisphere and are extremely proud to be Black (Zephir, 1992).

⁹⁷ Zephir, option cited, pg. 4

⁹⁸ As cited in <http://www.population.com>.

⁹⁹ Zephir, option cited, pg. 67.

Both Michel Laguerre and Flore Zéphir have chosen to study the Haitian community in New York City, and for good reasons. As Laguerre notes, “The Haitian community in the United States in 1996 is estimated to be approximately 1.5 million, with major concentrations in New York (700,000), Florida (500,000), Massachusetts (80,000), Illinois (70,000)...”¹⁰⁰ with the vast majority of these concentrations located in New York City, Miami, Boston, and Chicago respectively. Zéphir goes on to note, “Between 1965 and 1992 approximately 117,500 Haitians resided legally in New York City; this figure represents about sixty percent of the total number of the legal Haitian immigrant population residing in the United States.”¹⁰¹

Very little attention and scholarly research has been paid to the Haitian community in Boston. Although the preceding numbers show that the Haitian community in the Boston Area does not come near the size of its two sister communities in Miami and New York, one must take a closer look. The total population of Boston in the 1990 census was 574,000, and as such, is considerably smaller than that of New York City. In Massachusetts, Boston is the city in which the overwhelming number of Haitian immigrants reside. If we take the total number of Haitian immigrants in Boston, estimated by Laguerre to be 80,000, by the total population of Boston, 600,000, then the percentage of the total population of Haitian immigrants in Boston is roughly 13%.¹⁰² This is significant for an immigrant community that was virtually absent only twenty short years ago, and now has become the newest and most dominant ethnic group in the city.

¹⁰⁰ Laguerre, option cited, pg. 86.

¹⁰¹ Zéphir, option cited, pg. 8.

¹⁰² These are very rough estimates using the most recent population of Boston from the 1990 census, 574,000 along with Laguerre's rough estimates of the 1996 Haitian population in Massachusetts, of which the overwhelming majority reside in Boston. The point here is to show that the Haitian community in Boston, relative to the size of Boston, is substantial and worthy of notice.

Haitian Immigration Process, Why Boston, Cambridge, & the CHA?

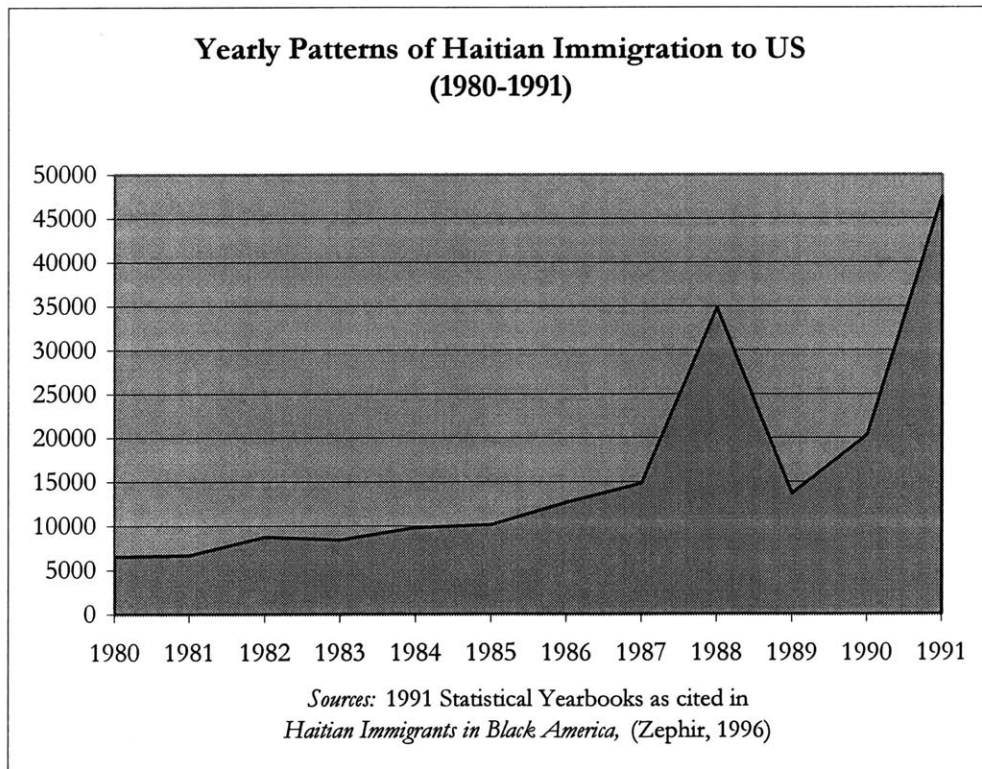
For the purpose of this thesis, I believe an extremely relevant question is, what forces have “pulled” the Haitian community to settle in the Boston Area, and particularly, in Cambridge’s Washington Elms and Newtowne Court (CHA)? Or more simply, why have Haitians chosen to immigrate to Boston and Cambridge? The answers to these questions will help to shed light on why the Haitian community has grown in Boston, and particularly, in Cambridge and the CHA.

Also, what process or pattern has the Haitian immigrant followed to get to Boston and the CHA? Has this been a process of step-migration? Have they stopped along the way to live in other communities before coming to Cambridge? This question is essential in beginning to think about an answer to the first hypothesis question posed in this thesis: *Is Public Housing becoming a port-of-entry community for immigrants?* The answers to the above questions will help to illuminate whether Washington Elms and Newtowne Court are the first opportunity for these Haitian immigrants to secure housing for themselves and their entire family.

Throughout the course of my interviews I asked each Haitian immigrant with whom I spoke if they could shed light on these issues. Each of the following respondents is either a current tenant or former tenant of Washington Elms or Newtowne court, save one: *Jean II*. When asked why they came to Cambridge and the CHA many of the people interviewed used Cambridge and Boston interchangeably, so I tried to establish a distinction between the two by asking them what specifically brought them to Washington Elms or Newtowne Court.

Table 6: Number of Documented Haitian Immigrants to the US 1980-1991

Year	Total
1980	6,540
1981	6,683
1982	8,779
1983	8,424
1984	9,839
1985	10,165
1986	12,666
1987	14,819
1988	34,806
1989	13,658
1990	20,324
1991	47,527
Total	194,230



The responses of the Haitian immigrants I interviewed to the question why they came to the CHA or why they believe other Haitians come to Cambridge, and where they or others have stopped along the way, are organized into four main categories: *personal-familial/* better education, better quality of life, family reunification; *information networks/* highlight particular aspects of place – e.g. job opportunities, greater income; *less racism/* experience more diversity and less prejudice and discrimination; *affordable housing/* large enough apartment for entire family at low price.

The individuals interviewed fall into multiple categories. Each category, however, is preceded by a distinction of whether they were a participant of *step-migration* or *non-step migration*:

Non-step Migration/personal-familial/information networks

Gustave:

*In 1994, I came directly to Cambridge to live in Washington Elms. I flew from Port-au-Prince to Miami for two hours, and then directly to Boston. The reason I chose Boston is because of I have relatives here. My sister and others live in Cambridge and the area. I chose Cambridge because of family ties, friendships, and word-of-mouth. Boston, compared to other cities, is the best! Boston has more job opportunities for Haitians. Many of them work as nurses, and in hotels. A lot of people leave New York City because of the better job opportunities in Boston. I don't know if you've every seen the taxi's but Haitian men dominate – it's there show. Haitian taxi drivers are everywhere!*¹⁰³

Step Migration/personal familial/information networks/less racism

Jean:

I came to the US in 1983 and stayed with an aunt in North Miami for a couple of years. In 1985, I moved to Somerville to stay with a friend. In 1986 I moved to Everett and I lived there for nine years. In 1986, I got married and moved down the street in Everett. During this time in Everett we had two kids, the rent got high, we had to pay for baby-sitting and other expenses like school and so on. In 1995, we moved in with in-laws in Dorchester for three years while my wife and I were working and going to school at night. In 1998, we moved to Hyde Park but we had a problem. I found out that the lady did not own the house, so we had to go to court. Then we had to move in with my sister in Randolph for a couple of months until I could find a place. Back in 1992, I had put my name on the waiting list for the CHA, and because I worked for Quest Diagnostics and we had an "emergency status" – being evicted from Hyde Park – we got into Newtowne Court in 1999! When I was moving from Somerville to Everett I was always looking for a place that included heat and hot water. I had put our name on the

¹⁰³ Personal interview with translator 3/28/2000.

waiting list for Housing in Cambridge, Needham, Frammingham, and Boston. We were called for housing in Boston, but I didn't like the developments and because of its reputation we wouldn't move there.

The reason I came to Boston is because of family and friends. The opportunities for a job in Boston are better, and I liked the social life. In Miami, if you tell people your from Haiti they think your "boat people"— they put you down — and treat you like a second-class citizen. Looking for work, good job opportunities, and the racism is less than Florida — better treatment — at least for me. I like Cambridge specifically for the diversity, Harvard Square. I knew some friends that lived here. My friends mother talked to me about it. It seemed like a nice place to live; seems like for the most part people get along.¹⁰⁴

Step Migration/personal-familial/information networks/affordable housing

Yanick:

I came to the US in 1978 with my sister. I stayed in Dorchester because my father bought a house for us. I only stayed in Dorchester for one year because my father had a heart attack and was on disability. I then moved in 1979 with my grandmother and my sister to Rindge Towers for three years, and then we moved back to Dorchester from 1981-1986. During this time I had my daughter and son. Between 1986-88 I lived in Lynn, so we could have our own place. When I had my first kid in 1981 and I lived in Rindge Towers I had put my name on the waiting list for the CHA. They send you a letter every year to see if you still want your name on the list. They finally called me in 1988 and came to inspect my house in Lynn. They gave me a preference because I had lived in Cambridge. I then moved into Newtowne Court in October of 1988 until 1998.

I was happy to come back to Cambridge, have you ever been to Lynn? And, I was happy to move to Newtowne Court because depending upon what you make, you pay a percentage of your salary in rent. For me that was good. It was very tough for me but I still paid it. I paid for daycare, after school, and I still paid \$723 a month.

You want to know why Haitians come to Boston, I'll tell you. It is easier to get a job here, through friends, than New York [City]. Most Haitian people come with little education, but they can find jobs in the hotels, as nurse's assistants and nurses, in the health care field in general.¹⁰⁵

Step Migration/information networks/less racism

Mura:

I had been coming to the US since 1989; whenever I had a vacation I would come to New Jersey to see my relatives and extended family. I came to the US on October 26th, 1991 and began to rent a room from my relatives. I went to New Jersey and because I feared for my life, my relatives convinced me to stay, but at first I regretted it. I regretted it because I came on a tourist visa, and then because I stayed, I became what they call 'illegal.' In Haiti, I had a nice place to live, a government car, two maid servants, a butler, and here I had to get a job under the table in a restaurant. I felt miserable.

My people in New Jersey knew someone to help people get greencards in Miami. There used to be Amnesty programs, and they thought he could help me. I went to Miami and I was waiting for something to happen, and nothing happened. In Miami I rented a room from another relative for \$160 a month. I was a very nice room. I spent two years over there, and then I came back to New Jersey. Through another family member, that came up to Boston for a wedding, he introduced me to my wife. I then started coming up to Boston every two weeks by bus. Then in 1995 I moved into Newtowne Court after my wife and I got married. We lived there until 1998.

Many Haitians come to Boston because of the job opportunities. The market has less competition among Haitian people because there are fewer Haitians than in cities like New York or Miami... I think living in Cambridge is great. When I first got here I got a lot of books on Social Work, because of the work I did back in Haiti this is exciting for me. Also many Haitians come to Cambridge because of its reputation. A lot of people know about the diversity, and they know as a Haitian this is a better

¹⁰⁴ Personal interview 3/28/2000.

¹⁰⁵ Personal interview 3/27/2000.

environment. The CHA has a good reputation for being fair. In the work that I do, I do not place people in the CHA, but I help them fill out the applications and make sure they have the correct information. A lot of Haitians come to me for advice.¹⁰⁶

Non-step Migration/personal-familial/information networks/affordable housing

Gerard:

My mom came to the US in 1974 and my dad came in 1975. When my other sister was born in 1976 in Cambridge, they got their greencards. My aunt was living in Boston, so when my mom came she lived with her in Boston. When my dad came they got their own apartment on Cogswell Ave., but they applied for emergency housing because the place had lead paint. Then in 1979 my other sister and I came to Cambridge to live with my parents in Jackson St, in the CHA. That was an uncomfortable situation, the rooms they had were not that big. We had a fifteen, sixteen, and a ten year old living in one room and then Housing gave us a transfer into Newtowne Court in 1986.

Family ties brought us to Boston, and the work they did was at, Fernal State School (Mental Retardation). My mom did work as a CNA (Certified Nurse's Assistant). My father was a doctor back in Haiti, but when he came here he had to do the same job as my mother. We moved to Newtowne Court because we needed a bigger place and couldn't afford other places. At first we were happy because we had a three bedroom, but the situation at Newtowne Court started to get bad.¹⁰⁷

Non-step Migration/information networks/less racism/affordable housing

Jean II:

My family sent me to the US for a better education. I came to the Cambridge in the early 70's to study. I can tell you that the Haitian community started coming in the 60's to the Boston Area, and maybe some students started coming to Harvard. Haitians started coming to Cambridge because it had the factories: the Fenton Shoes, Cable Wire Factory, Kloss Speakers. These were places people could work. Also there are a lot of services. It has the Learning Center, the schools, the diversity; it had cheap housing. Cambridge is more welcoming, it's more diverse, it's been a long time of diversity in Cambridge. If you're Haitian, and if you go to Harvard Square you will find a person speaking French within minutes. So that immediately makes you feel welcome. So I think it's the diversity.

The early 80's, maybe '84-'85, was the major wave of Haitians to Cambridge. In regards to why they came to Boston and Cambridge I can tell that in the late 80's and the early 90's, before Dukakis left, there was a big boom in the nursing home industry. The Red Cross would train people and give them a certificate to be a nurse's assistant. This is a trend. Now there is no Fenton Shoes, Kloss Speakers, and this is the area that Haitian can work! A lot of Haitian women and men work in the health care field. The men also work as taxi drivers, in hospitals, as mechanics, and in hotels and restaurants. Boston is a place that Haitian can find work.

As soon as rent control was gone, many of the Haitians were gone. Some landlords doubled the rents and the families could no longer afford to live there. Now a lot of the Haitians live in Housing; the loss of rent control has had a devastating effect on the immigrant population. The Cambridge Housing Authority has a good reputation. I refer people to them all the time, and a lot of the Haitians live there and work hard.¹⁰⁸

The following is the responses of two focus groups I conducted with young adults who are either Haitian immigrants themselves, or the children of Haitian immigrants. Their responses further

¹⁰⁶ Personal interview 3/25/2000.

¹⁰⁷ Personal interview 3/22/2000.

¹⁰⁸ Personal interview 3/22/2000.

illustrate some of the reasons Haitians immigrate to Cambridge, and the process this migration follows. Many of the same recognizable patterns emerge:

Focus Group I:¹⁰⁹

The question I asked the focus group were: “Where are you from?” “Why did you come to Cambridge?”

“Where else has your family lived?” This is a summary of their responses.

Mary Louise:

I was born in Cambridge in 1984 and both of my parents are Haitian. Before coming to the US my mother went to Jamaica. After Jamaica she went to live with her cousin in Miami for a short while. Next she lived in Connecticut with my godmother. From there she moved to New York. After New York she moved to Medford. From Medford she moved to East Cambridge where she finally got her own place and wasn't living with any family members or friends. We came to Newtowne Court in the late 80's for a bigger place. There are eight kids plus one cousin.

Claudet:

I was born in Haiti. My parents came to the US in 1986. I'm not sure if they stopped anywhere? I stopped in Miami for a while. My parents lived in Boston for a while, but then they moved to Cambridge because they needed a bigger place. My parents sent for me in 1991.¹¹⁰ We lived on Windsor St. for a short while, but then more of my family came and we needed a bigger place we could afford. We moved to Newtowne Court in 1993.

Reneed:

I was born in Haiti. My mother left Haiti often to travel to Puerto Rico and the other islands because she bought and sold products. She did this for about ten years. She then moved to Florida and lived there for about ten years. Then she moved to Boston in 1988. Then she moved to New York for a couple of years. Then she moved to Cambridge. My mother sent for me and my other brothers and sisters around this time. We moved into Washington Elms in 1993. The reason my mother likes Boston and Cambridge is because she is a nurse's aid and my aunt is a nurse.

Shermin:

I was born in Port-au-Prince. I would have rather stayed in Haiti because I had a better life there. I went to a boarding school. In 1978 my mother came to Allston, but she stopped in Florida for couple of years. She thought it was too hot in Florida. My mother believed that we would have a better life in the US. We moved to Putnam Gardens in the late 80's.

Junior:

¹⁰⁹ Focus Group I conducted on 3/21/00 consisted of 7 juniors in high school that participate in the Cambridge Workforce Unemployment Program, a youth employment program run by the CHA. All 7 participants are children of Haitian parents. Out of these seven Haitian participants, only 3 live in either Washington Elms or Newtowne Court, but because I would like to show trends followed by Haitian immigrant families of Cambridge, the responses of all seven participants are included. I would like to thank my classmate Richard Cho for recording the notes from that day.

¹¹⁰ The term *sent for me* is repeated over and over again by many immigrant children. It refers to the process of family reunification under the immigration laws or the process by which family members, once they have attained a greencard or citizenship, can sponsor an immediate family member – usually a son or daughter, wife or husband – for a greencard or citizenship.

My parents moved to the US in 1986. They moved to Florida for a couple of years, then they moved to Boston. My parents sent for me in the early 90's and moved to Newtowne Court around this time.

Naomi:

I was born in Haiti. I came straight to Cambridge when I was six years old. My parents lived in New York for a while, and then my parents sent for me when they moved to Cambridge. We lived in Rindge Towers for a while and then we moved to West Cambridge. After that we moved to Washington Elms. The reason my parents came to Cambridge is because my mother is a nurse.

Pierre:

I was born in Cambridge, but both of my parents are from Haiti. They came to the US in the late 70's. First they lived in New York for a while, and then they moved to Dorchester. The reason they moved to Boston is because my mother worked in a nursing home. They then moved to Cambridge in 1989.

Focus Group II¹¹¹

The questions I asked the Focus Group II were the same questions I asked Focus Group I: “Where am I from?” “Why I came to Cambridge?” “Where else has my family lived?” This is a summary of their responses:

Emanuel:

I was born in Haiti, Port-au-Prince. My aunt and her husband were here in Boston, Dorchester so my grandmother came to Dorchester to live with them. In 1994, my other aunt came to Cambridge, because my first aunt was telling her how it was a great place to live. My dad came back and forth, but he didn't really like the weather and the city. Then my grandmother came to Cambridge and told the first aunt how nice Cambridge was, and then the first aunt moved to the “Bridge.” I lived with my grandmother first on Brookline St., and then I moved into Newtowne Court in 1994 to live with my aunt.

John:

I was born in Haiti, Port-au-Prince. My father was in a Miami refugee camp for one year in 1981. He then moved to Newtowne Court in to live with my mother's cousin. In 1984 he sponsored my mother and they moved to Somerville for a while, but they left there because of the racism. They then moved to Rindge Towers for a short while. In 1992, they moved to Newtowne Court and that is when they sent for me. I guess they came to Cambridge because it was a better place to live than Somerville.

Mika:

I was born in Haiti. I came to the US in 1995. My aunt came to Cambridge first. She stopped in Miami for a while. My sister left Haiti with my aunt. First my sister and my aunt lived in Rindge Towers and then my mom and I came to live with them in Rindge Towers. We lived in Rindge Towers for five or six months and then we moved to Jackson Gardens.

Francesse:

¹¹¹ Focus Group II conducted on 3/24/00 consisted of 4 seniors in high school that participate in the Cambridge Workforce Unemployment Program. All 4 participants are children of Haitian parents. Out of these four Haitian participants, only 3 live in either Washington Elms or Newtowne Court, but because I would like to show trends followed by Haitian immigrant families of Cambridge, the responses of all four participants are included.

I was born in Haiti, Port-au-Prince. I came to Cambridge in 1996. My father came to New York in 1984 and he lived with my mother's sister's husband. In 1986 my mom came to New York, and then they both moved to Dorchester to stay with some relatives. In 1994 they moved to Prospect St. and in 1996 we moved to Harvard St. to live in Washington Elms.

It is unmistakable after viewing the responses from all the individuals interviewed that a consistent pattern emerges. Many of the Haitian immigrants participated in a step-migration process. It is apparent that the two primary US satellite communities, Miami and New York, are main stop-over points that attract the vast majority of Haitian immigrants, irrespective of whether or not they intended to remain in either city permanently.

It is also interesting to note, that many families were not fully reunited until they secured housing in either Washington Elms or Newtowne Court. As articulated throughout the course of the interviews, for many Haitians, the main attraction of Cambridge/Boston seems to be the desire to live in close proximity to family members, as well as the strong pull of the job market, the diverse environment, and the access to affordable housing for their entire families, particularly in the CHA. Many of the respondents consistently named the health care industry as a major factor in their decision to migrate to the Boston Area.

It also became very clear that Rindge Towers is a major stop over for many Haitian immigrants that arrive in Cambridge. Rindge Towers are three major high rises, all towering over 30 stories. They were built under Federal Legislation referred to today as “expiring use,” or a program that allowed developers to acquire very low-interest loans with the obligation to maintain rents at an affordable level for twenty-five years. Hence, Rindge Towers continues to receive many immigrants and low-income individuals, many of whom leave as soon as they are able to acquire better housing.

The reason to migrate to Cambridge, and particularly to Washington Elms and Newtowne Court, was less clear, although many of the respondents suggested the need to live in a larger apartment as a major factor in their family's decision. The welcoming environment of Cambridge, and the amount of diversity that Cambridge has been historically known for, were reasons mentioned more than once.

It seems important to discuss in slightly more detail the issue of families being reunited. If Haitian immigrants are residing in certain locations for short periods of time, but never fully stabilizing their family housing situation (putting down roots), then I would argue that these ephemeral locations are not their port-of-entry neighborhoods as I have defined them. More simply, they should be defined as temporary housing. If a family is separated and disconnected because of its immigration status, then I would argue that until the *entire* family has been reunited, it has not secured their housing.

In Cambridge, both Washington Elms and Newtowne Court present the first opportunities for many Haitian immigrants to stabilize housing for their entire families. This was, in fact, the case for many of those I interviewed.

Conclusion: Rise in Haitian Immigrants at Washington Elms & Newtowne Court, 80's-90's

In a process that seemed to happen overnight, Haitians began to constitute the largest immigrant group in both Washington Elms and Newtowne Court. In two developments that were developed primarily as strongholds for the dominant ethnic group in the region – Irish Americans – a quick glance at the current resident make-up begs the question: “If the United Nations were to relocate to The Port, would they have problems finding delegates to fill their membership?”

The nations represented among residents, as of late 1999, include the following countries as listed place of birth: Haiti, Jamaica, Puerto Rico (technically US Commonwealth), Cape Verde, Dominican Republic, Portugal, Ethiopia, Tibet, Barbados, El Salvador, Nigeria, Guatemala, Bermuda, (technically British Commonwealth) Dominica, China, Pakistan, Peru, France, Cuba, St. Lucia, Honduras, Panama, Colombia, Hong Kong, Bangladesh, Somalia, Brazil, Trinidad, India, Pakistan, Senegal, Mali, Taiwan, Bahamas, Mexico.¹¹²

The fact that an enormous number of immigrants have moved into the CHA in general, and into these two development in particular, is striking. Only fifteen short years ago Washington Elms and Newtowne Court primarily housed native born African-American, white, and Latino (mainly Puerto Rican) residents.¹¹³ It is clear that the majority of the immigrants housed in Washington Elms and Newtowne Court are from the Third World, and this is a recent migration pattern that is reflected in Housing Authorities across the US (Vale & Dobrow, 1994).

As outlined in the previous chapter, Washington Elms was redeveloped between 1982-1986. Upon re-opening in 1986, many of the previous tenants chose not to reoccupy their old apartments or had secured Section 8 housing and did not wish to return to this development. This left approximately 100 units vacant, and thus individuals who had been on the CHA waiting list started to enter Washington Elms. At the same time, due to a natural process of turn over, some families left Newtowne Court in the mid to late 80's through early 1991. At both sites the people who replaced

¹¹² These data were taken from a recent demographic analysis run by William Holshouser, to show the place of birth of current resident in Washington Elms and Newtowne Court, 11/1/ 99.

¹¹³ Personal interview with Ann Arata, Director of Leasing and Occupancy, CHA 3/20/2000.

the old tenants were some of the Housing Authority's first Haitian families.¹¹⁴ Dan Wuenschel, Executive Director of the CHA had this to say:

Many of the families moving into the family housing in the late 80's were Haitian, particularly in Jefferson Park, but also at Washington Elms...that was the major influx of Haitians into the CHA, 1986 or '87 up to '91, '92, '93. This meant prior to these years they had been on the waiting lists and got in and continue to get in to this day. We tried to respond to this by hiring people on the staff who could speak Haitian Creole in our admissions department. So when Haitians heard the CHA was a friendly place, it started to snowball.¹¹⁵

And snowball it did. Another community activist and long-time director of the Cambridge Arts Center, Susan Richards-Scott who works directly with the children of both developments

comments:

In 1985, when I first started working in the Art Center there were a lot more Latino families then than there are now. A lot of the Latino families have been displaced by the Haitian families, but this is just my opinion. There were Dominicans, Barbadians, Puerto Ricans, bi-racial, Irish, African-Americans, but evictions and the natural process of moving out made room for the Haitians at different times. The first Haitians I experienced, were in the mid-80's. They were part of the first little wave. And in the last seven years the Haitians have grown exponentially. The Art Center has become a "Haitian-thing," like the Harrington School.¹¹⁶

It is clear that many of the CHA's first Haitian families had begun to put their names on the waiting list around the beginning of the 80's. It is also clear, for reasons described above, that this is the period in US history that many Haitians were migrating to the three major satellite communities in the US: Greater New York, Miami, and Boston. For the first half of the 1980's, no new placements were sent to either Washington Elms or Newtowne Court. The Authority had decided not to place any new tenants at Washington Elms after 1979 because of disrepair, vandalism, and crime, as well as its goal of moving individuals off-site to make room for the proposed redevelopment. Newtowne Court during the early part of the 1980's was not experiencing any new turn over. Families were not

¹¹⁴ Terri Lurie interview, 3/21/2000.

¹¹⁵ Personal interview with Dan Wuenschel, Executive Director of the Cambridge Housing Authority 1974-present.

¹¹⁶ Personal interview with Susan Richards-Scott, Director of the Cambridge Arts Center 1985-present, 3/22/2000.

leaving. Also, any of the vacant apartments in Newtowne Court were reserved for families that had to be moved out of Washington Elms to make way for the redevelopment.¹¹⁷

The increase in the number of immigrant families has continued over the last fifteen years. It is not surprising, however, based on the migration trends of Haitian families that Haitian immigrants would be well represented in a housing market like Cambridge's. In 1994, with the abrupt loss of rent control in Cambridge, many of the housing options for immigrant families were drastically diminished. As stated earlier, rent control had been in effect in Cambridge since the beginning of 1970. This program was instituted five years after the Hart-Cellar Immigration Reform Act of 1965. Thus, it is not surprising that many immigrant families chose Cambridge as their city of choice. Cambridge not only had an environment that was welcoming to immigrant families, but also, a plentiful supply of affordable housing under its rent control program. Jean Juene had this to say about rent control:

As soon as rent control was gone, many of the Haitians were gone. Some landlords doubled the rent and the families could no longer afford to live here. They can't afford the rent in Cambridge so they turn to Somerville, Medford, Malden, Everett, Lynn, Chelsea...If I look at my old files many of my Haitian clients came from Area IV, but also other parts of Cambridge. Today the issues I deal with are more immigration rather than housing. The loss of rent control had a devastating effect on the immigrant population of Cambridge.¹¹⁸

As the number of housing options in Cambridge became scarcer post-1994, Haitian families began increasingly to turn to the CHA. A look at the resident make-up at both developments a few short

¹¹⁷ Ann Arata interview 3/20/2000; Terri Lurie interview 3/21/2000; Personal Interview with Jim Stockard, member of Board of Commissioners, CHA 3/15/2000.

¹¹⁸ Jean Juene interview 3/22/2000.

years after the first wave of Haitian immigrants came into the CHA population, and coincidentally one year after rent control was abolished in 1994, showed the following trends:¹¹⁹

Washington Elms:

- 99 out of the 173 units or **57%** were occupied by US born residents.
- 74 out of the 173 units or **43%** were occupied by foreign born residents.
- 39 out of the 173 units or **23%** were occupied by **residents born in Haiti**.
- 39 out of the 74 units occupied by foreign-born residents or **53% were Haitian families**.

Newtowne Court:¹²⁰

- 86 out of the 156 units or **55%** were occupied by US born residents.
- 70 out of the 156 units or **45%** were occupied by foreign-born residents.
- 43 out of the 156 units or **28%** were occupied by **residents born in Haiti**.
- 43 out of the 70 units occupied by foreign-born residents or **62% were Haitian families**.

It is clear from these numbers that Haitian immigrants had quickly become the dominant ethnic group at both developments in as little as seven to eight years, beginning in the mid-80's. In fact, a review of the same CHA document that produced the numbers above shows that the entire CHA immigrant population was 613 out of 1279, or 48% of the total. The entire CHA domestic-born population was 663 out of 1279, or 52% of the total. Of the total foreign- born population in all of

¹¹⁹ This statistical analysis was produced by William Holshouser, Director of Planning and Information, as a demographic analysis to show the percentage of immigrants in Cambridge Public Housing, 12/30/94. Due to the sensitivity surrounding the nature of these results, it was the only time this type of document was produced.

¹²⁰ Newtowne Court was in the process of renovating, thus the number of rentable units in 1994 was 156, opposed to the actual number of units on-site, 268. The site was not fully operational until the beginning of the summer of 1999.

the CHA developments, 279 out of 613, or 46% of the families were born in Haiti! Clearly, the CHA, to use Ms. Richards-Scott's words, has become a "Haitian-thing."

The overall number of Haitian immigrants in the US has continued to grow in the last six years, as Haitians have migrated to the US in larger numbers. The current make up of both Washington Elms and Newtowne Court reflect the following:¹²¹

Washington Elms:

- 44 out of the 175 units or **25%** are occupied by Haitian residents.

Newtowne Court:

- 72 out of the 269 units or **27%** are occupied by Haitian residents.

Although the percentage of Haitians to the total population at Newtowne Court has dropped by one percentage point, because the total number of rentable units increased from 154 to 268, the total number of Haitian families increased from 43 to 72 or a 60% increase in Newtowne Court.

It is not hard to understand how the reality of housing immigrants in increasingly large proportions, in a politically charged city like Cambridge, could cause extreme stress for the upper management of the CHA. Because of the loss of rent control, and the shrinking stock of affordable units throughout the city, many of the city's long-time residents have been forced to move out of Cambridge to find affordable places to live. This caused, and continues to cause, a dichotomy for policy makers within the CHA – the struggle to balance access for Cantabridgians versus access for

¹²¹ These data were taken from a recent demographic analysis run by William Holshouser, to show the place of birth of current resident in Washington Elms and Newtowne Court, 11/1/ 99.

low-income immigrants. Jim Stockard, a long-time Cambridge resident, and member of the Board of Commissioners at the CHA, observes:

It's an interesting policy question, on the one hand we make all these concessions for developers to develop in Cambridge; Cambridge becomes an increasingly attractive real estate market, and a lot of people benefit – essentially the city does extremely well. So, we should make sure that Cantabridgians have a first-shot at the affordable housing in Cambridge if they need it. On the other hand, this is a country of immigrants, and it is not so long ago that either your people or my people were immigrants themselves, and so, we should provide access to affordable housing to the next wave of immigrants if they need it.¹²²

The policy implications that surround housing an immigrant population in public housing lead us to think about the final question that I will attempt to answer in the last chapter: *what does it mean for Public Housing to take on this new role of housing this nascent resident population – immigrants?*

Cambridge Housing Authority Selection Process

One question that has perplexed the CHA upper management is: *how have immigrants gained access into the CHA developments so quickly?* If one realizes that most Housing Authorities have extensive waiting lists, and most residents wait for public housing units for years at a time, then how do immigrant groups, many recently arriving in the US, acquire public housing in Cambridge?

It is not difficult to imagine, however, how this process might unfold. Demographic shifts can happen very quickly, as was evinced in Boston's Franklin Field neighborhood. A neighborhood that maintained a majority Jewish population from the 1920's up to the early 60's, and even as late as 1965, was transformed into a majority African-American neighborhood in less than five years. By

¹²² Jim Stockard interview, 3/15/2000.

the time policy makers and politicians could begin to comment on the transformation, it had already occurred (Vale, Three Public Neighborhoods, unpublished manuscript).

Three main historical forces, that occurred simultaneously, led to a greater number of Haitian residents in the CHA in general, and Washington Elms and Newtowne Court in particular:

1. A rise in Haitian immigration to the three main satellite communities, Greater New York, Miami, and Boston, but more specifically Cambridge in the late 70's and early 80's.
2. The increase in number of low-income Haitian immigrants in need of affordable housing to moving into Cambridge, that in turn greatly increased the number of Haitians that were placing their names on the waiting lists at the CHA.
3. The CHA was placing no new residents at Washington Elms, and was placing very few at Newtowne Court in the beginning half of the 1980's, up to 1986.

Because all three of these forces occurred concurrently, when the CHA did open its waiting lists to place residents at these two sites, the majority of the families offered public housing were Haitian immigrants.

To understand with more clarity the process by which immigrant groups rose to almost fifty percent of the total population in the Cambridge Housing Authority by the end of 1994, and more specifically, how Haitian immigrants became the dominant ethnic group in both Washington Elms and Newtowne Court, we must first investigate the method by which the CHA selects its tenants.

The CHA has a very strict process for choosing its tenants. Once an applicant has his/her name pulled from the top of the list, as selection is made in chronological order of application date, the Office of Leasing and Occupancy maintains the following procedures to approve an application:

- Third party landlord references that goes directly to the landlord to verify the housing history of the applicant of the last five years.
- Third party employment references that go directly to the employer to verify the work history of the applicant.
- Bill history, used to verify if the applicant has a history of paying bills.
- School verification for all listed children to determine if children are attending Cambridge schools or not.
- Credit checks (not applicable to immigrants, instead the last place of residence is determined) to determine if the applicant has decent credit and no serious defaults.
- Criminal record-check of any person in the household over the age of 18 to determine if any of them have a history of drug-related offenses. In this instance, even a drug related arrest with no conviction can disqualify an application.¹²³

The CHA has preferences in conjunction with these procedures. The first and most important preference is that an applicant must currently live at a Cambridge residence. Today this is a must, Ann Arata recently commented, “If they don’t have a Cambridge residence, we will never reach them; they will never make it into our housing. The list of Cambridge based residents on our list is

¹²³ I was told by Ann Arata that if any person in the household of an application has been arrested, but never convicted of a drug-related offense, their application can be denied. When pushed, however, she explained that an applicant may appeal a decision to deny their application based on this fact. These applicants go before an internal CHA review board to appeal these decisions; Ann Arata interview, 3/20/2000.

that long!”¹²⁴ An equivalent preference is given to individuals who work in Cambridge—working in Cambridge qualifies as residency by Federal law and regulation.

The first preference of having a Cambridge residence, in conjunction with the other standard procedures, is the area many Haitian immigrants have been able to use to their benefit. Prior to moving in to both Washington Elms and Newtowne Court, the *majority* of Haitian residents first must have a Cambridge residence.¹²⁵ As mentioned earlier, the residence that was listed repeatedly by many of the Haitian immigrants, prior to moving into Washington Elms or Newtowne Court, was Rindge Towers Apartments.¹²⁶ Ann Arata had this to say:

*A large number of our Haitian applicants come from Rindge Towers. They double-up and are added to the lease, as they are allowed to do so over there. And once their names come to the top of the list, they then move on to the CHA...because of the lack of affordable housing in Cambridge, Rindge Towers is the last bastion of hope for immigrant communities!*¹²⁷

“Doubling-up” or crowding family members into the same apartment is a tactic that has been practiced by every immigrant group that has reached the shores of the US, regardless of income status in many cases, and especially in housing markets where the availability of affordable housing units are scarce (Handlin, 1951). If Haitian immigrants practice doubling-up, even when the majority of landlords try to ensure this does not cause overcrowding, then they are justified in their intentions.

¹²⁴ *ibid.*

¹²⁵ Many of the Haitian families have family members move either directly from Haiti or other areas of the US straight into Washington Elms and Newtowne Court, and then added to the lease. This is a process that was described over and over again in many of the interviews I conducted that were listed *earlier* in this chapter.

¹²⁶ Many of the Haitian individuals I interviewed consistently named Rindge Towers as the prior place of residence before moving into Washington Elms or Newtowne Court. This development has well over 900 units and is similar to a small city.

¹²⁷ Ann Arata interview, 3/20/2000.

As mentioned earlier, in Cambridge many of the neighborhoods that historically housed many low-income residents, particularly The Port, have become gentrified. Some neighborhoods, however, continue to have a small number of apartments that are affordable. It is in these neighborhoods, as well as in Rindge Towers, that many Haitian immigrants live in prior to moving into the CHA. Since the affordable housing stock has clearly diminished in Cambridge, we would predict that many immigrant families would be forced to allow family members to be added to their leases and to reside in their dwellings. This is what Haitians immigrants have done and continue to do in Cambridge.

In the final chapter, I will attempt to answer the two questions posed at the beginning of this thesis: *is Public Housing becoming a port-of-entry for immigrants, in our case Washington Elms and Newtowne Court?* And second, *what does it mean for Public Housing to take on the new role of housing immigrants?*

CHAPTER 5. FINAL DISCUSSION: FUTURE OF IMMIGRANTS IN PUBLIC HOUSING

Throughout the course of the previous four chapters, I have attempted to describe the convergence of many different stories. Chapter 1 began with the creation of the port-of-entry neighborhood in the historical port-of-entry cities. I investigated both the old port-of-entry neighborhood, pre- 1924, and the new port-of-entry neighborhood, post-1965. I was able to uncover the traditional elements of the port-of-entry neighborhood (i.e. *tenement and slum housing*), how the neighborhoods functioned for the newly arrived immigrant (i.e. *ethnic enclaves*), and how the port-of-entry evolved over time (i.e. *high immigrant segregation based on ethnic group affiliation in the first period, to less immigrant segregation based on ethnic group affiliation in the second period*).

Chapter 2 continued with a story that began when the period of one of the key elements to the old port-of-entry neighborhood ended -- the end of tenement and slum housing. Public housing was created as a way to institutionalize affordable housing, and as a way to increase the level of services offered to a submerged middle class, but this was done only when federal, state, and local governments decided that slum housing had become a blight to the communities in which they were located and when the economy was in dire need of a stimulus. Public housing has experienced many different “lives,” and many different classes of residents: from the submerged middle-class, to the former slum dweller, to the underclass, up to the present period when a new class of residents – newly arrived low-income immigrants – has begun to occupy some public housing authorities in traditional port-of-entry cities.

I then investigated how immigrants have come to occupy public housing. The discussion in Chapter 3 turned to a neighborhood in Cambridge, The Port, historically known as a port-of-entry. This

neighborhood is home to two of the oldest public housing developments in the United States: Newtowne Court, 1936; Washington Elms, 1943.

The first immigrant groups to occupy The Port included Canadian, British, German, Swedish, Portuguese, and Eastern Europeans. The dominant immigrant group, however, were the Irish. At the beginning of the twentieth century over 30% of the residents in The Port were of recent foreign parentage. As we have seen, the pattern of housing individuals from all over the world in The Port is a tradition that has remained constant to this day. The Port went through many different historical epochs: beginning with the period of industrialization, moving to pre-war depression to the post-war boom, on to the period of racial integration, then to the period of severe economic recession and disinvestment and white blue-collar flight, next to the period of violence and crime, and finally up to the period of revitalization and stabilization in the late 90's. Throughout these different historical epochs different waves of citizens have occupied the boundaries of The Port.

The two developments located in The Port: Washington Elms and Newtowne Court have also experienced many tumultuous years. As listed above, the circumstances of both developments have mirrored the experiences of many housing authorities across the nation, including their histories and the multiple classes of residents that both developments have housed. In the latter part of the 1980's Washington Elms began to receive its first large wave of immigrants, many of whom hailed from Haiti. A short time after, Newtowne Court followed.

In Chapter 4 the discussion moved on to a review of the Haitian immigrant experience in the US. Haitians have had a chaotic history, beginning in the period directly following their struggle for independence from France in 1804. The relationship between the US and Haiti has been one full of

domination and control. The US began by sending military forces into Haiti to usurp French hegemony in the early part of the twentieth century. Since the end of the US military occupation in 1934, Haiti has been ruled by kleptocratic dictatorial regimes that have often leveled severe forms of oppression and murder against their own people. The average Haitian has lived through severe economic and social disorder for well over four hundred years. Since the passage of the Hart-Cellar Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 over twelve million immigrants, well over three fourths hailing from the Third World, have migrated to the US. This has caused successive waves of Haitians, post 1965, to migrate to the United States mainly to three satellite communities: Miami, New York, and Boston.

As the Haitian community in Greater Boston rose, so did the number of Haitians on the CHA waiting lists. As the CHA finished its modernization programs in the mid 80's it opened its waiting lists for the first time in close to ten years, only to discover that it was presented with an entirely new group of residents: Haitian immigrants. As the number of immigrants has increased in Greater Boston, and as the CHA has gained a reputation for being fair and impartial to immigrants, its overall immigrant population has increased dramatically.

In my final analysis I attempt to answer the questions posed at the beginning of this thesis: *is Public Housing becoming a port-of-entry for immigrants, in our case Washington Elms and Newtowne Court? And if so, what does it mean for Public Housing to take on the new role of housing immigrants?*

Washington Elms and Newtowne Court, Ports-of-Entry?

The traditional boundaries of the port-of-entry neighborhood were not confined to the immediate living environment and were not simply defined by the abundance of affordable housing but, also,

these boundaries extended to areas of daily social and business interactions and were defined by a multitude of variables. Some of the important characteristics of port-of-entry neighborhoods exist in The Port, as Haitians have transformed this neighborhood into their port-of-entry.

Significant Numbers

As the overall number of Haitian immigrants in the US has continued to grow in the last six years, Haitians have continued to migrate to the CHA in large numbers. As stated earlier the current resident make-up of both Washington Elms and Newtowne Court numbers between 25% to 27% respectively.

It might be simplistic to argue, based on sheer numbers, that Haitians have transformed both Washington Elms and Newtowne Court into ports-of-entry. Based on the variables previously listed as essential elements of port-of-entry neighborhoods, however, many other indicators abound in both developments and in the surrounding neighborhood.

Throughout the course of my interviews with both current and former residents, I continuously heard phrases such as: *and then my parents sent for me; after we got our apartment, then I sent for the rest of my family.* I also heard from individuals on the upper level staff at the CHA as well as from the current manager of both developments that many Haitian residents often go through the process of “lease add-ons” or the process by which they add both immediate and distant relatives to the list. John Keane the Director of Management commented:

*Haitian families do create overcrowding in our units, father and mothers send for children, but we deal with it. These are called lease add-ons, but our developments always remain up to sanitary codes. These codes however, are based on white middle-class values and it can be hard enforcing our values onto another culture.*¹²⁸

Although the Haitian immigrants that I interviewed over the course of the last three months were part of a process of step migration – spending time in other communities prior to residing in the CHA – many families did not *fully* reunite until they were able to acquire an apartment in either Washington Elms or Newtowne Court. The affordability and size of the units made this possible.

I would argue that because many Haitian immigrants do not fully secure housing for their *entire family*, along their journey of step migration, that when they do attain a housing environment that is suitable for their *entire* family, that this location becomes *their port-of-entry*. In old port-of-entry neighborhoods low-quality affordable housing – either tenement or slum housing – was relatively more available. Because of stricter immigration laws, coupled with tighter real estate markets and building codes in many port-of-entry cities and traditional port-of-entry neighborhoods, immigrants have been forced to discover more creative mechanisms to achieve the goal of family reunification. This often means adults – fathers, mothers or grandparents – enter first, followed by children – sons, daughters, nephews, nieces, and in some cases cousins.

Ethnic Business Enclave

Another important variable that is present in the surrounding community, that was an important element in old port-of-entry neighborhoods and remains an important element in new port-of-entry neighborhoods, is the small business ethnic enclave. Directly on the periphery of the development,

¹²⁸ John Keane interview, 3/24/2000.

two to four blocks away, is a cluster of Haitian owned and Haitian patronized small businesses that form a neighborhood enclave.

On any given day, one can visit any of the Haitian owned businesses and see a multitude of Haitian customers. Most of these customer live in both the surrounding neighborhood and in the two public housing developments. With the loss of rent control, however, it is not difficult to realize that vast majority of the patrons, that are the lifeline to these businesses, are the individual Haitian families who live in Washington Elms and Newtowne Court. Throughout the course of my research, the entire group of Haitian immigrants that I interviewed informed me that they were frequent patrons of all the Haitian small businesses in The Port.

On the corner of Harvard and Columbia street is *Camies Bakery*. *Camies* is a well respected restaurant and bakery that is prominent in the Haitian Community. Professor Laguerre commented on the significance of Haitian restaurants to Haitian immigrant communities:

*Restaurants have been operated by Haitian American Entrepreneurs since the early days of the settlements of the community. By and large these restaurants cater to the ethnic clientele, and the presence of a restaurant often signals the presence of a concentration of immigrants in the neighborhood.*¹²⁹

Camies, one of the oldest businesses to have been established by Haitian immigrants in The Port, opened its doors in 1991. I have visited *Camies* on a great number of occasions over the past four years. *Camies* is a traditional bakery/restaurant whose clientele is almost exclusively Haitian. “This type of restaurant operates as if it were located in Haiti.”¹³⁰ Its menu is in Haitian Creole and it

¹²⁹ Michel Laguerre, option cited, pg. 114.

¹³⁰ Ibid, pg 115.

offers a diversity of dishes on a daily basis to give its steady customers a variety in their diet. This is a practice readily adhered to in Haiti (Laguerre, 1999).

IMAGE 14. CAMIE'S BAKERY



On the same side of Columbia Street, a few doors down is the ubiquitous Haitian money transfer house, *Global Express (Bureau De Transfer)*. No Haitian port-of-entry neighborhood is without this *lifeline* to Haiti, that enables its members to keep their relatives relatively secure back in the Old Country. One Haitian immigrant had this to say:

*I have to tell you right now, everyone in Haiti is supported by Haitians living in the US. If Haitians in America stopped sending money back to Haiti, Haiti would crumble in a week. You have immigrant families paying this bill and that bill, but they also have to send money home to Haiti every week, or at least once a month.*¹³¹

Professor Leger also commented:

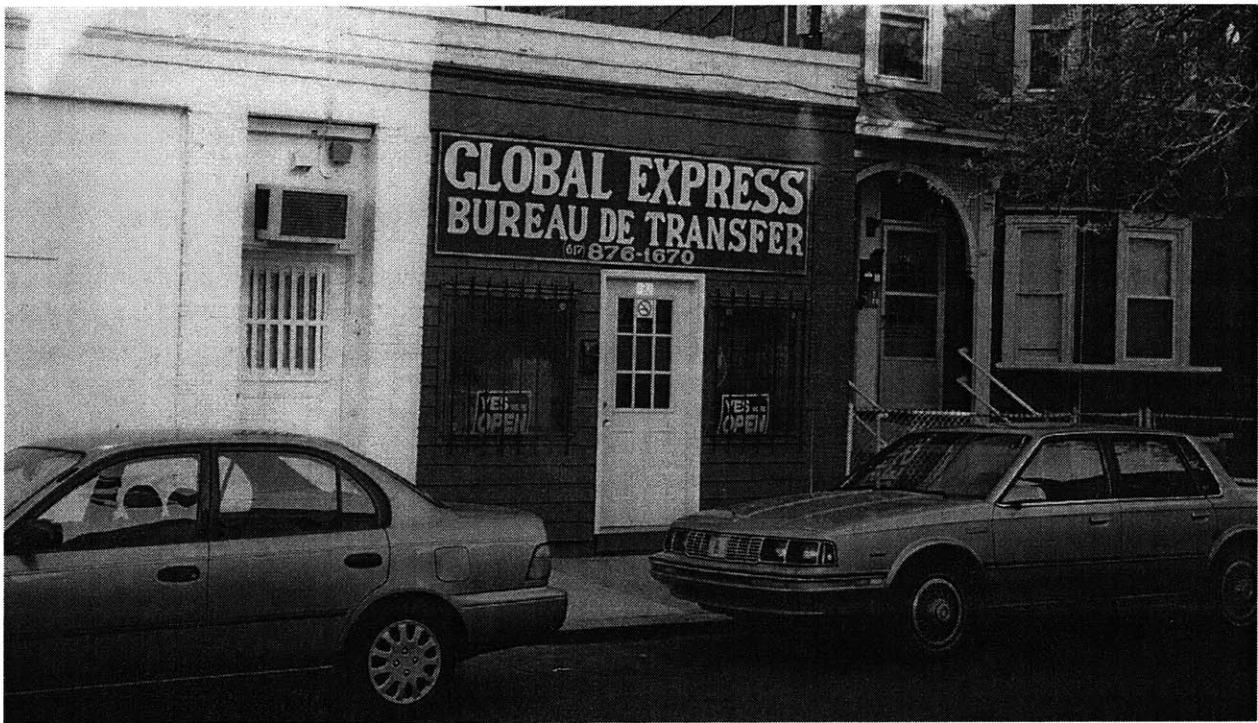
For some immigrant families, a major item in the household budget is the remittances sent to Haiti. Its size depends on the need of those members still in Haiti...sometimes money is sent out of generosity and a sense of solidarity, but at other times requests are received or funds must be sent to pay for the expense of a child left behind or to take care of the immigrant's property in Haiti...I have also found a clear gender difference between the amount and regularity of remittances sent to the homeland. By

¹³¹ Personal interview with Gerard Jean-Leger, 3/22/2000.

and large, the women tend to be more consistent...It is estimated that the Haitian diaspora in the US sends an average of \$400 millions to Haiti each year.¹³²

It is not surprising then, that because of the importance of money transfer houses to Haitian immigrant communities, and the presence of a large number of Haitian female immigrants represented in Washington Elms and Newtowne Court -- at least 116 -- that *Global Express* has a consistent and reliable clientele.

IMAGE 15. GLOBAL EXPRESS



Around the corner from *Camies* and *Global Express*, on the corner of Broadway and Elm, is the largest cluster of Haitian owned businesses in The Port. Here *Jean's Caribbean Grocery*, *Le Bon Samaritan*, and *Bobby Express (Transfert Dargent Rapide)*, have developed a strong small business network directly adjacent to one another. All three of these business serve the Haitian community in

¹³² Michel Laguerre, option cited, pg. 108.

multiple ways, and greatly benefit from the close proximity to one another. Not only do they serve as places of business, but they also serve as a location in which many Haitian immigrants can congregate. I have visited these small businesses many times to speak with their owners, as well as to observe their daily functions.

IMAGE 16. ETHNIC ENCLAVE



Like many barber shops in the African-American community, Haitian barber shops serve as a locale for men to converse about politics, current affairs, sports, and any topic of the day. *Le Bon Samaritan* is no different in this regard. Every time I have visited *Le Bon Samaritan*, men were standing outside as well as sitting inside the shop in anticipation for their chance to get a hair cut; Haitian Creole is spoken almost exclusively as the clientele dictates. This barber shop is extremely popular and is never empty. Interestingly, a sizeable number of its customers are Haitian children – mainly on the weekends – who walk over from the near by developments.

Jean's Caribbean Grocery is a catch-all small business. With a large Caribbean population present in The Port the business serves a diverse clientele. However, due to the fact that the majority of the customers are walk-in patrons, and that a good portion of the products are Haitian specialty items – i.e. leaves for tea, vanilla incense, and vitamins sold widely in Haiti – it is not difficult to realize the necessity of a sizeable Haitian clientele.

Bobby Express is a small travel agent who mainly sells airline tickets to Haiti. An overwhelming majority of its clients are Haitian and the majority of business is conducted in Haitian Creole. The entire staff is Haitian, and its clients are mainly from Cambridge and the inner ring suburbs of Everett, Malden, and Somerville where many Haitians immigrants have moved to buy their first home.

Religious and Educational Facilities

An interesting development of the last few years, is the creation of a local Haitian church directly across from Washington Elms, on the corner of Harvard and Windsor Street. This church, a Seventh Day Adventist, operates out of the Maynard School on Friday and Saturday night. It conducts its services entirely in Haitian Creole and its congregation is completely Haitian. Two out of the five Haitian immigrants that I interviewed informed me that they had been contacted to attend the church on numerous occasions. A good portion of the community, who attend this church, are current residents of both Washington Elms and Newtowne Court. In fact, some interviewed believed that because such a large community of Haitian residents currently reside in both developments, this gave impetus to the Seven Day Adventist community in choosing Maynard School as its location.

Three other important institutions to the Haitian community of Washington Elms and Newtowne Court are the Harrington, the Fletcher, and the Maynard Schools. From my interview with current and former residents, as well as some CHA staff members -- including the current manager -- I was able to discover that a large number of the Haitian children attend all three grammar schools. The Harrington School, a massive 500 plus K-8, is located within the traditional boundaries of

Cambridgeport, closer to East Cambridge and the Somerville border, on Cambridge St. Today, however, it is not considered part of The Port. The Fletcher School, a mid-sized K-8, is within the boundaries of The Port.¹³³ Finally the Maynard School, a K-4, is directly in The Port, on the corner of Harvard and Windsor Street. From my experience as a math teacher at both the Harrington and the Fletcher schools, during the school year 1997-1998, I witnessed a considerable number of first and second generation Haitians in the student body. The Harrington school – more so than the Fletcher and the Maynard – has experienced a drastic increase in its Haitian student body.

IMAGE 17. MAYNARD SCHOOL (SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH)



¹³³ As of this writing, the Fletcher and Maynard Schools have been merged for the upcoming school year. Historically, as The Port lost its prestige in the City of Cambridge, the School Department began to neglect both of these schools. Consistently over the last fifteen years both schools have performed poorly on state-wide achievement tests. Both schools have extremely high concentrations of children of color. The School Committee and the new superintendent listed poor school performance and low attendance records as the determining factors in their decision to merge these schools. Many neighborhood residents that I interviewed listed this merger as a decision with which they disagreed vehemently. They felt the city was turning its back on the neighborhood once again. The neighborhood is being primed for a new school, mainly populated and run by white middle-class parents in the current Cambridgeport neighborhood. It is aptly called, The Cambridgeport School, and many residents of The Port feel that is exactly where it should stay.

Social Institutions

Many of the social institutions in The Port have been in existence for decades. If Haitians are truly transforming The Port, and particularly Washington Elms and Newtowne Court, into a port-of-entry, then we would expect the social institutions in the immediate environment to evolve as well. In fact, this transformation has occurred. Currently, The Community Arts Center, The Workforce Unemployment Program, the Area IV Youth Center, and the Gateways Program serve a population that is comprised of a majority first and second generation Haitian immigrants.

The Cambridge Community Arts Center (CCAC) has been in existence and operating in The Port since 1932. Its mission, consistent with many programs that have been used to acculturate or assimilate recent arrivals to the US, is to provide social services and arts education to residents of The Port. Currently housed in the Windsor Street Community & Health Center, it serves 92 youth ages 5 to 19 years old. Seventy-five percent of the 92 children are from Washington Elms and Newtowne Court. Out of these 92 students, 36 or 39% are first or second generation Haitian immigrants, and the vast majority of these live in both public housing developments. It is not difficult to understand why Susan Richards-Scott, the long time director of the CCAC, commented, “The Art Center has become a Haitian thing!”¹³⁴

The Workforce Unemployment Program is another social service institution that has been present in The Port for some time. Started in 1984, this internship/mentoring program targets children living in the Cambridge Housing Authority ages 14 to 18 years of age. There are currently four locations

¹³⁴ Susan Richards-Scott interview, 5/15/2000.

throughout the city that provide Workforce Unemployment training, with one housed in the Windsor Street Community & Health Center. Out of the current make-up at the Washington Elms/Newtowne Court Workforce site, 25 of 38 or 66% of the students are either first or second generation Haitian immigrants.¹³⁵

IMAGE 18. WINDSOR STREET COMMUNITY & HEALTH CENTER



The Gateways program, a recently created social service institution, has found a new home in The Port, as well as two other locations in Cambridge, one in Central Square, the other in North Cambridge. In The Port, the program is housed along side the Workforce Unemployment Program and CCAC in the Windsor Street Community & Health Center. This program was created by the Cambridge Housing Authority to directly serve its new immigrant population as an English literacy course designed for non-English speaking CHA residents. Initiated in 1996, Gateways currently

¹³⁵ Reyita Ramos interview, 4/3/2000.

serves between 70 – 105 people. In a recent survey, out of 68 participants 46 or 67% named Haiti as their country of origin, and a large portion of these participants reside in both Washington Elms and Newtowne Court (Samuels, 2000).¹³⁶

The information provided above, suggests there is sufficient evidence to argue that both Washington Elms and Newtowne Court play the role of ports-of-entry for Haitian immigrants. The question still remains, however, whether other port-of-entry cities are experiencing a rise in their immigrant populations, and if other immigrant groups are using public housing as their ports-of-entry into the United States?

What does it mean for Public Housing to take on the new role of housing immigrants?

Demographic Renewal

One of the most important benefits to the Cambridge Housing Authority has been the rise in the immigrant population in general, and the Haitian population in particular. With the decrease in federal subsidies flowing to housing authorities across the nation, and the ardent support of policies such as HOPE VI that emphasize the importance and the need for income mixing, Housing Authorities have had to search for creative ways to attract moderate-income residents. In Cambridge, Haitian immigrants have filled this role for the Cambridge Housing Authority, as they have been predominantly working-class residents. Building on the theory of demographic renewal

¹³⁶ From a recent survey conducted by George Samuels, Master in City Planning candidate of the Department of Urban Studies & Planning, MIT, “An Evaluation of the Cambridge Housing Authority’s Tenant Outreach Program,” unpublished paper.

discussed in Chapter 1, the CHA has experienced a renewal in many ways, but in particular by attracting this new immigrant population. Indeed, many of the upper-level CHA staff had extremely positive views regarding their Haitian immigrant population:

It certainly benefits the CHA to have Haitian immigrants because they have more income and their families tend to work more...I have noticed a significant turn-over rate with the Haitians, and they usually tend to go on to purchase a home, sometimes in other states.¹³⁷

We've tried to get moderate income families to move into our housing, but because of the stigma attached to public housing: drugs, welfare mothers, crime, a lot of these families just don't apply. We've had a local preference, but it just didn't work...Also a lot of the long-time families were leaving because as their children grew-up and moved out, their rents went up...But the immigrants are the ones who are applying to the CHA, and they are the families who are filling our moderate income apartments.¹³⁸

Anyone that is of age to work in our Haitian immigrant population has a job; the motivation to work is phenomenal. You see very few numbers receiving public assistance, and when you deal with a bureaucracy like ours you see a large number of people on some form of assistance...Ironically, we don't see many organized bodies representing Haitians, because their entire community is very sophisticated and knows how to work within our system.¹³⁹

The work ethic of Haitian and other immigrants affects the numbers of people we have with earned income, both in our developments and on our waiting lists...I would say it has gotten to the level of happiness. It benefits the developments if more people have earned income, and a large portion of Haitian families are those with incomes. The large influx of Haitian immigrants has been a benefit to the CHA.¹⁴⁰

This is only impressionistic, but I would say that about 70-75% of our current residents are immigrants...Haitians would be the largest single group...Immigrants tend to work at a considerable rate, and at a higher rate than their predecessors...The immigrant groups tend to take advantage of our human services at a higher rate than our other residents. They are upwardly mobile, with the traditional immigrant mentality.¹⁴¹

It is arguable that, one of the policy adjustments which many Housing Authorities around the country need to implement is accepting, rather than rejecting more immigrants. Immigrant households, at least in the instance of Haitians and the CHA, tend to have an extremely high motivation for work. This has allowed the CHA to collect more rent, and to rely less on subsidies from the federal government. Unfortunately, however, this is only one current example in the public housing arena, and the political consequences of accepting more and more immigrants out weighs

¹³⁷ Faith Walker interview, 3/28/2000.

¹³⁸ Gerard Jean-Leger interview, 3/22/2000.

¹³⁹ Ann Arata interview, 3/20/2000.

¹⁴⁰ William Holshouser interview, 3/20/2000.

¹⁴¹ Steve Swanger interview, 2/28/2000.

the benefits for the CHA. I was constantly reminded throughout the course of my interviews with upper-level CHA staff that the repercussions for becoming identified as “housing for immigrants,” rather than “housing for poor Americans,” would be political suicide. Housing Authorities around the country are extremely subsidy reliant, and the CHA is no different.

An interesting point to consider, however, is the manner in which the Cambridge Housing Authority has benefited from having a growing immigrant population, particularly Haitian immigrants. Certainly, upper level staff at the CHA could not have promoted a policy of receiving more immigrants, while at the same time turning away Cantabridgians and native born US citizens. However, the CHA has allowed the immigrant population to grow through the natural process of tenant selection. Based upon my research, many of the Haitian immigrant families occupy the moderate income tier – paying more rent – and are extremely important to the CHA.

Although this is not a policy change that Dan Wuenschel or any of the upper level staff at the CHA could promote at the national level, one is left contemplating: “If immigrants provide such value to the Cambridge Housing Authority, why then must the CHA keep its knowledge quiet.” No other reason, than because most immigrants are precisely that – immigrants. Because of widespread xenophobic attitudes at the Federal, state, and local level, many policymakers shy away from immigrant issues. “If they don’t vote, then they don’t count,” becomes the motto. Jim Stockard recently commented:

With any kind of social progress like this there are many different levels to implementing policies of this sort [immigrant revitalization of public housing]. You can implement it, but you don’t make it public. Or you can implement and make it public so everybody knows what you’re trying to accomplish. Sometimes, however, there comes along a situation where the it is too politically sensitive, but someone has to talk about it, i.e. Jack Kavorikian and doctor assisted suicide. The same might be true about immigrants in public housing, and we know the benefit they bring and we have data that can back it up...But what Dan

*is going to say is that he's not ready to talk about this at the national level because Congress is still bad, and HUD doesn't have any guts!*¹⁴²

It is my belief, that by creating a model that can be applied to Haitian immigrants, the CHA, and other Housing Authorities, can then apply the same approach to other immigrant groups as they significantly increase in numbers. This model includes hiring more bi-lingual staff members including Haitian cultural specialists, implementing Haitian cultural training programs, and organizing its Haitian immigrant population among itself first, and then integrating it back into the established tenant councils.

New Haitian Staff Members

Some of the policy adjustments the CHA can make are techniques that it has attempted to implement in the past. With a burgeoning immigrant population, and one that is dominated by Haitians, it seems that by hiring new white collar bi-lingual Haitian staff members their current immigrant populations would be much better served. During the course of my interviews, many upper level CHA staff expressed frustration over what they have felt has been a lack of commitment or ability to hire Haitian staff members. There have been Haitian staff members in the past, however, the department that has excelled in hiring bi-lingual staff members is the Office of Leasing & Occupancy. The director of this division, Ann Arata commented:

*In terms of the area of intake, we have three Haitian staff members. Having a creole speaking staff has made it enormously helpful. This has facilitated our ability to communicate with Haitian individuals on the waiting list, we've had staff that can interpret Haitian culture for us, and during renovations we've had staff members to deal with the language barriers faced with the residents.*¹⁴³

¹⁴² Jim Stockard interview, 5/11/2000.

¹⁴³ Ann Arata interview, 3/20/2000.

An area that is greatly under-served by bilingual or translator support is on-site management. John Keane, Director of Management commented:

No one gets treated any differently, but the language barrier has caused a problem in the past. When managers have to conduct recertification of current tenants many of our immigrants and managers have had problems communicating. This process is done once a year and is very thorough...I wish I was more successful in hiring more Haitians on our staff, at least at the assistant manager position."¹⁴⁴

By hiring new staff members that speak Haitian Creole, not only in the Office of Leasing and Occupancy, but also on-site to allow bilingual staff members and tenants greater proximity to one another, the CHA can greatly improve its ability to manage its most dominate resident group at Washington Elms and Newtowne Court. As stated earlier, Haitian residents comprise 116 families at both developments. Many upper level CHA staff members consistently reminded me that they were in constant need of translators for Haitian Creole, and that they often turned to the same individual at the Cambridge Economic Opportunity Council (CEOC), Mura Joseph, to translate some of their most basic daily interactions with Haitian residents. It seems obvious then that the CHA must hire new Haitian staff members to facilitate with on-site management.

Cultural Awareness

When the managers and the tenants were white, as long as the population was white, there was a lot of understanding. Then all of a sudden the population began to shift to Black, and the understanding stopped. Then laws were passed, and the property managers backed off for a while and the system was out of balance. Now managers have the tools today that allow them to deal with the population; more of our managers are people of color, and we have reached another period of equilibrium. Now the question is, as we have an increased immigrant population will we return to a period where property managers and the tenant population have more conflict...Manager and tenant relations might suffer again if we have a lack of cultural understanding.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ John Keane interview, 3/23/2000.

¹⁴⁵ Jim Stockard interview, 3/15/2000.

Countless CHA staff members that I interviewed repeated a desire to have cultural training that would allow them the opportunity to begin to understand Haitian culture in more depth. Many staff members do not understand the intricacies of Haitian culture and because of this their work is impeded. The language barriers seems an obvious impediment for on-site managers, however, managers and other CHA staff members could greatly benefit from Haitian cultural training. The Teacher/Counselor of the on-site Workforce Unemployment Program expressed her concern:

Twenty-five out of my current thirty-eight students are Haitian. From the beginning I've been asking for training in Haitian culture. I felt like it would help me identify with my students and their parents. The reality is we are servicing these people so we need to know their culture, not ignore it...The Haitian parents weren't real open to coming out to our ceremonies, they didn't understand our mission, and I didn't know how to reach out to them so they would understand where I was coming from.¹⁴⁶

It is evident that her work would be greatly facilitated with even minimal cultural training in Haitian culture.

One way to expose all of the current residents and management of both Washington Elms and Newtowne Court to the importance of Haitian culture, as well as to build pride among Haitian residents, would be – as one community organizer has suggested – “to create activities that bring Haitians and other residents together, such as Haitian Flag Day, on May 18th.”¹⁴⁷ If the CHA were to create an activity that would recognize one of the most important days to the people of Haiti – as this was the day that Haitians officially cut ties with France and made their first large step toward freedom – it allow all residents to experience the joy of Haitian culture. Also, it would provide second generation Haitians children the opportunity, “to know the strong culture that they came

¹⁴⁶ Reyita Ramos interview, 4/3/2000.

¹⁴⁷ Mura Joseph interview, 5/7/2000.

from.”¹⁴⁸ It is this type of activity and policy adjustment that is easy to implement, but difficult to conceptualize without a base from which to draw.

Tenant Organizing

Over the course of the past three months every CHA staff member along with every Haitian immigrant with whom I spoke, listed the need for strong tenant organization and participation by Haitian and other immigrants of Washington Elms and Newtowne Court.

Tenant organizing has been a struggle not only for Housing Authorities around the nation, but for tenant activists and urban housing specialists all over the world. One example, that might help to illuminate the value of such a policy adjustment, is an incident that recently transpired inside the CHA itself. Current Haitian residents have begun to assert their control at one of the elderly developments named the Lyndon B. Johnson Apartments (LBJ).

The most recent example has evolved over the past year. In this case, the tenant council at the LBJ had decided that it would no longer put forth the effort to seek outside translators for announcements and flyers. Outraged at this lack of respect, many of the current Haitian immigrant tenants contacted the lead tenant organizers at the CEOC. CEOC in turn, visited the residents at LBJ to help them to positively channel their concerns in a constructive manner towards CHA upper level management.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

The tenant organizers called a meeting to allow for a forum in which the Haitian immigrants could voice their immediate concerns. Throughout the course of this meeting it was decided that a letter would be drafted and sent to John Keane, Director of Management for the CHA, and that this letter would be sent in carbon form to Billy Thomas, the current manager of LBJ. This letter listed the concerns of the Haitian immigrants: their desire to be included in the Tenant Council at LBJ; their concern over the lack of response to their work orders; the scant attention that they had received from on-site management; their demand to have translators on-site for Tenant Council meetings; and their request to have announcements translated into Haitian Creole. John Keane promptly responded by organizing a meeting in which he was able to hear the concerns of the Haitian tenants, and one in which he was able to realize the urgency of their concerns.¹⁴⁹

Although the issue of translators has not been fully addressed, just two weeks ago, two Haitian elderly women have been elected to the posts of Treasurer and Secretary of the LBJ Tenant Council. Neither of these women speak English, however they both perform their duties in a professional manner. In the words of one of the tenant organizers, “These women mean business. This is called tenant empowerment!”¹⁵⁰

It seems that many lessons can be gained from LBJ, the most important of which is that by organizing Haitian immigrants amongst themselves first, and allowing them to create a forum in which they can voice their concerns, the CHA, will in the end, benefit. The Haitian residents have proven that they do not wish to be treated as a separate group, but that they desire the opportunity

¹⁴⁹ The information listed above was ascertained in a personal interview with Mary Reagan and Mura Joseph, both tenant and immigrant activists that work for the CEOC, 3/23/2000; 5/7/2000.

¹⁵⁰ Mura Joseph interview, 5/7/2000.

to participate in the decision making process in their development. They certainly benefited from organizing amongst themselves, and then re-integrating into the established tenant council; a process that ultimately affects their daily lives.

The CHA would be wise to hire more organizers on a contractual basis to come into their developments and to help facilitate this process, particularly among the current immigrant groups at both Washington Elms and Newtowne Court. The established tenant council, however, has been resistant to any tactics that attempt to organize the Haitian immigrants at this site, and to proposals that do not involve its control. It is in this instance, that an outside organizer, sanctioned by the CHA, could prove helpful.¹⁵¹

One solution the CHA might consider to address many of the proposed policy recommendations listed above, would be to hire a Haitian cultural specialist. This individual could have a job description that is multi-faceted, but one that attempts to serve the same end.

Some of the central functions of this specialist might include creating and facilitating workshops on Haitian culture for CHA staff members. Another area in which a Haitian cultural specialist could prove extremely helpful would be as meeting translator/facilitator. Also, the Haitian cultural specialist could begin his/her efforts by organizing the Haitian immigrant population at both Washington Elms and Newtowne Court with the stated goal of achieving greater tenant council participation. With such a large concentration of Haitian immigrant families (within a two block

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

radius) at Washington Elms and Newtowne Court this individual will have a large pool of families with which to work.

As other immigrant groups grow in numbers, to a level that dictates staff support, then many of these policies can be replicated to serve their needs. Haitian immigrants must have their concerns met first, as they are currently the largest immigrant group inside of the CHA.

Some Questions Left Unanswered

An outstanding question remains: What lies in the future for immigrants in public housing?

Future of Immigrants and Public Housing

As of this writing, the future for immigrants and their ability to remain as current residents in public housing remains unclear. In a recent training conducted by the Greater Boston Legal Services entitled “New Rules On Immigrant’s Eligibility For Federal Public Housing In Boston,” organized to help clarify the rules that will govern the eligibility of immigrants in federally assisted public housing, it became very clear that Congress is determined to rid Housing Authorities of undocumented foreigners, i.e. “illegal aliens.”

In 1980, Congress passed a law that mandated to be eligible for federally assisted public housing a resident must be a US citizen or a legal American resident. As is often the case with many federal laws, it took until June of 1995, for HUD to finally began to enforce this statute. Initially it allowed housing authorities the option of not enforcing this law, but in October of 1998, it abolished this opt-out clause. Since 1998, all Housing Authorities have had to enforce this law in their federally

assisted developments. Currently, all residents must prove that they are a citizen or documented resident. From this time forward, all immigrant residents have been classified as either eligible or non-eligible tenants.

Today, non-citizens must prove that they are eligible to receive subsidized housing, or they will be charged a market rent for their apartments. In situations where some members of the household are eligible, while others are not, individual households then pay on a sliding-scale. A subsidy is offered for every eligible member, and for those that are not eligible the subsidy is removed. For instance, in a household of four where three individuals are eligible and one is not, then 75% of the household receives the normal subsidy.

This leaves some outstanding questions. Are Housing Authorities mandatory reporters? At least one member of the household must be eligible to receive the housing subsidy, what happens to households where no eligible members exists? Will information be shared with the Immigration and Naturalization Service? These questions and many others will be answered by Housing Authorities as some become public ports-of-entry.

Future Research

The case study of The Port and its two developments – Washington Elms and Newtowne Court – has proven to be extremely illuminating. As I have argued, Haitian immigrants have transformed these developments into a port-of-entry neighborhood. When compared to other Housing Authorities across the nation, however, this case might prove to be an aberration. One is left asking

the question, *Are other Housing Authorities receiving large waves of immigrants, and if so, are these developments transforming into port-of-entry neighborhoods?*

Fortunately, I was able throughout the course of my research to speak with officials from two other Housing Authorities to ascertain some anecdotal data: the Boston Housing Authority (BHA), and the Los Angeles Housing Authority (LHA).

I was told by Kate Bennett of the BHA:

As a bi-product of the market, and because many immigrants come to this country with little or few resources, we end up with a good-sized immigrant population in both our family and our elderly developments.¹⁵²

Nancy Ryerson of the LHA commented:

This is nothing new, we've had a growing immigrant population over the past twenty years, but it certainly has gotten larger in the last ten. If we send anything out today in the form of a flyer it has to be in Vietnamese, Khmer, Korean, and most importantly in Spanish. We have a large Hispanic population that is both domestic and foreign born. This is the group that is most dominant.¹⁵³

It is interesting to note that both Housing Authorities are located in historical port-of-entry cities, and that each one has identified a nascent immigrant population. Without statistical data, however, it remains unclear to what extent this population has grown in both Housing Authorities over the past thirty five years since the passage of Hart-Cellar Act. Neither Housing Authority conveyed any special programs or policy adjustments that they have used to deal with their new immigrant population save translating flyers and hiring a small number of interpreters.

¹⁵² Personal interview with Kate Bennett, 3/7/2000. Kate has been working with the BHA for the past five years.

¹⁵³ Personal interview with Nancy Ryerson, 5/1/2000. Nancy has been working with the LHA for the past twenty nine years. She is currently the Systems & Procedure Supervisor.

In the next thirty years many social scientists and demographers predict that the number of foreign-born individuals migrating to the US will significantly increase (Winnick, 1990). It is not difficult to predict that cities historically known for receiving large waves of immigrants will continue to experience a rise in their immigrant population.

Traditional port-of-entry cities, particularly those that have experienced tighter and tighter real estate markets, will continue to produce immigrant populations that search for creative solutions to their housing needs, particularly low-income immigrant groups. Public Housing officials will be better prepared to make more informed policy adjustments in the future, if studies are conducted in the present to ascertain the extent to which *their* Housing Authorities have been transformed into port-of-entry neighborhoods.

LIST OF INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED

Ann Arata, current director of leasing and occupancy for the CHA.

Tyrone Bellitti, life-long resident of The Port and former resident of Newtowne Court.

Kate Bennett, current upper level staff member Boston Housing Authority.

Dennis Benzan, life-long resident and neighborhood activist of The Port.

Mr. & Mrs. Colon, part of the first wave of Puerto Rican immigrants to migrate to The Port.

Lena Dobson, life-long resident and neighborhood activist of The Port.

José Garcia, life-long resident of The Port and former resident of Newtowne Court.

Gustave, recent immigrant from Haiti, and current resident of Washington Elms.

Donnie Harding, life-long, third generation resident of The Port, and former resident of Newtowne Court.

William Holshouser, current director of information for the CHA.

Jean II, Haitian immigrant and current resident of Newtowne Court.

Gerard Jean-Leger, former resident of Newtowne Court and current member of the CHA's office of Leasing and Occupancy.

Muradiou Joseph, recent Haitian immigrant and current organizer/teacher/in-take specialist for the Cambridge Economic Opportunity Council

Jean Juene, current social worker for the city of Cambridge dealing mainly with Haitian immigrant services.

John Keane, current director of management for the CHA.

Terry Lurie, current director of planning for the CHA.

Venita Mathias, current staff member of the Cambridge Community Development Department and former resident of The Port.

Reyita Ramos, current Teacher/Counselor, Washington Elms – Newtowne Court, for The Workforce Unemployment Program of the CHA.

Mary Reagan, current tenant organizer for the Cambridge Economic Opportunity Council.

Jane Richards, life-long Cambridge resident and one of the first ten families to live in Newtowne Court.

Susan Richards-Scott, long-time director of the Cambridge Community Art Center and long-time resident of Cambridge.

Janet Rose, long-time resident, neighborhood activist of The Port.

Nancy Ryerson, current systems procedures supervisor for the Los Angeles Housing Authority.

George Samuels, current master's student in the Department of Urban Studies & Planning.

Jim Stockard, current board of commissioner CHA and the director of Loeb Fellows Program at Harvard University.

Steve Swanger, current director of human services for the CHA.

Faith Walker, current manager of Washington Elms and Newtowne Court.

Workforce Unemployment Program Focus Group I & II , many current Haitian immigrants, children of Haitian immigrants, as well as current residents of The Port.

Dan Wuenschel, current director of the CHA.

Yanick, Haitian immigrant, former resident of Newtowne Court, and current resident of The Port.

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