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REPRESENT: THE NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC HOUSING RESIDENT ALLIANCE AND ITS STRUGGLE AGAINST THE IMPOSITION OF THE NEOLIBERAL AGENDA

by

GRETCHEN SUSI

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Psychology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2005

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Abstract

REPRESENT: THE NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC HOUSING RESIDENT ALLIANCE AND ITS STRUGGLE AGAINST THE IMPOSITION OF THE NEOLIBERAL AGENDA

by

Gretchen Susi

Adviser: Professor Cindi Katz

This research has focused on four interconnected topics: the formation of a citywide group of public housing residents and advocates (The New York City Public Housing Resident Alliance); a collaboration between the Resident Alliance and building trade unions in New York City to gain jobs for public housing residents—The TRADES Coalition (Trade Unions and Residents for Apprenticeship Development and Economic Success); public housing activism in an era of neoliberal reform; and efforts on the part of the Resident Alliance to engage in what Henri Lefebvre refers to as the production of space. It has examined how The New York City Public Housing Resident Alliance has responded to the neoliberal political economic environment of the late 20th-early 21st centuries. The research has also been considered through the theoretical lenses of geographic scale, structural racism, social movement theory, and social reproduction.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation is dedicated with love to Cynthia Jenkins, Harold Thompson, Eva Varnum, and Ethel Velez, who inspired this research.

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me to count my blessings and great good fortune. My colleagues at the Roundtable, Andrea Anderson, Patricia Auspos, Ivett Colon-Leon, and Stacey Sutton have been like a family. Your support, interest in my work and patience with me have been *greatly* appreciated.

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Questioned after the explosion in the second coach of the express metro train he was driving . . . the driver, who according to witnesses had led the evacuation of the passengers with exemplary calm, warned against the temptation to take revenge on the Algerian community. They are, he said simply, 'people like us.' . . . That simple remark contained an exhortation by example to combat resolutely all those who, in their desire always to leap to the simplest answer, caricature an ambiguous historical reality in order to reduce it to the reassuring dichotomies of Manichean thought . . . It is infinitely easier to take up a position for or against an idea, a value, a person, an institution or a situation, than to analyze what it truly is, in all its complexity.

Pierre Bourdieu
Acts of Resistance
1998
Pp 21-22

Represent[1]: The New York City Public Housing Resident Alliance and its Struggle Against the Imposition of the Neoliberal Agenda

'Modern' spatial practice might thus be defined—to take an extreme but significant case—by the daily life of a tenant in a government-subsidized high-rise housing project.

- Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 1991, p. 38.

This research has focused on four interconnected topics: the formation of a citywide group of public housing residents and advocates (The New York City Public Housing Resident Alliance); a collaboration between the Resident Alliance and building trade unions in New York City to gain jobs for public housing residents; public housing activism in a neoliberal environment; and efforts on the part of the Resident Alliance to engage in what Henri Lefebvre refers to as the production of space. It has examined how The New York City Public Housing Resident Alliance—from here, The Resident Alliance—has responded to the neoliberal political economic environment of the late 20th-early 21st centuries. Neoliberalism is here understood to be policies and practices that favor the rule of the market, cutting taxes, reducing public expenditure for social services, deregulation, privatization, and elimination of the concept of "the public good" or "community" and replacing it with "individual responsibility" (Martinez and Garcia, 1997). The research has also been considered through the theoretical lenses of geographic scale, structural racism, social movement theory, and social reproduction.

[1] To stand up for or be down with something. "I represent the Bronx." (http://members.tripod.com/the_yz/dictionary/q-r.html); To make a good showing; to stand up for, to be a role model, to give respect to. "I don't care where you started out from, now that you are here you've got to represent." (www.bhs.berkeley.k12.ca.us/departments/english/slang_dictionary.htm); To represent the real, to do something the way it should be done. (www.xent.com/FoRK-archive/spring96/0455.html)

An Overview of the Resident Alliance

The Resident Alliance is a city-wide organization of public housing tenant leaders from each of New York City's five boroughs who have united in order to more effectively confront the challenges and attacks facing public housing and its residents. The formation of the Resident Alliance was a response to government actions (first initiatives, later legislation) that would have posed sudden and drastic changes to the structure and nature of public housing, threatening hundreds of thousands of households with the grave danger of homelessness. In its own words, The New York City Public Housing Resident Alliance "is a citywide organization of concerned public housing residents seeking to improve our homes and communities. Our purpose is to inform and connect residents so that we can have a strong and effective voice and secure greater accountability in government decisions that affect public housing in New York City." The Resident Alliance informs and organizes residents, and represents resident interests to the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), elected officials and other decision-makers. They also work proactively on issues of high importance to residents, including increasing training and employment opportunities.

Some of the Resident Alliance's most important accomplishments include having:

- held hundreds of informational meetings and forums to inform residents about the changing context of public housing and what they can do to protect their households;
- developed relationships with elected officials at the local, state and national level;
- fought (successfully, for a time) to repeal legislation that was part of the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 (which would have required public housing residents to perform "community service"—in addition to paying rent—in order to remain in public housing) by mobilizing thousands of public housing

residents and allies, and by working with elected officials who introduced a bill (H.R. 2243, Housing and Employment Opportunities Reform Act) demanding repeal the legislation; and

- forged relationships with other non-governmental grassroots housing organizations, unions, universities, as well as governmental institutions.

A particular focus of the research has been the Resident Alliance's work to win further implementation of Section 3 of the 1968 Housing and Urban Development Act. Section 3 mandates that all renovation and construction activities within public housing give priority to employing public housing residents. Section 3 has gone largely unimplemented since 1968. More than thirty years after its passage, public housing activists and advocates sought to resurrect and implement Section 3 in their search for possible counters to the new austerities in social welfare programs, including efforts to repeal rent caps in public housing (The Brooke Amendment) and to place limits on the amount of time that a household can spend in public housing. In its efforts to win further implementation of Section 3, the Resident Alliance formed alliances with an array of organizations with which it had not previously interacted, including, most importantly, certain building trade unions including the Carpenter's Union, Laborers Union and the Painter's Union. The alliance between the unions and public housing residents is known as the TRADES Campaign (Trade Unions and Residents for Apprenticeship Development and Economic Success) and is an unprecedented collaboration between unions and public housing residents.

I have focused on how, or not, the Resident Alliance—on its own and as a member of the TRADES Campaign—has been able to "produce spaces" (following Lefebvre) of public housing that meet public housing residents' self-defined needs (Fraser, 1989), as opposed to the way that "needs" have been defined by the state. My

work has focused on the contemporary state, which is driven by neoliberal principles inflected by predictable class-biases and all too often purveying racist policies and practices that reinforce the historical and structural impediments faced by inner-city public housing residents. The responses of the Resident Alliance and the TRADES Campaign to the neoliberal environment are important to consider for a number of reasons. In particular it is important to understand the way that groups are countering the lack of governmental concern for the survival and quality of life of poor people. This lack of concern, veiled by ideologies of individualism and "up by one's bootstraps" Horatio Alger myths, has gained a level of acceptance in US culture that has legitimized the removal of state-sponsored safety nets in crucial areas of human life, particularly housing. It is also important to keep in mind the crucial role played by housing in the US economy. The dominant consensus on housing in the US is that it is a for-profit enterprise. Housing, and housing starts more particularly, are looked to as predictable economic indicators. There is almost no concept of a right to housing, and collective forms of ownership and occupancy are actively discouraged. These conceptualizations and practices are the backdrop for severe housing crises in the US.

Via a set of extensive interviews, document review, and participant observation, I have examined the Resident Alliance's Section 3 activities in the current neoliberal context as manifested in legislation, policies and practices surrounding public housing, employment issues, and activism (or producing space) in New York City.
The research, which is informed by a combination of theoretical frameworks, considers the weight of the material and political history of public housing in the US, and the history of social movements concerned with housing in light of the way that the spaces of

public housing are being produced by both neoliberal policies and practices and by grassroots groups. I take into consideration the usual ebbs and flows of everyday life in public housing (social reproduction in public housing) and the ways in which public housing residents have confronted (sometimes more successfully than others) obstacles placed in their paths by the neoliberal disregard for their needs. I also look at the Resident Alliance and its work to implement Section 3 in relation to the production of geographic scale and through the historical and analytical view of a structural racism perspective. In sum, the research seeks to understand how grassroots groups and their advocates work to create spaces that are respectful of human development through the lifespan in a socio-cultural climate in which the needs of working, and especially poor, people tend to be given short shrift.

Origins of the Research

Before beginning the formal description of the public housing environments and activist efforts I have studied, I would like to briefly explain how I came to spend time in New York City public housing and how I became interested in pursuing this research. In 1993, having just graduated from college, I took a job as an editorial assistant at one of the major publishing houses in New York City. It was the first step on what would become my professional path, and while I had no passion for the paperback mysteries and romances that we published, I was just happy to have a job and interested in learning how the industry operated. In less than a year I was promoted to the position of associate editor. My salary was very low, but I enjoyed the perks of an expense account, traveling, lunches in the best restaurants, and the abundant resources of the company, especially the

color copy machines and helpful assistants who looked after details. After two years, however, I came to recognize that I could no longer continue in the position. The bottom-line driven book industry did not appeal to the sense of literature I had then. Even more disillusioning to me were decisions made not to feature black characters on book covers and not to publish certain manuscripts that had too "intellectual" a tone. Having left my position as editor and begun graduate school, the next professional setting I would find myself in was as a research assistant for the Housing Environments Research Group at the City University of New York Graduate Center. My first assignment was to serve more or less as a participant observer/technical assistant to the tenant association at the James Weldon Johnson Houses, a public housing development in East Harlem, New York City. The purpose of the research I was involved in was to better understand the way that resident associations functioned in public housing. Stepping out of the New York publishing world into the settings of public housing was an eye-opening transition, like slipping from one world to another, even though the two worlds were but a few-dozen city blocks from each other. I often thought about what the resident leaders with whom I was working would be able to accomplish if they had the resources and able-bodied assistants available in the publishing business. As I decided to focus my own research on tenant activism in public housing, I found myself positioning myself as such an assistant to the resident leaders with whom I worked, working with them to further their projects and overall visions. I also attempted to align myself as much as possible with the positionality of the public housing tenants and tenant leaders with whom I worked.

To those who have never lived or spent time in public housing, and to those who do not know anything about what life really is like there, it is "another world," the world not just of the "inner city" but of "the projects." While I will attend to some of these qualities, I hope to effectively emphasize the tensions between the extraordinariness and ordinariness of public housing, which after all is simultaneously a world apart and an ordinary place. Life in public housing in New York City is often mundane: men and women rise in the morning to go to work, children go to school, families prepare for holidays. But there are other elements that have, over time, taken on a mundane quality that might seem extraordinary to an outsider: selling drugs is commonplace and intergenerational, young and old alike play roles in that underground economy; a situation can go haywire on a somewhat predictable basis, many people rarely leave their neighborhoods because, they do not have enough money for bus or subway fare, let alone other expenses that they might incur in their travels. With hundreds of thousands of people falling under the umbrella of "public housing resident," it should not be surprising to find variance among people, but I am continually surprised by the blanket and negative characterizations made about public housing residents and by how little it takes for the stigma attached to living in public housing to reproduce itself. In the pages that follow I hope to convey the heightened levels of contradiction within which "public housing life" takes place. It is particularly important to keep in mind, I have found through my research, the particular position that public housing occupies in American society and, as Lefebvre noted, all that it can reveal about the society in which it is nested.

Contexts: historical & social

Throughout the dissertation I have attempted to carry the thread of the social and historical contexts within which the Resident Alliance and TRADES have operated, particularly: a) the evolution of public housing in the US since it was created in 1937, and b) the waning of Keynesianism and the rise of neoliberalism in the US. Public housing in the US was created during the Great Depression, a time when capitalism was in crisis, and the government had some, but not full, support in financing it. Strong opposition to public housing was voiced by representatives of the real estate industry and those who opposed it on ideological grounds as "socialism." Public housing was established, it is important to note, not necessarily because there was widespread support for government subsidized housing, but because jobs were created in the construction of public housing.[2] For a time, from approximately the 1940s until the late 1960s, government intervention in social welfare and in the regulation of business held sway. But by the early 1970s many US corporations became dissatisfied with profit margins and acted in the interest of recapturing profit gains. The now familiar logic of neoliberalism, which was generated in conservative think tanks and evolved in corporate boardrooms, among other places, arose in tandem with these concerns. In the decades since the 1970s neoliberal principles have come to dominate both discourse and practice in the US and more broadly around the world.

Because the formation of both the Resident Alliance and the TRADES

[2] As noted by Lawrence Vale in his volume From the Puritans to the Projects: "Public housing thus emerged out of an uneasy alliance among housing reformers, settlement workers, architects, labor unions and construction companies who could all agree that the first priority was putting the nation back to work. However much the "housers" within this coalition emphasized the positive value of better housing conditions, the imperative of job creation would become the driving force behind both slum clearance and housing project construction" (p. 155).

Campaign was prompted by the imposition of neoliberal legislation and practice, it is important to understand the neoliberal environment in which the Resident Alliance works. For example, the idea of "individual responsibility," as if individuals exist in vacuums, is one of the current hallmarks of the discourse surrounding public housing. Neoliberalism pulls the economic rug out from under people, and then charges them with cleaning up the mess, all the while making it seem as if the neoliberal forces themselves are giving public housing residents and others an "opportunity" to exercise individual responsibility.

Another way that the current dominance of the neoliberal perspective affected the subjects of this research is via the professionalization of grassroots organizations. In order to penetrate the governmental and economic systems that dominate the spaces of their lives, activists must play by the rules of business, witnessed in such things as proposal writing and forced utilization of foundation-established "best practices" and evaluation strategies.

The New York City Public Housing Resident Alliance: Purpose and Background

The Resident Alliance represents the interests of the approximately 500,000-600,000 people who live in more than 182,000 units in 346 public housing developments throughout the five boroughs of New York City (with an additional 171,000 on waiting lists). Residents are almost entirely—94.2%—black and Latino.[3] Approximately 55% of public housing residents fall below the US federal poverty line and the average household

[3] According to the most recent figures, the racial distribution of residents of public housing in New York City was as follows: Asian, 2.1%; Black, 53.4%; Hispanic, 40.8%; White, 3%; Other, 0.6% (New York City Housing Authority, 2004c).

income is $17,203.[4] The average length of residence is 20 years and more than 30% of households are headed by people who are over 62 years old (New York City Housing Authority, 2004b). The Resident Alliance, as was mentioned above, was founded in 1996 in the wake of reform measures that drastically changed the nature of government involvement in the social welfare of poor people. All forms of welfare benefits, including shelter and food subsidies were affected by this legislation, known as the Personal Responsibility Act of 1995 and the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998, at federal, state and city levels. In the case of public housing residents for whom the Alliance was fighting, what was at stake were measures that would require residents to perform "volunteer" labor in order to remain in public housing, as well as measures that would have removed rent caps, imposed time limits on tenancy, and allowed tenants to be evicted "at the authority's pleasure when leases expired"[5] (Community Service Society, 1999). While this legislation can be understood in a number of ways, including in terms of reform of a flawed and often counterproductive welfare system, the Resident Alliance's perspective on the legislation is that it posed threats to the very livelihoods and survival of public housing residents. The formation of the Resident Alliance can be understood as a means of defending public housing

[4] In order to qualify to live in public housing, households must not have incomes above amounts specified by the federal government. In 2004 the maximum admission income limits were as follows: for a family of 1, $35,150; 2, $42,000; 3, $45,200; 4, $50,250; 5, $54,250; 6, $58,300; 7, $62,300; 8, $66,300 (source: The New York City Housing Authority. Development Data Book, 2004a).

[5] The Department of Housing and Urban Development and the New York City Housing Authority began to press for and implement eviction procedures more frequently as part of plans to reduce the role of government in housing provision and other social services, and to turn over the oversight of such institutions to the private sector since there is a perceived absence of public will for spending public money on social welfare programs. One way of achieving a smaller fiscal role for the government is to have people move into public housing who can pay higher rents. By having easy vehicles for eviction of tenants, the Authority makes it easier to free up apartments, accept tenants with higher incomes, and so reduce expenditures. Also, the more vacant apartments in any development, the easier it will be to turn it over to private owners.

residents from the imposition of laws and practices that *claimed* to have the best interests of residents and communities in mind, but which instead were examples of neoliberal tendencies within the realm of social policy law that made it both legal and culturally acceptable to disregard and diminish the welfare of poor people. It is important to note that the brand of neoliberalism that seemed to have reached a peak in the 1990s, and continues its prominence at the time of writing, is a quantifiably severe brand, particularly in terms of state concern and involvement with public welfare and public welfare programs.[6]

Public Housing Residents and the Role of Representations

While public housing residents often find their lives satisfying in the realms of family life and personal accomplishment, they also understand the structural realities of everyday life to be complicated and often exceedingly difficult: employment opportunities are limited, schools fail to prepare students or to provide them with access to gainful positions in universities or the labor market, and crime and violence are regular occurrences. Representatives of the state, the media, and promoters of neoliberal discourse, on the other hand, tend to constitute life in public housing as filled with "welfare queens," lazy people, and thugs who need new regimes of discipline and work. An example of such neoliberal discourse is evidenced in the writing of conservative think

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[6] In an editorial in *The New York Times*, Matthew Miller describes the situation in the following way: Consider one of the most pressing issues, health care. [Democratic senators] have unveiled plans to expand coverage that are more modest than the proposal offered by President George H.W. Bush in 1992 . . . On the supposedly "liberal" side, Howard Dean, John Kerry and Richard Gephardt say they eventually want to cover everyone. But in the years ahead their various plans would reach perhaps 30 million of today's 41 million uninsured. No serious Democratic contender today would endorse Richard Nixon's plans from the early 1970s for universal health coverage and a minimum family income: Nixon's package was far too liberal (Matthew Miller, September 4, 2003).

tanks like the Heritage Foundation intended to influence the direction of public policy. In a testimony before the congressional Subcommittee on Housing and Transportation of the Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs, Robert Rector, a prominent member of the Heritage Foundation's staff, expressed the following:

> When undergoing annual re-certification, residence by current tenants should not be automatically extended. Instead, able-bodied, non-elderly heads of household should be placed in a selection pool along with similar new applicants. Priority in selecting residents for the next year from within this pool should be given to those applicants with the best record of employment and/or other constructive activity. It is important to note that this system would not penalize those cannot find formal employment since they would be given credit for performing other constructive activity. The system would, however, send the very strong message that idleness would not be tolerated for able-bodied individuals within assisted housing (Rector, 2002).

The apparent lack of feasibility of a plan such as Rector's did not seem to stop others from proposing similar scenarios. The infeasibility has, however, seriously curbed both the implementation of housing reforms like the one put forth by Rector, as well as attempts to severely cut funding for public and other forms of subsidized housing as housing authorities across the US voiced their opposition based on the sheer impossibility of carrying out the proposals (Lowe, 1997).

Cultural opposition to public housing is largely ideologically driven and speciously based on public housing as a great financial burden to society. The National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), however, has done extensive research on "the disparity between federal subsidies for homeowners through the tax code and direct housing assistance for low income people" (Dolbeare & Crowley, 2002, p. 3). By comparing funding amounts for direct housing assistance (such as public housing and Section 8 housing subsidies) with housing related tax expenditures (homeowner

deductions for mortgage interest, property taxes, exempted or deferred tax on capital gains from sale of home, and other minor deductions, as well as investor deductions for tax-exempt housing bonds, accelerated depreciation, passive losses, low income housing tax credit, and other minor deductions) the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) concluded the following:

> By far the largest housing-related tax expenditure is the mortgage interest deduction, at $64.7 billion in 2002 or 53% of all housing related tax expenditures. *The mortgage interest tax deduction is the second most costly expenditure in the tax code, exceeded only by employer health insurance premiums and contributions* . . . Housing assistance outlays receive careful scrutiny by both the Administration and Congress, regardless of which party is in control, while the housing-related tax expenditures seem to be untouchable, even though they are considerably more costly. This can be explained by who the beneficiaries of each form of assistance are and their relative levels of political power.

As can be inferred from the National Low Income Housing Coalition's data, ideologically driven policy has gained such momentum that real numbers have no effect on changing public opinion about public housing's costs and/or benefits. While admittedly imperfect, government initiatives like the 'War on Poverty' remind one of a period when residents of public housing and inner city communities were recognized as largely shut out of opportunity structures of education and unemployment and so legitimately in need of government assistance (in its different forms) both for the sake of the individuals in question and for the society at large. The current social, political/policy climate, however, makes no such concessions. It is therefore important to understand the neoliberal turn, which has been gaining in prominence since at least the Nixon administration (1969-1974), because it affects and has the increasing potential to affect the quantifiable physical and material well-being of millions of people. In the context of public housing, jobs and tenant activism, the ways in which those carrying out neoliberal

agendas understand and "deal with" populations who have not been granted a place on the coattails of neoliberal prosperity must be understood so that they can be overcome and transcended in order to protect developmental well-being and other human rights not only in public housing communities everywhere, but in communities characterized by structural, practical and representational injustices (Young, 1990).

Taking Matters Into Their Own Hands

With the context of a globally uneven neoliberal atmosphere as background, I turn back to the specific topics that are the focus of this research—the measures taken by a combination of organizations with a limited but important agenda aimed at protecting the social reproduction—the very lives—of their constituencies by coming together around a mis- and under-used employment program that had been on the books for years, but had never been properly implemented. Recognizing that extremely limited access to living wage employment is a major obstacle faced by many public housing residents in New York City[7], in 1998, actors from across a variety of sectors, including residents, tenant associations (including the Resident Alliance), labor unions, community organizing groups, as well as a small number of elected officials have focused on Section 3 of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968. Section 3 requires that public housing authorities (PHAs) across the US hire and train "low and very low income people/public housing residents to work on federally funded construction, renovation and economic development initiatives that are undertaken within public housing as a way to broaden access to training and employment opportunities for public housing residents"

[7] More than half of resident households in public housing in New York City have incomes below the poverty level (55%), and more than half (53%) are on public assistance. Thirty-five percent of resident households have employed have employed members (Community Service Society, 1999).

(United States Congress, 1968). Despite the admirable intentions of its authors, Section 3 has been poorly implemented by PHAs across the US. While Section 3 laid dormant for many years after its passage in 1968, renewed interest was directed towards it after the 1992 race riots in Los Angeles (The National Congress for Community and Economic Development, 2001). Others suggest that welfare reform also spurred renewed interest in the Act. (Bailey, et al., 1996).

Using laws that are on the books but unenforced as leverage signals important elements at work in the situation of poor people and their advocates, particularly the uncomfortable fit between humanist and democratic 'ideals' and the frameworks and praxis of capitalism. It also points to the continuum of challenges and constraints faced by those working to improve the disparate conditions in public housing and the inner-city communities of which it is a part. Under the political economic conditions of the past three decades, there are few economic opportunities available to public housing residents. Rallying around Section 3 was a positive tactic, but it makes clear that the hands of activists, organizers, and advocates who work on behalf of the interests of the classes of working poor are largely tied under current socio-political formations. By organizing around a somewhat predictable source of work (construction and renovation in public housing) and insisting on an existing mandate, the TRADES Campaign accomplished an important and strategic victory. Nevertheless, it seems important to note that its very structure is indicative of the adverse conditions in which such efforts are developed and often falter.

While the Resident Alliance did not profess to subscribe to any particular political orientation or set of beliefs (for example feminism, civil rights, etc.) their beliefs

and goals had much in common with the survival politics long associated with African American women among others, and many of the principles associated with the Black Power Movement of the 1960s—though the Alliance leaders themselves have never directly articulated this. For instance, the Ten Point Plan put forth by the Black Panthers in the late 1960s provides an interesting reference point for many of the positions expressed by resident members of the Resident Alliance:

The Ten Point Plan

1. WE WANT FREEDOM. WE WANT POWER TO DETERMINE THE DESTINY OF OUR BLACK AND OPPRESSED COMMUNITIES.
2. WE WANT FULL EMPLOYMENT FOR OUR PEOPLE.
3. WE WANT AN END TO THE ROBBERY BY THE CAPITALISTS OF OUR BLACK AND OPPRESSED COMMUNITIES.
4. WE WANT DECENT HOUSING, FIT FOR THE SHELTER OF HUMAN BEINGS.
5. WE WANT DECENT EDUCATION FOR OUR PEOPLE THAT EXPOSES THE TRUE NATURE OF THIS DECADENT AMERICAN SOCIETY. WE WANT EDUCATION THAT TEACHES US OUR TRUE HISTORY AND OUR ROLE IN THE PRESENT-DAY SOCIETY.
6. WE WANT COMPLETELY FREE HEALTH CARE FOR All BLACK AND OPPRESSED PEOPLE.
7. WE WANT AN IMMEDIATE END TO POLICE BRUTALITY AND MURDER OF BLACK PEOPLE, OTHER PEOPLE OF COLOR, All OPPRESSED PEOPLE INSIDE THE UNITED STATES.
8. WE WANT AN IMMEDIATE END TO ALL WARS OF AGGRESSION.
9. WE WANT FREEDOM FOR ALL BLACK AND OPPRESSED PEOPLE NOW HELD IN U. S. FEDERAL, STATE, COUNTY, CITY AND MILITARY PRISONS AND JAILS.
10. WE WANT TRIALS BY A JURY OF PEERS FOR All PERSONS CHARGED WITH SO-CALLED CRIMES UNDER THE LAWS OF THIS COUNTRY. WE WANT LAND, BREAD, HOUSING,

> EDUCATION, CLOTHING, JUSTICE, PEACE AND PEOPLE'S COMMUNITY CONTROL OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY. (Black Panthers, http:www.blackpanther.org/TenPoint.htm).

While the Resident Alliance did not express its ambitions in quite such forceful terms, their concerns were not all that different from the ones espoused above, even if their focus was concentrated on housing, jobs, and self determination.

Producing the Spaces and Scales of Public Housing in New York City

A number of spaces fall under the umbrella of "public housing." The most basic units of public housing are the apartments: individual apartments within buildings are grouped together as developments, and the developments which are located throughout the five boroughs of New York City (see map, Figure 4 below). I include these details, in order to better illustrate the different scales on which the spaces of public housing are produced in New York City and, to explain my rationale for drawing on Lefebvre's conceptualization of the production of space as a guiding framework through which to understand the research. Public housing is frequently thought and written about monolithically. The causes for framing it in such a way are obvious—all public housing in the US ultimately is under the jurisdiction of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, house people of similar socio-economic status, and experience similar problems. The experience of carrying out my research, however, has taught me that it is important to be explicit about public housing as consisting of many individual apartments and households, cultures and associations within buildings and atmospheres and practices within individual developments and neighborhoods.

Figure 1: The inside of an apartment at the James Weldon Johnson Houses in East Harlem

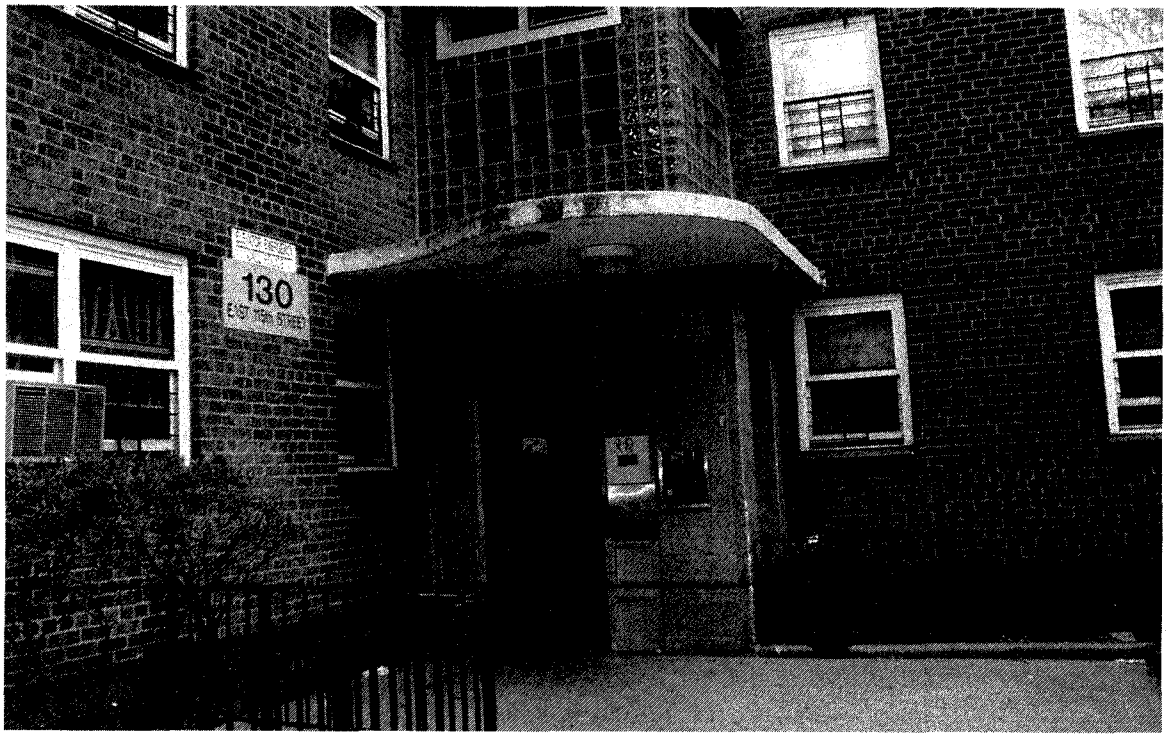

Figure 2: The entrance of one of the seventeen buildings at the James Weldon Johnson Houses in East Harlem.

Figure 3: View of the James Weldon Johnson Houses from East 112th Street, between Lexington and Park Avenues.

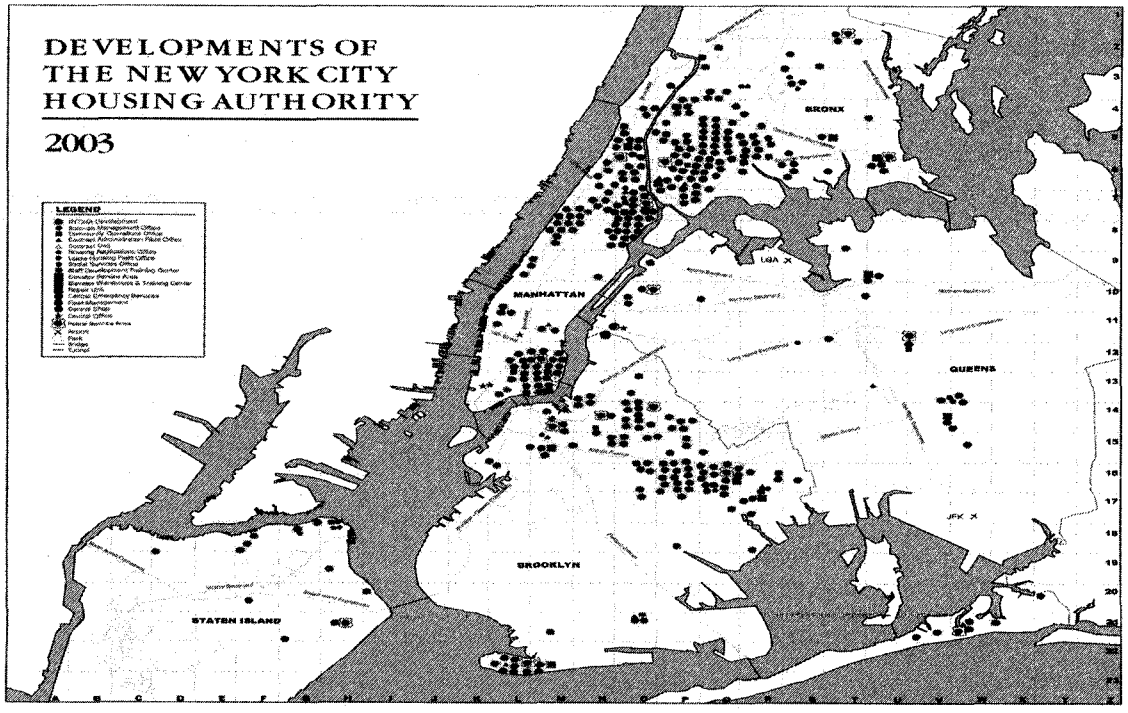

Figure 4: Map locating all of the public housing developments in the five boroughs of New York City

These physical spaces, of course, are produced by the society of which they are a part; the individuals who live and work there, as well as by those who make decisions about its governance and operations. Lefebvreian theory is particularly relevant to public housing, and to this research in particular, in that it allows for the conceptualization of the intertwined operating frameworks at play in the production of the spaces of public housing. The quote that opens this chapter refers to Lefebvre's definition of spatial practice. *Spatial practice*, along with *representations of space*, and *spaces of representation,*[8] form the conceptual triad that is fundamental to *The Production of Space*. In the opening quotation Lefebvre used the example of everyday life in government housing to exemplify his definition of spatial practice. *Spatial practice* under capitalism is "dominated" space, it is the actual space where struggles over the production of space are carried out. This contention over the production of space emanates from the struggle between two other distinct spaces: representations of space and spaces of representation. *Representations of space* is space created according to the logic of capital accumulation, it is "conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent—all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived . . . this is the dominant space in any society." (pp. 38-39). *Spaces of representation*, on the other hand, are the spaces created according to the logics of experiences grounded in everyday life, "space as directly *lived* through its associated

[8] The 1991 translation of Production of Space by Donald Nicholson-Smith refers to Lefebvre's construction as "representational space." Shields (1998), however, suggests "spaces of representation" because it is closer to the French original "espaces de la representation." It also seems closer to the meaning of the term, "space itself," "l'espace vecu," as opposed to a "representation of space."

images and symbols, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users' . . . This is the dominated . . . space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate." (p 39).

Katz's (2001) description of her rationale for "doing topography" does not refer specifically to the Lefebvreian framework, but it does reflect the thinking behind my own utilization of a framework that privileges space in such specific ways:

> Doing topography . . . already assumes the historical examination of social process in three-dimensional space. It takes for granted that space is both the bearer and reinforcer of social relations and that if these relations are to be changed so must their material grounds. Topographies are a means to elucidate the intersections of these processes with others elsewhere and thereby inspire a different kind of politics, one in which crossing space and "jumping scale' are obligatory rather than overlooked.

Identifying the activities of the Resident Alliance and the TRADES Campaign within the *Production of Space* triad of spatial practice, representations of space, and spaces of representation is a way to insist upon the spatiality of all political practice. It also offers a different way to look at the acts of producing space, one that can withstand the complexities and contradictions that exist among the different actors and entities that produce the spaces of public housing in New York City. It allows for a better reading of an institution like NYCHA, for example, which, through its policies (both mundane and momentous) and those charged with implementing them produces spaces with elements of spaces of representation coexisting with or within representations of space. This allows for a clearer and more nuanced explanation of how public housing in New York City gets reproduced, one that begins with an explicit understanding that producing space within the capitalist systems is wrought with contradictions. Among the contradictions reflected in public housing is the demand that residents and others leave behind the "real needs" that the spatial relations suggest, and operate instead according to the logic of

capital accumulation. This logic simultaneously promotes material consumption for its own sake while obscuring the uneven social relations inscribed in space.

Struggle over the production of space was easy to see in the case of public housing and in the work of the Resident Alliance. The struggle centered on the questions of whether space would be produced according to the abstract logic of capital accumulation, (representations of space), or whether it could be produced, even if only in part, by a logic and material social practices that comes from experiences of everyday life (spaces of representation)?

Representations of space is a fitting way of conceptualizing the social and physical spaces of public housing that the Department of Housing and Urban Development and its municipal counterpart in New York City, the New York City Housing Authority, produce. With the rise of neoliberalism in the US it has become even more rare that planning for and the administration of public housing take place from the perspective of residents' well-being. The tendency, to borrow Lefebvre's phrasing, has been to plan and run these spaces with "the logic of capital accumulation" foremost. On the other hand, the spaces of representation as described by Lefebvre is a fitting way of conceptualizing the space that the Resident Alliance produces through its advocacy efforts, which work to inform and influence policies that most affect public housing residents with the organic knowledge that comes from living out everyday life in public housing.

Producing Scale

The production of space in public takes place at different geographic scales, ranging from the scale of the body to the scale of the globe. Borrowing mostly from scholars like Neil Smith and Sallie Marston, I have also applied a scale analysis to the formation and evolution of the Resident Alliance and the TRADES Campaign. While the production of scale framework is elaborated further in Chapter 2, the three concepts that are most salient to this research are *scalar differentiation* (distinctions between the body, the household, the community, the urban, the region, the nation and the global (Smith, 1992); *scalar jumping* (expansion of representation and influence in new scales—for instance public housing tenant associations in individual developments "jumping" from representation at the development- or borough-level to the city-wide level); and *scalar fix* (a socially constructed 'boundary' that, among other things, plays the role of bounding people and/or places). The activities of the Resident Alliance and the TRADES Campaign are viewed through the lens of geographic scale throughout the dissertation since it allows a clearer perspective on both the ways that public housing has been produced directly by social policies emanating from the state and national level, as well the ways in which both the Alliance and TRADES worked to produce different spaces of public housing.

Research Design

My research has been a one year intensive study embedded in a longitudinal research project that began in late 1995. The research consisted of participant

observation, archival research, and a set of extensive interviews.[9] Following are brief descriptions of the methods used in this study:

I conducted *participant observation* of the activities of the Resident Alliance over a period of approximately 12 months (from September 2003 to October 2004). I kept field notes of Resident Alliance meetings and its activities such as discussions, process, grant writing, and strategic planning. I also conducted *interviews* with key Resident Alliance members and advisors, and key employees of the institutions with or against which the Alliance works most closely, including the New York City Housing Authority. I have also *reviewed documents relevant to the Alliance's work*, including NYCHA guidelines for tenant participation, Resident Alliance papers (including but not limited to proposals, correspondence, minutes from meetings, strategic plans, meeting announcements); and journalists' accounts of Resident Alliance work, public housing status in New York City, and employment issues related to public housing and/or Section 3.

My objective was to have a better understanding of what exactly resident leaders faced in trying to carry out their work of looking after the well-being and interests of their own households and communities. I believed that this would make me a better advocate. The solutions to the disparities evidenced in the public housing communities that I came in contact with seemed almost as difficult to achieve as they were important to achieve for the livelihoods of the hundreds of thousands of people who live in New York City

[9] The formal dissertation research was preceded by a long period of work (since late 1995) with the executive director of the Resident Alliance, Ms. Ethel Velez. This earlier work took place at Ms. Velez's home development, The James Weldon Johnson Houses, where she has been the tenant association president since the early 1980s. My role as a participant observer there was largely providing technical assistance to the tenant association. My work consisted of grant writing, strategic planning, implementation of projects (including the establishment of a community center and a gardening club), and tenant organizing, among other related activities.

public housing. The Resident Alliance's involvement with the TRADES Campaign was particularly fascinating because it was a new and unlikely alliance with the potential to effect real change on a number of levels. In order to better understand exactly what spaces were being produced by the formation of the TRADES Campaign, what lessons they might offer, and how their contribution could be expanded upon, I asked this more specific set of questions:

- How are the Resident Alliance's efforts to facilitate and secure the production and reproduction of social life, especially via their Section 3 efforts, spatialized?

  For example, who does the Resident Alliance encounter and interact with in its Section 3 advocacy efforts? And, what are the pathways that lead Section 3 program participants to the Section 3 jobs? Where do these negotiations and activities take place?

- What space is *produced* by the Resident Alliance's efforts?

  For example, what are the tangible results of the Resident Alliance's Section 3 efforts in individual public housing developments? In the lives of individuals and their households?

- What is the space where the social life and social order aspects of social reproduction meet in the Resident Alliance's efforts?

  For example, in the language of 'production of space,' what new space is created via the interactions that the Resident Alliance has in its advocacy for resident-centered public housing, and especially for Section 3 implementation?

- How is the hegemony of neoliberalism in the US which affects the Resident Alliance's activities, especially their Section 3 efforts, spatially expressed and enforced?

  For example, what types of spaces, places and practices thwart the Resident Alliance's Section 3 activities? Where do things break down and disallow the Resident Alliance from influencing policies and practices?

- How, via jumping scales, does the Resident Alliance rescript stereotypes of public housing residents and reproduce the scales of their lives?

For example, what effect does the Resident Alliance working on the Section 3 issue as a *citywide* organization have that is different from the effect that individual public housing Tenant Associations have been able to have?

These questions have been considered in light of:

- The relationship of the Resident Alliance's work to processes and theories of social reproduction
- The Resident Alliance's Section 3 activities as a social movement/tenant movement in light of both the production of space and the production of scale, and
- The context of structural racism in the US as it relates to issues of housing, public housing, employment and government-sponsored employment initiatives like Section 3.

The relevance and rationale for looking at the research through these lenses, so to speak, is elaborated upon in the next chapter.

This research dwells at the intersection of some of the most contested areas of social life: distribution of social goods; community activism; struggles around race, labor, class, gender; and political practices within and under neoliberalism. It considers in particular the relationships between threats to the production of household, community and urban environments, and the intervention of activists. In this way my concerns are at the heart of the relation between social reproduction—the making and maintenance of ready workers and the conditions of their (potential) labor—and the production of the spaces that encompass and sustain these activities.

Overview of Chapters

My perspective on the story of the Resident Alliance and of the TRADES Campaign is related in the following way: Chapter Two presents the historical and theoretical frameworks most relevant to the topics and processes at hand. The history of

public housing in the US is briefly considered. The role that ideology has played in this history is given particular consideration since ideology (including neoliberalism) has played and continues to play an important role in the creation, maintenance and current directions of public housing. The positions that public housing residents have historically held in the workforce are also described, as is the Section 3 program. Following these descriptions is the consideration of the history and conceptualizations of activism in public housing, particularly in light of theories of social reproduction and Lefebvre's production of space. Chapter Two concludes with a presentation of the structural racism framework—connecting the concerns and activities of the Resident Alliance to the racialized policies, practices and representations that the structural racism framework identifies as the elements that maintain the uneven balances of power along racial categories that are evidenced in cities and regions all over the US.

Chapter Three describes the needs that were addressed by the formation of the New York City Public Housing Resident Alliance, particularly public housing reform legislation, the misrepresentation of public housing residents as lazy and unwilling to work, and the token representation of tenant interests at the New York City level. The chapter then provides an overview of the evolution of the Resident Alliance, including the roles that have been played by advocates and elected officials. It then moves on to consider the accomplishments, challenges and the role that crisis has played in the Resident Alliance's abilities to produce different spaces of public housing.

Chapter Four takes a step back from the city-wide Resident Alliance and looks at the local level challenges that are faced by resident leaders at the development level: the everyday life and struggles faced by both residents and resident leaders. Among the

contextual factors faced by public housing residents are lack of educational and occupational opportunities, insecurity (in terms of public safety), and stigma. The often negative role that the New York City Housing Authority plays in the production of space at the development level is also covered. The different "faces" of NYCHA are described, including the dynamics between residents and NYCHA representatives, non-communication strategies employed by NYCHA to keep residents at bay, token representation, and petty harassment. Resident agency, as well as challenges to it (including weaknesses in tenant leadership and disaffected residents), are considered, particularly in light of the opportunities and challenges to mobilizing public housing residents in collective action strategies to protect their interests, and in light of detrimental public housing reform legislation.

Chapter Five describes the Resident Alliance's relationship to the TRADES Campaign, the alliance of unions, advocates and residents to promote broader implementation of the Section 3 training and jobs programs. The needs of both unions and residents that were addressed by the formation of the TRADES Campaign included the following: the building trade unions had almost no work in public housing in New York City; most residents were not aware of the Section 3 program, nor were adequate numbers of residents being employed via the program, which was asserted by very weak legislation in the 1968 Housing and Urban Development Act; further, it was widely rumored that there was a great deal of corruption and incompetence involved in NYCHA's contracting practices resulting in faulty repairs and renovations, among other factors. The evolution of the TRADES Campaign is elaborated upon, including the initial welfare reform legislation that initially brought the unions and public housing

leaders together, resistance that the Campaign met, both externally from vested interests within the Housing Authority, and internally from within union ranks.

Chapter Six is a consideration of the accomplishments and challenges of the TRADES Campaign and a description of the different projects that the Campaign has undertaken, not only on its own behalf, but also on behalf of public housing residents more specifically. Among the Campaign's successes were having broadened awareness about the Section 3 program and its potential for increasing employment opportunities and for promoting sound contracting practices and construction work within NYCHA developments. The Campaign was also able to effect changes in both policy and institutional practices within the Housing Authority, particularly by forcing NYCHA to change the processes it used for processing applications to the Section 3 program, for soliciting contractors, and for monitoring participant progress within the program. The challenges met by the TRADES Campaign are also covered, including some challenges that were inherent to the project, including the limited number of public housing residents that could actually be included in the Section 3 program, the difficult employment histories of public housing residents, as well as challenges inherent to labor union-community relationships, specifically the long history of mistrust existing between the two sides, as well as power differentials and differences in process.

Chapter Seven, the concluding chapter, considers the research in light of the "umbrella" of production of space theory, but including as subsets of production of space theory the other theoretical frameworks utilized in the research, particularly social reproduction theory, production of scale theory, and the structural racism analysis.

An examination of the Resident Alliance's activities to fully implement Section 3 can reveal a great deal not only about how to support efforts concerned with the well-being of individuals and communities, but also about how to understand other communities that are outside of the mainstream, disconnected, or at significant disparity from the larger society. Those, in other words, whose life chances have been systematically damaged by market forces (Offe, 1985).

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Theoretical framework

Public Housing

Historical perspectives on public housing in the US show it to have been a highly contested program from its inception (Radford, 1996; Vale, 1998, p. 268; 2000. p. 261 Friedman, 1973, pp. 450-452; Marcuse, 1995). Current domestic perspectives on the US's public housing program can be divided into three basic camps: Some believe it has gone wrong and should be demolished (Husock, 2003, 1997, 1991; see Whitman & McCoy, 2000)[10]; others believe it is a flawed program that should be tolerated, but reformed[11] (Hornburg & Lang, 1997); and still others believe that public housing is a potential source of social well-being (Spense, 1993, p. 367; Marcuse, 1986; 1995). There was never great support for public housing[12] in the US (Radford, 1996). It was introduced in the mid-1930s[13] during a period of severe, widespread national economic crisis. Its creation and construction were tolerated because of the degree and magnitude of displacement, homelessness and social unrest in the 1930s and because of the

[10] It is important to note that there is little to no research supporting this position. One of its main proponents, Howard Husock, affiliated with the Kennedy School of Government and the Heritage Foundation, publishes diatribes against public housing and subsidized housing in general, though his writings contain no bibliographic references, nor any reference to any research at all.

[11] For a concise review of different reform programs currently and/or recently applied to public housing, see Vale, 1996, p. 491, and Epp, 1996.

[12] There were, in fact, important forces opposed to it. The real estate industry feared de-commodification of the nation's housing stock; and, because it was perceived as a socialistic program, it faced ideological opposition as it was feared that it would undermine the dominance of the private property system.

[13] In 1933 the Housing Division of the Public Works Administration was formed. The Housing Act of 1937 established the US Housing Authority. The New York City Housing Authority was created in 1934, and the first public housing in the United States built in the United States is the First Houses, on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. The First Houses opened in 1935.

employment opportunities that such large scale construction might offer. While early housing reformers like Catherine Bauer, Louis Pinkett and others made convincing cases for the need for and benefits of public housing, political economic and cultural opposition to such housing forms resulted in distorted manifestations of their visions (Bauer, 1957)

It is important to understand and account for the ideological environments in which public housing has existed. It was born at a time when there was an urgent and national scale need for both housing and jobs. In his book, The Federal Government and Urban Change: Ideology and Change in Public Policy, R. Allen Hays describes the degree to which ideology has borne considerable weight and influence on housing questions in the US as follows:

> ...characterized by: (1) a lack of consensus as to the basic validity of government intervention of behalf of the poor in general; and (2) a lack of consensus as to the need for the government to provide adequate housing to those who cannot purchase it on the private market. A substantial segment of the political/economic elite stratum of American society has felt, with varying degrees of consistency and intensity, that such government activity is inimical to the long-term well being of a capitalist economy. They have opposed or tried to curtail such activities at every turn. They have occupied key leadership positions at various times throughout the last five decades and have had a major impact on housing policy outcomes, despite the legislative, bureaucratic, and constituency interests supporting a public role in housing and community development (p. 291).

Hays also identifies ways that this environment has negatively affected "government" housing. "Among the most important are: 1) a consistently low level of resources (in relation to need) . . . ; 2) feedback regarding the difficulties encountered by various programs has been used to argue for their curtailment or abolition rather than as knowledge useful for their improvement . . . ; and 3) constant fluctuations in program design between opponents and proponents of government involvement." To paraphrase Hays and others, the need for public housing, or subsidized housing in general, runs

contrary to dominant narratives of equality of opportunity, meritocracy, and upward mobility. Belief in these "national values," however, is crucial to the reproduction of the political economy of the United States. Since the situation of public housing casts serious doubt upon these national values, it ends up being cast in a negative light in order to preserve, more or less, the national values and production and reproduction of the social order.

Hays is not alone in his analysis. Halpern (1995), Bratt, (1993); and Salzer (1998) make similar assertions about the ideology against public housing reinforcing itself, and becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy (through site selection, target population, etc.). They point to the lack of regard that has been given to the impoverished opportunity context—failed schools, high unemployment, low-wage opportunities—to which public housing residents (and inner-city residents more generally) are the heirs (Salzer, 1998; Smith, J. 2000). Public housing residents, and residents of low-income communities more generally, are not understood in terms of the social and political economic context in which they are situated, but in terms that makes it appear as if the insecure social positions occupied by many public housing residents are matters of individual choices, completely erasing historical and structural legacies. Decontextualization facilitates domination of everyday life in public housing by making it easier for abstract ideologically-based policies to govern everyday life in public housing instead of policies informed by the real experience of living in public housing.

Given these ideological underpinnings and the policies they generated, it is little wonder that public housing in the US became a repository for the contradictions and challenges plaguing US society. Unemployment, concentrated poverty, racial disparities,

high crime rates,[14] and "severe distress" are the chronic problems associated with public housing. In his book, *From the Puritans to the Projects,* Lawrence Vale (2000) has traced the history of public housing (particularly in Boston) from the Puritan period to the late 1990s. By looking at public housing from a lens of "the nature and extent of public obligation to socially and economically marginal people in America," Vale, too emphasizes the ideological nature of US housing policies as well as how the ideological nature relates to "relationships among land tenure, house form, and labor . . ." (p. 1). He notes:

> It is a cruel but telling irony that what is called "subsidized housing" actually receives the *least* amount of government subsidy. Given the persistent cultural need to see questions of housing provision, like housing acquisition, as a private responsibility, a mortgage-subsidizing government must be the silent partner in individual initiative rather than a visible substitute for it. The public housing project contradicts this still-ascendant American tradition at every turn (p. 7).

In his concluding chapter, Vale goes on to say:

> Rooted in powerful ideas about the relationship between house form and moral worth, the tragic saga of attempts to house public neighbors—from the Puritan almshouse to the project superblock—reveals a distinctively American brand of cultural unease. Above all, the thorny questions of public housing policy and design point out the underlying iniquities of class, gender, and race relations, just as earlier generations of housing policy conflated slum clearance with efforts to reform or replace the city's least-wanted immigrants (p. 387).

While the contradictory and often despised status of public housing can be traced to its contested origin and to long-running tensions at the core of American values regarding private property, it is also useful to think about the despised status of public housing as having been made an "example" of, a representation of the intolerance for public ownership and, at the same time, a promotion of homeownership—an intolerance that is currently perpetuated in large part by the desire to privilege housing's exchange

[14] A federal government study issued last year reported that project residents are more than twice as likely to be shot as Americans in general (Markowitz, 2003).

value rather than its use value. In other words, the neoliberal decision-making process has in many ways *exploited* these original contradictions surrounding public housing in order to preserve a housing policy environment favoring commodified housing and characterized by hostility (public housing as "the last bastion of socialism" (see Velazquez, 1997; AFSCME, 1996)) and unwillingness to do the serious work required to construct a sound and sustainable low-income housing policy.

Public Housing Residents and their Position in the Workforce

Another way of understanding public housing is to look at what segment of the labor force has resided there over its lifetime of nearly 70 years (Marcuse, 1995). Public housing tenants have historically been groups that were either necessary to the interests of the nation at the time that the housing was constructed, or groups that the labor system failed to absorb or accommodate and who thus face extremely difficult social and economic circumstances. For instance, when the US federal government passed the Public Housing Act of 1937, it was to alleviate the misery and unrest of the Great Depression and house people suffering the consequences of long-term unemployment. Later, during World War II, it provided housing for the burgeoning working-class required by the war effort—the factory and navy yard workers, as well as returning soldiers. After the war and during the era of "slum clearance," veterans and the labor required by post-war prosperity became public housing's typical residents (Marcuse, 1995, 1986, 1982; Freedman, 1969; Friedman, 1973a and b; Bellush & Hauskneck, 1973; Radford, 1996). When the limits of post-war prosperity were reached in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and unemployment levels were at new highs, especially among

minorities in deindustrializing cities (Wilson, 1996) , public housing became the major reliable source of housing for a segment of the labor force no longer required by the local economy. The 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s were dominated by two important background points: 1) conservative governments marked by reluctance to support publicly funded housing and social programs, and 2) the abandonment of manufacturing bases especially in the older US cities, the effects of which were readily visible on the inner city communities in which the majority of public housing is located.

Starting in 1998 and continuing to the present time, public housing residents who are not employed were constituted as potential participants in the "Work Experience Program," commonly known as "workfare." With the passage of the 1998 Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act, Section 509 of this law began to require eight hours per month of community service of public housing residents. Public housing residents could also "opt" for participating in a self-sufficiency program[15] in lieu of community service. The elderly, disabled, employed, and others with prior state exemption certificates were considered exempt, but all others would have been required to participate and risked losing their leases if they were 'non-compliant.' Interpreting this measure as unduly punitive, public housing residents in New York City protested in great numbers. The Resident Alliance and its allies undertook a special campaign directed at NYCHA and HUD to resist the measure. While they were not able to overturn the measure entirely, they did succeed in gaining the support of NYCHA to broaden the categories of who would be exempt from the requirement. They also gained NYCHA as

[15] "Examples of qualifying economic self-sufficiency activities include: work placement, household budgeting, apprenticeship, any program necessary to prepare a participant for work (including substance abuse or mental health treatment programs), employment counseling, basic skills training, English proficiency, workfare, financial management." http://www.nyc.gov/html/nycha/pdf/po.pdf

an ally in the fight against the community service requirement since while the federal government mandated the requirement, insufficient resources had been granted to local authorities to implement the measure. NYCHA stood to lose its federal funding if it did not enforce the community service requirement and therefore had to comply to a certain degree, but, in an interesting and telling turn of events, NYCHA and the Resident Alliance ended up fighting the same fight to increase the types and number of residents who would be exempt.

It is important to keep in mind the long-running relationships between work and "public neighbors" (Vale, 2000), or, those whose material circumstances place them in a position to rely on the good (or not so good) will of the larger community/society. Vale, in particular, has pointed out the ways in which public neighbors have been painted as suspect and stigmatized for inability to provide for their own means of survival—especially housing—and have been forced, whether, as in the past, to work in almshouses or, as in the present time, to participate in "workfare" programs or mandated volunteer work in the form of the Community Service Requirement.

In light of such relationships between public housing and work, the focus of this research—activism and employment in public housing, particularly the Resident Alliance's activities to get Section 3 jobs for residents—is especially relevant because it sheds light on the nature of US society, how it is reproduced, and the roles that work and housing play. It also points to the shifting lines in the contestations over work between workers/potential workers and those who control access to work in relation to what can be thought of as a gradual dispossession of urban workers. The Resident Alliance's efforts towards further implementation of Section 3 suggest measures that can be taken

towards producing a space of public housing that is different from what currently exists. They are working to increase the number of people who have jobs, and who therefore bring money and other resources into the community. The Resident Alliance's efforts are met, however, by a number of obstacles generated by the contestations and contradictions surrounding public housing, as described above, as well as by contradictions of the Section 3 jobs program itself, which is detailed in the following section.

Section 3

Section 3 of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968 required of all federally funded public housing authorities (PHAs) that to "the greatest extent feasible, economic opportunities created by HUD funding for the operation, development and modernization of public housing be steered to low and very low-income people, especially public housing residents" (US Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1996). As with the creation of public housing, Section 3 was created in response to social unrest. The following is an excerpt from the introduction of the act in a 1968 report by the United States Congress Committee on Banking and Currency:

> A basic factor in the magnitude and urgency of our present housing problems has been the failure to include all parts of our population in the general rise in incomes and wealth. In fact this growth of prosperity has accentuated and may have even widened the gap between the poverty of the approximately 6 million families who still live in substandard housing and the affluent majority. Because of this contrast and the unrest it has created, the task of our housing and urban development programs is more critical than ever. (United States Congress, 90th Congress, 1968).

Nearly 40 years later, the challenge to "include all parts of our population in the general rise in wealth..." remains unmet. A report on the Section 3 program in the late 1990s commissioned by the Department of Housing and Urban Development stated the

following: "The public housing population has grown poorer and progressively more disadvantaged over the last 30 years, adding urgency" (p 2).

As mentioned above, Section 3 went almost unnoticed and certainly underutilized for more than 30 years. The mandates of Section 3 were strengthened in 1992 with amendments to the 1968 Act, and again in 2001 with the Housing and Employment Opportunities Reform Act (HR 2243 IH). After the 1992 Act was passed, HUD commissioned a report from the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation. The report, which was published in 1996, looked at the viability of Section 3 as a tool for creating jobs and promoting economic independence. It stated that the potential of Section 3 alone to provide adequate empowerment (employment) opportunities was not reliable since the awkwardly positioned initiative was confronted by an overwhelming set of obstacles including "the realities of the labor market, supply and demand imbalances, institutional and legal constraints, the small business environment, and the needs and capabilities of public housing residents" (US Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1996). The program has also suffered from lack of implementation and enforcement on the local level, and thus has not realized its potential.

MDRC also recommended that Section 3 implementation continue, but with the caveat that it should be part of an *array* of community building efforts. It offered a 3-pronged strategy consisting of 1) work incentives, 2) rent reform, and 3) use of best training and employment programs. According to the report, PHAs with the "highest level of formalized resident involvement" had the strongest Section 3 programs. The report states, "The challenge of moving large numbers of unemployed residents into jobs will require dramatic changes in the ways PHAs operate." It recommended large scale

collaboration with community partners, where community partners are understood to include: the welfare system; the employment and training system; the education system; the private sector; the local community; and civic organizations (p. 69). Collaboration of the depth and scale recommended by the report had the intended outcomes of "facilitating empowerment of residents, breaking isolation of public housing communities, forging partnerships with the private sector, and creating linkages with social service systems." The MDRC report clearly revealed the complexities of Section 3 and the significant organizational commitments that would be required to make it a reality.

However, despite the complicated nature of Section 3, the Resident Alliance has chosen it as one of their projects. The next section places the Section 3 aspect of the Alliance's overall strategy in the context of struggles over social reproduction or efforts by social movements to influence social reproduction. Like public housing itself, Section 3 was instituted because of social unrest and protest.

Section 3 in the Context of Government-sponsored Work Programs

Government sponsored work programs have been "central component[s] of US welfare policies since the early beginnings of the welfare state in the 1600s" (Rose, 1993). There are two basic types of work program, mandatory and voluntary. Mandatory work programs are intended to punish and stigmatize those who participate in them, while voluntary work programs compensate for market irregularities or advances (like automation). Mandatory work programs are more likely to be designed for participation by blacks and other racial minorities, while voluntary work programs are more likely to be designed with white participants involved. Government sponsored

work programs have also served to promote favored features of the dominant culture, namely work ethic and family ethic (Rose, 1993). Section 3 as a government-sponsored does not fit neatly into either of those categories, particularly in that it is a voluntary work program targeted mainly to racial minorities. This "mismatch" may partially explain the fact that Section 3 lay largely dormant for so many years.

Labor Union-Community Relationships

There is an ongoing resurgence, dating from at least the early 1990s, in the belief that there is a role for community-labor union relationships in grassroots political and economic development. This belief is being advanced by growing numbers of unionists, activists, scholars and researchers across the US (Bronfrenbrenner, 1998). Margaret Levi (2001), for example, has noted that the most prevalent union-community coalitions focus on living wage campaigns and minority and immigrant communities, on ensuring that large-scale development projects go to union contractors, and that jobs and other amenities (like housing) are provided when appropriate to the poor and to union membership, on fighting discriminatory welfare reforms, and on protecting the right to organize (Levi, 2001, p. 251).

Several factors motivate the resurgence in interest, attention and action in the arena of community-labor union relationships. Levi and others have identified two general factors, including common interest around issues, and/or overlapping membership.[16] Further, with a) union membership and influence having dwindled significantly since at least the 1970s, b) increasingly minority membership in unions, and

[16] In the case of the TRADES Campaign there is both mutual interest and overlapping membership driving the campaign on both the union and the public housing resident side.

c) community and community based organizations' need for decent training and employment opportunities, unions and poor and working class families have made progress in identifying their commonalities.

Union Decline and Reemergence

The causes for decline in membership and influence of unions in the US are generally regarded as being due to three basic factors: strict state-imposed limits placed upon labor unions and favoritism granted to business interests (Bronfrenbrenner, et al., 1998, p. 4; Freeman, 1985, p. 4; Gordon, 1999); narrowly-conceived self-interest on the part of labor unions themselves—including but not limited to racism and sexism—and subsequent failure to organize successfully (Bronfrenbrenner, 1998; Fine, 2001; Gordon, 1999) as well as changes in production technologies which were not always able to "accommodate" labor unions.

Bronfrenbrenner and her colleagues have pinpointed one of the most pivotal moments in labor's recent history, one that would set unions across the country on large-scale new organizing campaigns:

> Labor's declining political power became starkly evident when the much-heralded Dunlop Commission, established by President Bill Clinton in 1993, failed to recommend the kind of substantive labor law reforms necessary to guarantee workers and unions their rights to organize and bargain collectively with their employers. In the aftermath of the commission's recommendations, American labor leaders were faced with the grim reality that substantive labor law reform, no matter how badly it was needed or how well it was justified, could not be achieved without first significantly expanding labor's political power through massive new organizing of unorganized workers (Bronfrenbrenner, 1998, pp. 7-8). .

While new organizing campaigns have met significant challenges, their successes and very existence have, according to Sciacchitano (1998, p. 151) "created what one

organizer called a 'micro-climate' for organizing" in the cities on which they have focused.

The benefits of labor union-community relationships range from the role that unions generally play in reducing wage equality across the board (Bronfrenbrenner, pp. 6-7), to the potential that labor unions have to assist residents of poor communities to develop social and economic capital and improve conditions in poor communities (Levi, 2001). With the importance and potential of labor union-community relationships come inherent challenges. Among them are opportunism, free rider problems (per Levi, 2001), and uneven power dynamics between unions, with more resources and networks, and often-struggling communities. Labor union-community relationships are also hindered by the significant history of distrust between them, typified by the notorious racism and sexism in union hiring practices.

Her research on union-community relationships and social capital has led Levi (2001) to draw some of the following conclusions regarding the potential of labor union-community relationships and alliances. She puts forth that unions must provide "credible commitments that demonstrate their concern for the poor and their willingness and capacity to carry out promises" (p. 249). She and others (see Sciacchitano, 1998) also emphasize the importance of working to ensure that decisions about direction and strategy are made evenly by both unions and community. Conceptually, those who study labor union-community relations emphasize strengthening the connections between work and community life: "One of the oldest weapons employers use against union organizing is the idea that unions are separate entities from their members and the communities in which they live" (Sciacchitano, 1998, p. 150)

Tenant Activism and Social Movement Theory in Public Housing

While this research has not aimed to determine whether or not the Resident Alliance and the TRADES Campaign "qualify" as social movements, I have found it very useful to consider the subjects of my research in light of tenant movement history and social movement theory. Historically, tenant movements have been able to achieve major victories in the US under two different circumstances. The first has been during times such as the first half of the twentieth century, when there were a political movements supporting either a bona fide tenant movement or tenant-related issues, such as the Socialist & Communist parties; and labor unions; and or non-dominant groups such as blacks and women who identified as a group for the sake of solidarity (Marcuse, 1999). The second was when there were crises in the economic system, for example during the period of landlord abandonment in the 1970s and 1980s, which afforded opportunities for tenant activists to galvanize as a group with a particular set of interests (see Lawson & Naison, 1984). This has been true of New York City and of US cities in general.

Once public housing was secured and constructed, tenant activism around it more or less fell off the radar screens of scholars and has since received little academic attention. Public housing tenants as a group or constituency with "movement potential" seem to be "forgotten," or at least not included in the frame.[17] One exception to this, however, is Roberta Feldman and Susan Stall's The Dignity of Resistance, an account of the struggles of the residents of Wentworth Gardens, a public housing development in Chicago, to develop what the authors call "homeplace." It is possible that the paucity of

[17] Studies of resident activity have focused mostly on small scale anti-drug or anti-graffiti initiatives or on site specific economic development that take place within one or two housing projects (Marcuse, 1999; Keys, 1992; Breitbart & Pader, 1995).

attention paid to tenant activism, and especially public housing resident activism, is due to the fact that scholars most often focus on areas in which activity is taking place, as in the Lawson and Naison study (1984). There was very little "tenant movement" activity in public housing environments in the US, even though, in many cases, prevailing conditions warranted it. Over time public housing tenants to a large degree had become clientized, tenants were expected to pay their rent and follow regulations. They were not encouraged or expected to participate in the political or administrative aspects of their housing developments. While mandatory tenant associations were set up in every public housing development in New York City, it was intended by the Housing Authority that these groups focus almost exclusively on social and recreational activities. From the outset active political engagement on the part of tenant associations was only partially tolerated by NYCHA (Schwartz, 1986). More recently, in mid- and late-1990s New York, under the mayoralty of Rudolph Giuliani, the city enacted a measure that forbade public housing residents and elected officials to convene on New York City Housing Authority grounds without the written permission of Housing Authority officials.

Peter Dreier published an article in Shelterforce in 1995 describing and thinking through the significant victories and setbacks to tenants movements since the 1960s. While largely concerned with private market housing, Dreier's observations are valuable to a general consideration of tenant movements and do shed light on how organizing and advocacy, or lack of, in the private market was related to organizing and advocacy in public housing. He traces activities in the 1960s, including advocating for code enforcement and rent control, blocking evictions, rent strikes, and exposing arson-for-profit, to name a few areas of activity, "took on a larger meaning because they were seen

as stepping stones to more significant social, political, and economic change." He notes that while statewide tenant groups emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, "[e]fforts to form a national tenant organization were never fully realized," though national organizations, for instance the National Low Income Housing Coalition, were founded. Dreier identifies at least four factors related to the decline of tenant organizing in the private market. They included: foundations having shifted priorities toward community development and away from grassroots organizing; the conservative push to "defund the left"; better organized landlords; and the shift in the attention of organizers and advocated turned to crisis of homelessness.

Dreier's suggestions for the revitalization of tenant movement objectives include making housing a more explicitly political arena, one that he suggests should be "win or lose issues for candidates." Like others studying housing activism, Dreier suggests creating or strengthening ties to the labor movement.

Peter Marcuse's efforts to understand in broad historical context the nature of housing movements in the US (1999) led him to attempt an understanding of tenant movements as social movements—a frame that he claims his research does not support. Using definitions of social movements as put forth by Garner (see Marcuse, 1999 and Castells, 1983), which indicate structural change as a goal and or result of social movements, Marcuse asserts that tenant movements never "seriously demanded basic changes in the housing system" (p. 81). And, like other housing scholars (Drier, 1984; Lawson & Naison, 1984), Marcuse notes that tenant activity of the 20th century has been largely reactive or defensive. He advocates looking at "not so much the independent role of housing in [movement] histories, but at the linkages between housing and those

broader concerns that did in fact produce movements and movement." A question worth asking, then, is whether housing movements in the US do not achieve social movement status, especially in terms of not challenging the underlying structure of housing distribution in the US, because such movements have been disinclined to do so because of practical considerations or philosophical beliefs, or whether housing activists have been especially *prevented* from challenging the structure.

While constantly being put in a defensive position has historically undermined housing, let alone public housing, as a rallying point for progressive social movement, a more recent phenomenon can be identified in the *professionalization* of housing activists. Professionalization of housing activism takes the form of housing activists being required by the institutions governing housing distribution refusing to communicate with activists on any terms other than "professional" (including grant writing, record keeping, bureaucratic navigation, etc.). And while professionalization perhaps provides an antidote to clientization,[18] if required of tenant advocates and activists without appropriate assistance (for example providing tenant associations with introduction or access to grant writers if they are required to submit proposals in order to carry out community activities), such professionalization becomes a significant obstacle to achieving grassroots organizations' goals.[19]

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[18] This view of 'professionalization' as an antidote to clientization is a valid one. Saegert, Thompson and Warren (2001) argue that "social transformation capable of addressing the root causes of poverty requires a paradigm shift in public policy discourse from a view of poor people as the passive object of social policy to view them as equal participants and leaders in policy-making and implementation. A social capital building strategy then requires that public discourse about poverty be infused with new mechanisms that enable poor people to participate more fully in shaping their own destinies and the future of American society." (p. 23). What is troubling about the current phase of what *may* be such a shift, is it's the tokenistic and "bait and switch" manner in which "resident participation" is currently treated.

[19] One example of this situation came to light in August of 2003. Large amounts of money were made available for resident participation activities. Tenant Associations were supposed to write proposals for the money that would allow them to use it to support their work. The application was a complicated process,

There is an important connection between housing activism (as a non-social movement per Marcuse) and activism around Section 3, and their combined potential toward the social movement status that has been denied it by scholars like Peter Marcuse. Section 3, especially because of its relationship to unions and to work, could provide the needed traction or momentum on which a social movement could rely (Levi, 2001). A connection with unions and employment issues may have more potential to produce space and allow for the scale of particular activities to be broadened. This prospect would follow Marcuse as he advocates looking at "not so much the independent role of housing in [movement] histories, but at the linkages between housing and those broader concerns that did in fact produce movements and movement."

The insights put forth by Marshall Ganz, especially in his 2002 article, *Why David Sometimes Wins: Strategic Capacity in Social Movements*, have been of great value in my analysis of the Resident Alliance and TRADES Campaign. Both the Resident Alliance and the TRADES Campaigns are groups working against what often seemed insurmountable odds, yet they have been able to secure important victories. Drawing from literature in social psychology, organizational sciences, and business, Ganz points out that the victories of what he refers to as "insurgents" are somehow the result of

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with any activity over $5,000. requiring a formal bidding process. NYCHA held a small number of workshops on grant-writing to help to prepare TA leaders to request the money. The workshops, it was reported, were not very informative. Out of 346 developments under the jurisdiction of NYCHA, only five developments submitted proposals. I wrote two of the proposals for two individual developments (The James Weldon Johnson Houses and The Thomas Jefferson Houses) at the request of Ethel Velez, president of the Johnson Houses and Executive Director of the Resident Alliance. A group within NYCHA, remarking on the paucity of proposals, launched an investigation into the proposal process, alleging that it was unfair and not inclusive enough. The launching of the investigation, in turn, froze the money, which is not available to any tenant association until the investigation is complete. While there is validity to the allegations that the proposal process was not inclusive enough, the fact remains that now the resources are frozen and not in the communities being put to use. It is also not clear that the allegations were brought against the process on entirely forthright premises, and tenant leaders fear that the investigation is but another misappropriation of funds and attempt to starve out resident participation.

historical inevitability. Ganz suggests instead that the agency of actors is the significant factor, particularly in relation to the ways in and position from which the times are acted upon.

Ganz refers to such agency as "strategic leadership" and argues that its omission is a particularly serious shortcoming of social movement theory. For Ganz, strategies are the ways in which actors "translate their resources (political, economic, cultural, moral) into power—to get more bang for the buck" (p. 4-5), and the necessary strategic capacities include "motivation,[20] access to salient knowledge, and quality to heuristic processes employed in deliberations" (p. 7).

> It is often in the differences in how actors use their opportunities that social movement legacies are shaped. Opportunities occur at moments when actors resources acquire more value because of changes in the environmental context. Actors do not suddenly acquire more resources or devise a new strategy, but find that resources they already have give them more leverage in achieving their goals (Ganz, 2002, p. 5).

Ganz also points to the of institutionalizing the victories of grassroots groups in order to parlay their efforts into real changes, including the creation of formal organizations, collective bargaining agreements, or legislation, and thus reshaping their environments. While many social movement theorists liken social movement activities and strategies to games, Ganz characterizes them as more creative, like "the performance of a jazz ensemble" (p. 9) in which different capacities (related to both expertise and creativity) are required of each of the players.

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[20] In his discussion of motivation in grassroots social movement activity, Ganz puts forth the following: that for social movement leaders, motivation deriving from identity forming values or the "moral sources" that infuse one's life with meaning and one's work with meaningfulness are of particular importance. Work expressive of identity can be viewed as a "vocation" and work at one's vocation promises more motivational reward than work at a "job" (p. 10).

> People can generate the power to resolve grievances not only if those with power decide to use it on their behalf, but also if they can develop the capacity to outthink and outlast their opponents...As an "actor centered approach, analysis of strategic capacity suggests ways to design leadership teams and structure organizations that increase the chances of devising effective strategies to deal with the challenges of organizing, innovation and social change today (Ganz, 2002, p. 25).

Theoretical Perspectives

Social Reproduction

Applying social reproduction theory has helped to enhance my understanding of the formation and evolution of the Resident Alliance and the TRADES Campaign and the work that both groups have done to alter the usual patterns of social reproduction as it is experienced by public housing residents. Social reproduction theory is often applied to questions of how class status is reproduced unchanged through generations (Willis, 1977), the degree to which either structure or agency determine outcomes for individuals (MacLoyd, 1987), and the ways in which capitalism is able to reproduce the conditions for its survival. In the case of the Resident Alliance and the TRADES Campaign's activities to secure increased Section 3 job opportunities, however, social reproduction theory is following the lead of those like Katz (2001), who are looking at how the current era is witnessing new formats of disregard for the concerns of social reproduction.

Social reproduction is here understood to encompass biological reproduction, acquisition and distribution of the means of existence, labor force production, as well as the reproduction of cultural forms and practices that maintain a social formation at a particular level of development (Katz, 2001). Social reproduction theory encompasses both the physical and the sociocultural (Katz, 1991), as well as "the production of

common sense understandings" and a "potent spatiality" (Mitchell, Marston, Katz, 2004, p. 4). Unlike usual conceptualizations of human activity that separate spheres of activity (work, household labor, leisure, etc.[21]), social reproduction is a form of thought that by definition opposes binaries and separations. Jessop (1999) outlines four dimensions of the state's role in social reproduction as follows: securing of conditions for profitable private business (economic policy); reproducing labor power individually and collectively (social policy); deciding scales on which economic and social policies are performed; and compensating for market failures and inadequacies through various modes of governance.

Social reproduction is related to Section 3 jobs in that Section 3 was introduced as a way to provide skills and income to public housing residents, which would support both individuals and poor public housing communities. Access to the material means of social reproduction have been and are increasingly beyond the reach of the poor residents of inner city public housing. As Katz (2001) notes, "Disregard for the concerns of social reproduction is visible in the landscapes of neglect common in urban areas of both industrialized and underdeveloped countries." Inner city communities across the US experienced patterns of the relocation and hence disappearance of jobs. Once jobs and income were gone, people in such communities were no longer required as laborers. The combination of the lack of jobs, eroded tax bases because of the intense disinvestments of the 1970s, subsequent inability to support public institutions like education, and existing inclinations against government involvement in social welfare translated into the absence of sufficient power and will invested in those who had been disinvested of employment.

[21] Or, following Mitchell, Marston and Katz (year), who identify the binaries as "state and society, work and home, production and social reproduction..."

The discontinuation of many social welfare benefits starting in the mid-1990s, as has been discussed in the pages above, has contributed to the challenges that public housing residents face in ensuring social reproduction—including having enough to eat (biological reproduction) and having access to social and cultural institutions like adequate schools. The diagram below is a graphic depiction of the relationship between the concept of social reproduction and the Section 3 mandate. It is the intersection of the Section 3 as an intervention with the drop in interest and involvement on the part of the state in the US that is of particular interest for this part of the research.

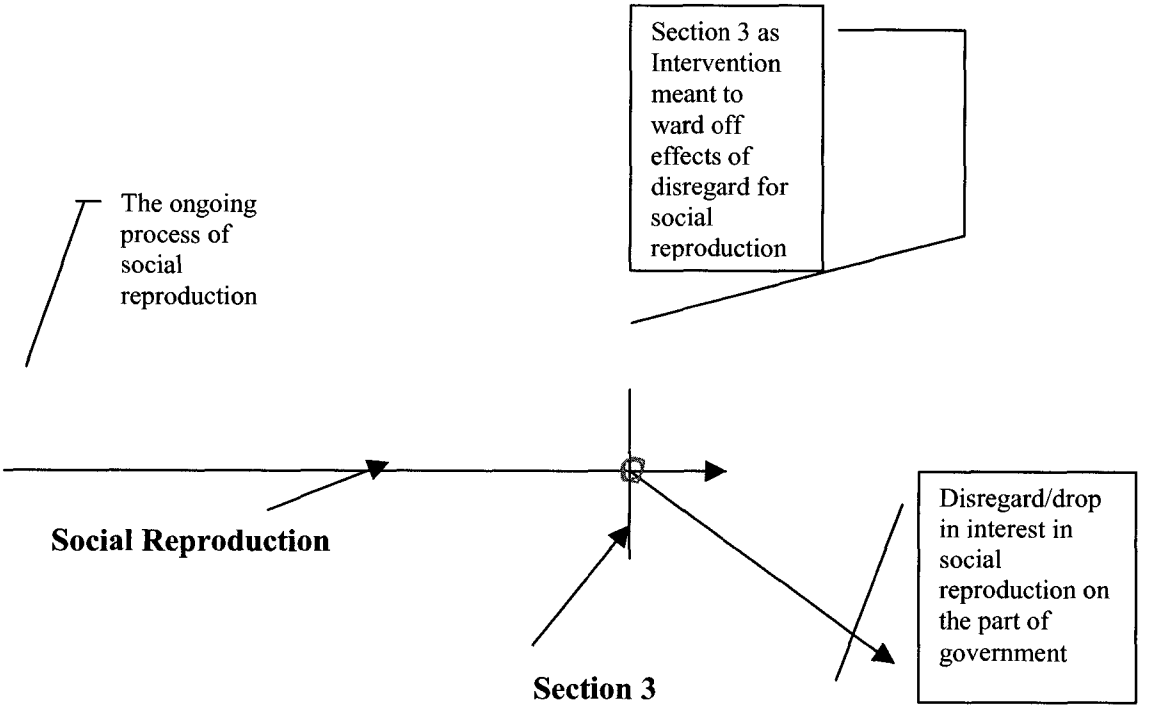

Figure 5: The Relationship Between the Resident Alliance's Section 3 Efforts and Social Reproduction

Section 3, and the Resident Alliance's efforts around it can be understood within this framework as efforts to ensure social reproduction during a period of substantial political and economic transformation. Biological, cultural and political economic reproduction, as subsets of social reproduction are vital to the endeavors of the Resident Alliance, with wages (jobs), knowledge (education, training and work experience), and political power the contested mediators determining the conditions in which everyday life is carried out. Changes in welfare and housing provision imply transformation of the social relations of production (Katz, 1991, p. 506). Such points of transformation are of particular interest since, if acted upon in appropriate ways, they have the "potential to alter the trajectory of socioeconomic change" (Katz, 1991, p. 509).

The concepts of *shift* and *transformation* are essential to understanding both social reproduction's relevance at the current time, as well as the relevance of the Resident Alliance and TRADES Campaign. Jessop (1999) pinpoints this shift as one from a Keynesian welfare national state to a Schumpeterian workfarist economy. Jessop outlines four trends in the restructuring of the Keynesian welfare national state: "shift from Keynesian aims and modes of intervention to Schumpeterian ones[22]; shift from a welfarist mode of reproduction of labor power to a workfarist mode; shift from primacy of national scale to post-national framework in which no scale is predominant; and shift from primacy of state in compensating for market failures to emphasis on networked, partnership based economic, political and social governance mechanisms (Jessop, 1999).

Two other important concepts relative to social reproduction in the current climate are "*hollowing out*" and "*erasure*." Jessop and others have noted the hollowing out of national states, in particular the welfarist elements of national states—where welfarist refers not only to entitlement programs, but also to other, more generalized forms of public welfare, including loosening of environmental standards, healthcare safeguards, and other social (versus economic) policy standards. Katz (1991) and others have noted the tendency for state policies and private practices to "erase" certain populations, their knowledges, and their means of production. At the same time, however, that there are attempts at erasure and general disregard for the welfare of poor people, there is a simultaneous "growing state management of surplus labor and a loss of autonomy in other realms that is often overwhelming" (Mitchell, Marston, Katz, 2004, p. 4). Such

[22] The Schumpeterian perspective "subordinates social policy to the demands of labor market flexibility and structural or systemic competitiveness. . . it is concerned to provide welfare services that benefit business and thereby demote individual needs to second place" (Jessop, 1999, p. 355).

contradictions are inherent to capitalist social formations, but become particularly apparent under neoliberalism.

The Role of Neoliberal Ideology in the Social Production and Reproduction of Public Housing Environments

As noted by Edward Soja "We must be insistently aware of how space can be made to hide consequences from us, how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology" (1989, p. 6). Neoliberalism is the ideology that is driving and legitimating social and spatial production and reproduction in the current era. As noted by Jessop (2000), we are at a "specific economic and political conjuncture dominated by neoliberalism." With its political economic and cultural (often highly moralistic) aspects, neoliberal ideology is particularly noticeable in the 'microcosm' of public housing since while social policies affect us all at varying levels according to social position, more socially and economically vulnerable groups of people feel social policies far more acutely than other groups.

Pierre Bourdieu (1998) has articulated in detail the elements characteristic of neoliberalism, with particular emphasis on the ways in which the neoliberal perspective asserts itself and has gained influence. One of the most prominent aspects is a fabricated separation between economic and social realities, making neoliberalism a desocialized and dehistoricized theory. Further, neoliberal ideology "throws into question all collective structures capable of obstructing the market" and involves a "methodical destruction of collectives; destruction of concept of collective responsibility" (Bourdieu,

1998, p. 6). Also featuring prominently in neoliberal thinking is the return to individualism. Again quoting Bourdieu,

> I'm thinking of what has been called the 'return of individualism,' a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy which tends to destroy the philosophical foundations of the welfare state and in particular the notion of collective responsibility (towards industrial accidents, sickness or poverty) which has been a fundamental achievement of social (and sociological) thought. The return to the individual is also what makes it possible to 'blame the victim', who is entirely responsible for his or her own misfortune, and to preach the gospel of self-help, all of this being justified by the endlessly repeated need to reduce costs for companies.

Bourdieu also points to the structural violence (p. 98): fear resulting from profound sense of insecurity and uncertainty (anxiety, demoralization, conformism), (p. 99) inherent in neoliberalism, blind faith in free trade, state withdrawal and decline in respect for public interest (p. 4), and explicit turns away from education and towards policing. Bourdieu also illuminates the existence of "social workers" "left hand of the state" [those who] "compensate for the most flagrant inadequacies of the logic of the market" and to the hegemonies of risk, overly abundant choice, the normalization of inevitable inequality (1998, p. 7). Mitchell, Marston and Katz note additional aspects of the neoliberal atmosphere, including the culture of constant work, or " permanently mobilized bodies" (Mitchell, Marston & Katz, 2004, p. 3) and

> The devolution of more and more 'choice' to a seemingly evermore autonomous individual who must rationally calculate the benefits and costs of all aspects of life, from health care (which diagnostics or treatment) to children (how many) to production (how to improve it/how to succeed at it/whether to conform to it/how to derive pleasure from it), is part of a much broader set of practices that tend to increase productivity and profits for the employer while reducing the responsibility of both the employer and the state in managing and sustaining the reproduction of labor power. (Mitchell, Marston & Katz, 2004, pp. 3-4).

Roots of Neoliberalism

A search of the recent Library of Congress listings contains many titles on the topic of neoliberalism. These appear largely in conjunction with words like suffering, struggle, crisis, injustice, pseudoscience, and displacement. While not widely referred to, the overwhelming influence of neoliberalism in the current era sent me in search of the roots of this body of thinking and policy implementation that seems to have little to no redeeming qualities from the perspective of my research topics. Friedrich von Hayek's The Road to Serfdom (1944) is considered to be the seminal text of neoliberal ideology. At the heart of the neoliberal program is a debate about freedom—whether human beings are served or oppressed by strong states. In von Hayek's view, the market is the closest to the real (versus state determined) needs of people being met. Von Hayek drew his examples from the totalitarian regimes of the National Socialist Germany, Soviet Union and Fascist Italy. The flaw of the neoliberal regime, however, is the failure of its proponents to account for the failures and inadequacies of the market system. While von Hayek's work promoting neoliberalism may have had a sincere intention, its cooptation by the interests of capitalist power brokers has led to its evolution into a legitimization, as above, for the disregard for the well-being of large and growing numbers of people.

Production and Reproduction of Neoliberal Ideology

One of the most important characteristics in the reproduction and dominance of neoliberalism is the way in which it is imposed[23] as if it were, inevitable, a priori and

[23] While some, particularly Mitchell, Marston and Katz (2004) maintain that the devolution associated with neoliberalism "is not imposed but rather becomes the accepted norm through time as it is infiltrated and articulated with other common-sense understandings in society," from the vantage point of resident activism in public housing, the ways in which such devolution *is* imposed (for example in the removal of

self-evident. In the sphere of neoliberal ideology, as Jessop points out, "Pollution and environmental destruction appear to be facts of nature rather than products of specific social relations" (Jessop, 2000, p. 5). While some take ideology to be a neutral term, one referring more to one particular conceptualization of the world and its workings as opposed to another, it is here understood to be a negative formulation, one consisting of a set of ideas put to use to rationalize and legitimize uneven power relations. Neil Smith's description of his own view of ideology is fitting in this instance:

> I take ideology to be an inverted, truncated distorted reflection of reality. Ideology is not simply a set of wrong ideas but a set of ideas rooted in practical experience, albeit the practical experience of a given social class which sees reality from its own perspective, and therefore only in part. Although in this way a practical reflection of reality, the class attempts to universalize its own perception of the world. (Smith, 1984, p. 15).

One of the most distinct dangers inherent in particular ideologies is the way in which it achieves domination to the detriment of alternative solutions that may contain far more potential for promoting or enhancing the well-being of human settings.

> ...strong limits are placed on the range of decisions possible in the system by the shared values and assumptions of its participants. Certain problems, or certain alternative means of solving them, are never discussed or debated by decision makers due to their shared assumption that these problems or solutions are not legitimate topics for political debate." (Hays, 1995, p. 3).

A similar observation is also made by Jessop:

> What goes unchallenged is the wisdom of the 'accumulated knowledge' that market forces provide the best means to satisfy human wants and desires and that, provided they are steered in the right direction through good governance, they can also solve the most pressing problems facing humankind in the new century. (Jessop, 2000 website)

Bourdieu's writing in Acts of Resistance provides further insight into the ideological aspects of neoliberalism and neoliberal discourse. Very much in the same way that it is

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welfare and medical benefits, as well as in the defunding of housing programs) is more evident that it may be in other, less state-managed areas of life.

an ideology based on separations, it also relies upon Manichean thought—reluctance to accept complexity and to prefer simple categories such as good and evil, productive and lazy, deserving and undeserving (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 22). While the reproduction of the capitalist system, and neoliberalism in particular, has long relied on the separation of the majority of people from the means of production, further division and separation via gender, race and colonial status (Mitchell, Marston and Katz, 2004) plays important roles in maintaining the uneven systems that characterize current social formations. As Mitchell and her colleagues note, "these [fabricated] differences were not just epiphenomenal to the reproduction of the capitalist system, but absolutely central to it" (p. 17).

Bourdieu and others (see Cruikshank, 1994 p. 33) have also noted the utilization of discourses of trust, cooperation and loyalty (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 98)—legitimate if backed by sound policies, practices and resources, but insidious given the socially irresponsible ways in which the neoliberal agenda is most often carried out—are key factors of most neoliberal enterprises. Bourdieu (1998), Krugman (2003) and Dreier (2004) have also noted the ways in which neoliberal agendas are carried out through character assassination, slander, and falsification. One striking example of the distortions that help in maintaining current neoliberal formations is included below:

> The cut in eligibility for seniors and the disabled was the most dramatic component of a stunning rollback of services in Mississippi's Medicaid program. The rollback was initiated by the Republican-controlled State Senate and Mississippi's new governor, Haley Barbour, a former chairman of the national Republican Party. When he signed the new law on May 26, Mr. Barbour complained about taxpayers having to "pay for free health care for people who can work and take care of themselves and just choose not to." . . . The governor is free to characterize the victims of the cuts as deadbeats if he wants to. Other have described them as patients suffering from diseases like cerebral palsy and Alzheimer's, and people incapacitated by diabetes or heart disease or various

> forms of paralysis, and individuals struggling with the agony of schizophrenia or other forms of serious mental illness (Herbert, 2004).

Examination of the Resident Alliance's activities to gain Section 3 jobs for residents from a perspective of social reproduction theory provides important vantage points on the differing logics of social reproduction and how, to varying degrees, everyday practice is able to influence the dominant structures that determine the conditions of social reproduction. As MacLeod put it, "in the process of social reproduction, what is the relationship between structural forces and cultural innovation?" (1987). And what is the relationship between cultural innovation, collective action and effecting broad change? For, as Saegert, Thompson and Warren have noted, "If we want to make headway in combating poverty, if we want people to 'get ahead,' survival is not enough" (2001).

Katz (1991), Lefebvre (1991), Shields (1999, p. 187) and others have made a point of focusing on shifts, transformations, and ruptures in the usual flows of daily life in order to discover counters to dominant uneven systems, particularly because, as Katz (1991, p. 509) notes, such points of rupture have "potential to alter the trajectory of socioeconomic change." The formation of both the Resident Alliance and the TRADES Campaign can be seen in light of such points of transformation. Both groups were formed to address and counter shifts in the socioeconomic policies and practices directed at public housing residents and other poor, mostly minority groups. Further, following the Mitchell, Marston and Katz's reference to Foucault's conceptualization of modern power as operating through "numerous micro-circuits and technologies of control" and being "primarily productive than repressive," (p. 17), it is important to take special consideration of those phenomena—like the Resident Alliance and the TRADES

Campaign—that are able to block or to re-route the micro-circuits and technologies of control.

In contemplating the potential for cultural innovations and alternatives to uneven capitalist and neoliberal formations, Mitchell, Marston and Katz (2004) also refer to Braudel, who, in their words, "conceives of the economy (both past and present) as a plural shifting and highly contextual set of processes, which are partly capitalistic and partly not, depending on time and place" (p. 18). Such conceptualizations make visible the points at which different actions, mobilizations and other such efforts can counter what often seems to be the overwhelming, unforgiving and rigid capitalist/neoliberal structures within which societies currently operate. At risk of stating the obvious, while it is essential to maintain hopeful conceptualizations that are explicitly cognizant of the fissures and ruptures with the potential for creating spaces that counter dominant uneven hegemonies, it is equally important to keep in view the significant challenges to such actions. In her 1991 article, "Sow What You Know," Cindi Katz notes how children in rural Sudan in the 1980s were "not being prepared for the world they are likely to face as adults." Similar concerns face public housing communities in New York City. Given the overcrowded and insufficient public education systems available to low-income families, young people growing up in public housing, too, are not being prepared for the world of work they face. The work of the Resident Alliance and TRADES Campaign work was a means to begin to counter these issues.

Mitchell, Marston and Katz (2004), along with Jessop (1999, p. 353) also draw attention to the contradictory "withdrawal" of the state in terms of provisions for well-

being (housing, health care, education, etc), while simultaneously increasing state presence in terms of surveillance and discipline:

> Indeed, the state is not disappearing but it is instead dramatically restructuring such that its juridical-legislative systems, bureaucratic apparatuses, economic entities, modes of governmentality, and war-making capacities continue to define, discipline, control, and regulate the residents of its territorial orbit (and those who wish to enter it) in most of the old as well as in startling new ways (cf Ong 1999) . . . the result is that globalization has increasingly drawn the modern state into a complex of supranational, regional and multilateral systems of governance. And as the nation-state has been drawn into these new activities, it has abandoned, reduced, or reconfigured many of its previous responsibilities for social reproduction, especially with respect to social welfare provision (Katz, 2001a) though it continues to exert great power through various disciplining strategies—witness US welfare reform strategies that encourage marriage, advocate abstinence, and coerce work in exchange for public assistance (Mitchell, Marston & Katz, 2004, p. 19).

Despite these configurations and their increasingly regulatory modes of reproduction, however, the agency of individual actors in their particular positions and with their potential to activate modes of interaction and construct structures that privilege people and not market supremacy must be raised up and replicated.

The Production of Space

The three pivotal concepts on which Lefebvre's *Production of Space* rests are a) representations of space, b) spatial practice, and c) spaces of representation.[24] It is the intersection of with representations of space and spatial practice that is most relevant to

[24] *Spatial practice* under capitalism is "dominated" space, it is the actual space where struggles over the production of space are carried out. This contention over the production of space emanates from the struggle between two other distinct spaces: representations of space and representational space. *Representations of space* is space created according to the logic of capital accumulation, it is "conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent—all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived . . . this is the dominant space in any society." (pp 38-39). Spaces of representation, on the other hand, are spaces created according to the logics of experiences grounded in everyday life, "space as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users' . . . This is the dominated . . . space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate." (p 39).

this research. The Resident Alliance's activities can be seen as the actualization of what Lefebvre termed "spaces of representation." The Alliance's activity voices the perspective and knowledge of residents and creates spaces that are derived from directly living, in, using and inhabiting public housing—the knowledge that comes from public housing being the *concrete reality* of its residents. Spatial practice, on the other hand, and representations of space, are the two types of space with which Resident Alliance work clashes. As Smith (2000) notes, it is the problem of exclusion of contextual factors (the knowledge that emerges from spaces of representation and lived experience) from the policy-making process to which attention must be drawn.

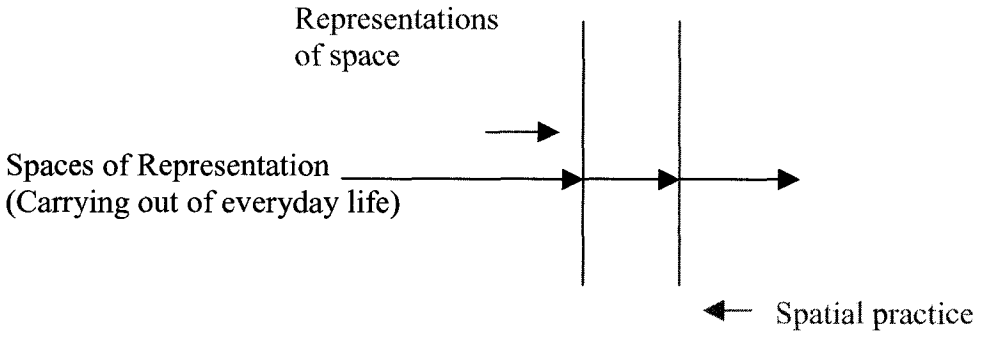


Figure 6: As individuals, households, and communities strive to carry out everyday life, they encounter obstacles presented by representations of space and spatial practice.

Concepts Essential to Understanding Production of Space Theory

Lefebvreian theory is the central analytical framework that has been used in the analysis of data and the conceptualization of my research findings. What follows, therefore, is a brief listing of the concepts essential to understanding production of space theory:

- Lefebvre's object of study is more concerned with the process of the production of space, rather than space itself (Shields, 1988, p. 5).
- Social space is a multiplicity of social spaces which interpenetrate (Shields, 1988, p. 6).
- The study of space offers direct consideration of the ways in which "social relations of production have a social existence to the extent that they have a spatial existence; they project themselves into a space, becoming inscribed there, and in the process producing that space itself" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 129).
- Space is not a container with bodies as "things in space." This is the origin of the strategy of separation and fragmentation of the body—a space in itself—from the space it is in (Shields, 1988, p. 9).
- Lefebvre's theory of space comes from a way of thinking about social change that is more akin to a revolution of the spirit, than a socialist revolution (Shields, 1999, p. 16).
- A political economy of space is possible which would reconsider the old object of political economy, broadening the notion of production to include that of the production of space (Shields, 1988, p. 6).
- Lefebvre encouraged interest in the problem of ideology and its role in the reproduction of culture and thus modes of production (Shields, 1988, p. 1).
- Because L. is referring to not only the empirical disposition of things in the landscape as "space," but also attitudes and habitual practices, his metaphoric "l'espace" might be better understood as the "spatialization" of social order . . . not just an achieved order in the built environment, or an ideology but an order which is itself always undergoing change from within, through the actions and innovations of social agents (Shields, 1988, p. 3).

What Lefebvre puts forth, overall, is a unitary theory of space, one with a comprehensive and holistic approach to everyday life as it is experienced in time and space. Production of space theory seeks to abolish that which maintains the separations of physical, mental and social spaces. As Rob Shields notes in Lefebvre, Love and Struggle: Spatial Dialectics,

> Lefebvre's was a humanistic Marxism whose key critical principle was Marx's concept of 'total man' found in the 1844 *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*. 'Total man' or the 'complete person' transcended the partial images of people as purely economic beings (for example, as described by Adam Smith) or as first and foremost spiritual beings (as described in Christian doctrine). In a typical phrasing, Lefebvre answers his own rhetorical question: 'What is the total man? Not physical, physiological, historical, economic or social exclusively or unilaterally; it is all of these and more, especially the sum of these elements of aspects; it is their unity, their totality. It is the implication of, and the call to, this 'total person' instead of only the rational actor that Lefebvre finds attractive (p. 49).

Following is further detail on the specifics of the representations of space and spaces of representation designations since they, too, feature prominently in the analysis. Representations of space are premised in relationships between certain aspects of urban spaces and the maintenance of capitalism/uneven power relations. Lefebvre's formulation of the representations of space concept can be seen as a "critique of the urban milieu in terms of its repression of the ludic, the lived, qualitative experience of space and in favor of rationality and productivity," (Shields, 1988, p. 1) "abstract and dehumanized codes of urban planning and the homogenization of experience under capitalism" (Shields, 1988, p. 5). Spaces of representation, directly juxtaposed to representations of space, on the other hand:

> . . . suggest and prompt alternative, revolutionary, restructurings of institutionalized representations of space and new modes of spatial praxis (Lefebvre suggested squatting . . . the tradition of "occupying" key spatial sites and buildings as a means of protest; slums, barrios and favellas as a "re-appropriation" of space from a commodified private property system . . .)" (Shields, 1988, p. 5).

Production of Space Theory and US Housing Policy

Janet Smith, among others, has pointed out that US housing policy is a "space producing activity," but one that "excludes key historical and contextual factors which local government and Public Housing Authorities will need to take on if public housing is

to be effectively transformed" (Smith, 2000). Both McCann (1999) and Gottdeiner (2000) have also pointed to the need for informing Lefebvrian theory with the racialized urban context of the US. Examination of the Resident Alliance's Section 3 work provides a timely and specific opportunity to respond to this call. The landscapes and struggles created in tandem with everyday life and social reproduction are the particular concern of theories of the production of space.

Little work has been done to ground or empiricize Lefebvre's concepts. While some, including Janet Smith and Eugene McCann point to its relevance to particular phenomenon and call for further work on certain topics, such as housing production and race, that work is descriptive, theoretical and suggestive. This research on the Resident Alliance and Section 3, however, fleshes out how the work of the Resident Alliance *compares* to the conceptual triad, and suggests what differences, subtleties and nuances can be identified in order to further ground and refine the concepts. Lefebvre's theory has helped me to emphasize throughout the research the complex interplay of structures and agencies that must be taken into account if a true picture of the Resident Alliance and its efforts to produce new and alternative spaces of public housing is to be painted.

> For Lefebvre, the development of a society of 'total human beings' is not the result of an inevitable historical progression, nor of economic structures, but requires continuous effort to demystify social relations (1939b [1968]: 164). There are therefore no guarantees. This places an enormous pressure on existential choices and the need for responsible exercise of agency (Shields, 1999, p. 111).

Production of Scale

I have found the concept of scale to be useful in understanding the contexts and dynamics surrounding the Resident Alliance's Section 3 work because of the breadth of

domains to which public housing, tenant activity and employment issues are related. Lefebvre also consistently emphasized "the nested quality of spatialization from micro to macro-level" (Shields, 2002, p. 42). Shields (1999) also notes that "[a]t the scale of the global, Lefebvre was one of the first to argue the necessity of a 'planetary' scale of analysis. In the Production of Space he proposed a grounding for this analysis that tied all scales of place, region, nation and globe into a broadened concept of social production (p. 144). Scale is a "language of spatial differentiation" that refers to the distinctions between the body, the household, community, the urban, the region, the national and the global (Smith, 1992). It is "the produced societal metric that differentiates space..." (Marston & Smith, 2001). Socially constructed scale also signals the different manifestations of power relations. Marston has applied the concept of scale to 19th and 20th century women's movements and the household. Smith has applied the concept of scale to, among other issues, homelessness (1992), uneven development (2000) and a politics of difference (1992).

> In a literal as much as metaphorical way, scale both contains social activity, and at the same time provides an already partitioned geography within which social activity *takes place*. Scale demarcates the sites of social contest, the object as well as the resolution of contest . . . It is geographical scale that defines the boundaries and bounds the identities around which control is exerted and contested (Smith, 1992).

Both the conceptual and descriptive aspects of scale provide a framework that allows for more facile navigation of the complex and intertwined dynamics inherent both to public housing and to political activity on the part of public housing residents. While public housing is most often thought of as being on the community or urban scale, the situations affecting it are produced at national and global scales. The scales of everyday life in public housing in New York City range from that of the households in public

housing, the work of tenant associations and the Resident Alliance, the policies and practices of NYCHA, the private practices of hiring, etc., state and federal policies and practices, and the governing ideologies/hegemonies of the dominant political economy. By definition, the Resident Alliance challenges existing bounds of scale. Had they not united into an Alliance, singular tenant associations would still be working in relative isolation of at the scale of the individual housing project. In the act of uniting tenant associations within New York City, the Resident Alliance by definition changed their position in the scaling 'process.' To borrow from Neil Smith' s term, the Resident Alliance has 'jumped scales' both in its formation and its organizing efforts; in the process altering the political frameworks of individual housing developments and their tenant associations, and the city's policies and means of response through organizations such as NYCHA.

Class, Gender and Structural Racism

Another central concept of geographic scale is that of the 'scalar fix,' which is also relevant to understanding the Resident Alliance and its Section 3 work in that the Alliance's Section 3 work is an attempt to assist public housing residents in overcoming the constraints placed on them by discriminatory education and employment systems. A scalar fix is the imposition of scale, a socially constructed 'boundary,' which can be physical, social or psychological, that plays the role of *bounding* people and/or places (Brenner, 1998). The most influential scalar fixes on the environments of public housing are class, race and gender (Bailey, et. al., 1996). Public housing developments in New

York City are characterized by a majority female headed, minority, low-income households.

Due to the power configurations that have, over time, developed the distinctions of class, race and gender, each of these categories tend to burden or constrain the individuals who find themselves so classified. Race, class and gender constrain well-being and potential, isolating individuals from opportunities that exist beyond the household and the community, leaving them without the financial, social or cultural resources that provide entrée, freedom of movement and participation in the arenas where control over power and resources is negotiated. Women, for example, continue to experience phenomena such as unequal pay for equal work. The responsibilities of childrearing also fall largely on the shoulders of women. Women are also more likely to fall into poverty and/or homelessness when household partnerships disintegrate. When compounded with 'membership' in a minority racial group, the odds of a person being confronted with material hardship are further increased.

Public Housing and Gender

Public housing is one of the most interesting and complicated locations in the US to look at through the lens of gender. As members of poor communities of color, public housing residents—both men and women—face particular sets of gendered circumstances that vary considerably from the circumstances and opportunities faced by those who are white and/or have higher class status. In public housing, both women and men face particular types of negative stereotyping. Women in public housing are negatively portrayed as being too dependent on welfare and as having too many children.

Men are portrayed as criminals and thugs. The actual situation, however, is symptomatic of structural and historically accumulated realities: women's labor tends to be devalued and exploited, while men's labor is either greatly devalued or excluded.

Women and girls face state policies and practices that attempt to discipline their bodies and habits, and men and boys face policies and practices that attempt to erase their presence, while simultaneously blaming them for not meeting their responsibilities. Further, public housing admission policies have, at specific points, favored female-headed households as having greater need. Such policies, perhaps unintentionally, resulted in families hiding the presences of fathers and men in general (Bailey, et al, 1996) in order to gain access to much-needed housing—a perfect example of the paternalistic need interpretation (Fraser, 1989) to which low-income women (and families) are regularly subject.

Exclusion of minority males from the labor force through racist hiring practices and legacies of unequal educational opportunities results in the increased likelihood of their participation in illegal economies, particularly sale of illegal drugs—a vicious circle that often places them in prison, exacerbating their absence from households and communities. In 2004 the Community Service Society of New York reported that "in 2003 barely one-half (51.8%) of New York's Black men were employed" (Levitan, 2004). The absences of males from public housing communities means that women end up shouldering even more of their fair share of the burdens of social reproduction. Women also struggle to keep their sons, brothers and male relatives from harm's way. Gangs and drug-selling are common and dangerous features of public housing communities. In addition, police presence and surveillance does not necessarily target

only those who are involved in criminal activity and being at the wrong place at the wrong time can have devastating consequences, particularly for young men.

While many women may hesitate to recognize the ways in which gender oppression affects their lives, the particular situations of men and women public housing—where the oppression faced by men is often more drastic and devastating than that faced by women—means that women's issues often receive short shrift. Resident leaders in public housing, the majority of whom are women, are not explicitly "feminist," but are concerned with nurturing their communities in ways similar to the ways in which they as mothers nurtured their households (Leavitt and Saegert, 1990). The Resident Alliance's efforts toward broader implementation of Section 3, in fact, have been efforts to supplement the social reproduction and provide increased opportunities to public housing residents. The fact that these jobs are in the construction trades—far more likely to be occupied by men than women—is but one example of the ways in which gender in public housing operates: women leaders, recognizing the dire straits faced by the men in their communities, have worked to secure employment for men. What this means for public housing residents who are women is not clear, but the example does illustrate the complexities of gendered configurations in public housing and in other similarly situated low-income, minority communities.

Structural Racism

Salience of Relationship Between Race and Public Housing: Why look at race?

It is not possible to understand public housing or resident efforts to implement an employment program like Section 3 without considering the historical contexts of racism

in the US. The public housing constituency in New York City is decidedly minority (96.9 percent). Race and public housing have a longstanding 'engagement.' Public housing was racially segregated when the program was created, and while some projects were desegregated between 1937 and the 1960s, it was not until 1968, with the passage of the Fair Housing Act (FHA) that housing segregation was outlawed. Even with the passage of the law, however, public housing remained largely segregated, with black and white projects the norm, until eventually very few white families (only 3 percent) resided in public housing at all. Neither production of space theory, nor production of scale theory, however, address race, though each of the theoretical frameworks would be greatly enhanced by incorporating analyses of racial dynamics. In order to compensate for the omission on the part of both theoretical frameworks, I have, therefore, included a framework for analyzing the elements of structural racism that are active ingredients in the production of public housing communities in New York City.

A structural racism analysis, however, is relevant well beyond public housing communities. Communities of color across the US continue to be defined by poverty, unemployment and early mortality rates. According to the 2000 Census, a person of color is nearly three times more likely to be poor than a white person (Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change, 2004). As Taylor & Cole (2001) have noted, "despite efforts to transform black neighborhoods and improve the quality of life in them, they remain impervious to the forces of change . . . In this distressed inner city setting, institutionalized socioeconomic problems were not only self-perpetuating, but also they spawned other socioeconomic problems and reproduce distress from one generation to another" (pp. 2-3). Bonilla-Silva (1996) has made similar observations, contending that

"after a society becomes racialized, racialization develops a life of its own. Race, as most analysts suggest, is a social construct, but that construct, like class and gender, has independent effects in social life that alters profoundly the material reality" (p. 475).

> Structural racism lens highlights: chronic racial disparities, not just race relations; specific power arrangements that perpetuate chronic racial disparities, especially as they exist in public policies and institutional practices; general cultural assumptions values, ideologies, and stereotypes that allow disparities to go unchallenged; the dynamics of progress and retrenchment, which highlight how gains on some issues can be undermined by forces operating in other spheres or by oppositional actors; political, macroeconomic, regional, and other contextual factors that have enormous influences on outcomes for children, families and communities. (p. 42).

As a researcher with the Aspen Roundtable on Community Change, I have had a close relationship to the development of the structural racism analysis. The Roundtable on Community Change is a forum in which people engaged in the work of inner-city community revitalization, including foundation sponsors, directors, technical assistance providers, evaluators, researchers, and public sector officials, meet to discuss the lessons that are being learned by initiatives across the country and to work on common problems they are facing. In 1998 the Roundtable staff was commissioned with the task of articulating a theory of the relationship between race and inner-city poverty. Its advisors, leaders in the community-revitalization field from foundations and universities, hoped to come to a better understanding of the long-running but poorly understood dynamics of race and poverty, particularly in urban areas. The Roundtable brought together scholars, practitioners and funders. As Taylor and Cole (2001) noted,

> The community revitalization movement ha[d] not considered structural racism and social class inequality in its conceptualization of the problem of inner city distress or in its formulation of strategies to revitalize inner city neighborhoods. The problem is that structural racism and social class inequality matter and that racialized ideas shape policies and practices that reinforce color lines and perpetuate the urban crisis. Consequently, as long as community revitalization

> fails formally to identify, attack, and dismantle structural barriers to inner city development, this movement's contributions and successes will not be sustained over time (pp. 1-2).

My own role on the Project on Structural Racism and Community Revitalization, as it was called, was as a researcher and developer of what we would eventually call the "structural racism analytical framework," and an author on the project's "manifesto," Structural Racism and Community Building. The development of the concept has been well received by the field of community revitalization and community building. The project is funded by a number of foundations (including the Ford Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Kellogg Foundation, and the Mott Foundation).

Defining Structural Racism

Scholars began using the term structural racism in the late 1980s and early 1990s. West (1993), Dyson (1993), Riggs (1992) and Bonilla-Silva (1996) used the term to refer to "the ways in which racism is so deeply encoded in American society's structure as to seem natural" (Birmingham, 1999). Having recognized a) that the civil rights paradigm has reached many of its limits in the changing atmosphere of US society, and b) that individual acts of discrimination have been replaced by structural impediments to the individual and community well-being of people of color, a structural racism analysis aims to articulate and dismantle:

> ...the many factors that work to produce and maintain racial equities in the US today. It identifies aspects of history and culture that have allowed the privileges associated with "whiteness" and the disadvantages associated with "color" to endure and adapt over time. It also points to ways in which public policies and institutional practices produce inequitable racial outcomes. A structural racism lens highlights chronic racial disparities, power arrangements that perpetuate chronic disparities, general cultural assumptions and stereotypes that allow disparities to go unchallenged, the process of 'progress and retrenchment,' which

> describes how racial equity gains on some issues can be undermined by forces operating in other spheres or by oppositional actors, as well as political, regional and other contextual factors. (Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change, 2004).

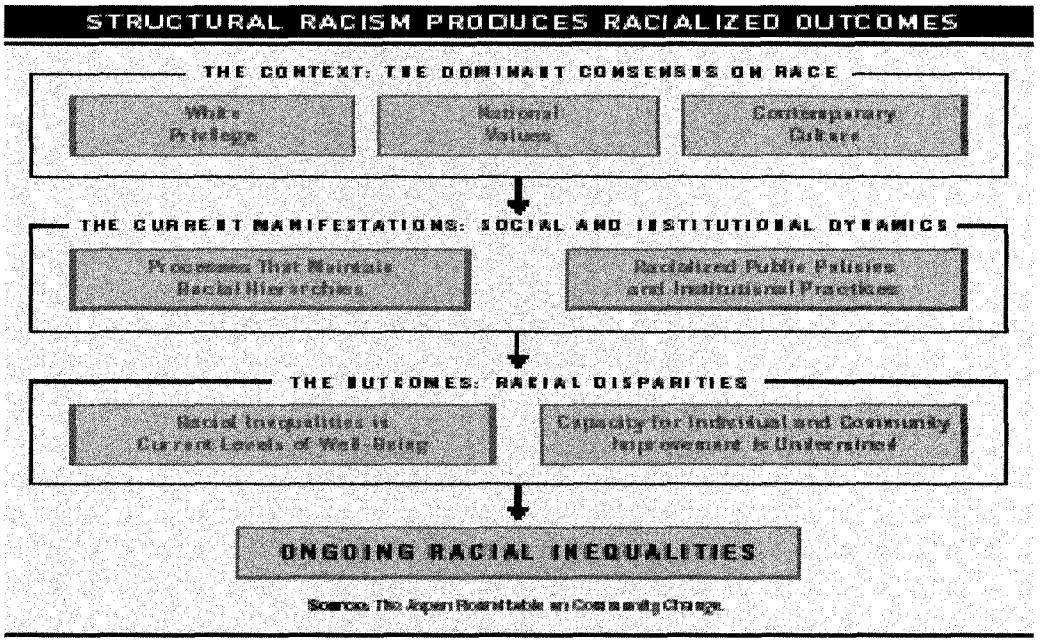
A decade after the term's inception, scholars like john powell (sic) (forthcoming), Manning Marable (forthcoming & 2002), Keith Lawrence (2001), and Lani Guinier and Gerald Torres (2002) continue to build conceptually upon the term as well as move it into practice through their work in the fields of legal studies, regionalism advocacy, history, African American Studies and political science. Those studying areas of social life to which race is particularly salient believe that a structural racism analysis is vital to, as Bonilla-Silva put forth, a rigorous conceptual framework that allows analysts to study the operation of racially stratified societies. Bonilla-Silva also points out the ways in other analyses of race based on individual or institutional levels are not enough:

> In contrast to race relations in the Jim Crow period, however, racial practices that reproduce racial inequality in contemporary America (1) are increasingly covert, (2) are embedded in normal operations of institutions (3) avoid direct racial terminology, and (4) are invisible to most whites . . . The unchanging element throughout these stages is that Blacks life chances are significantly lower than those of whites, and ultimately a racialized social order is distinguished by this difference in life chances. Generally, the more dissimilar the races' life chances, the more racialized the social system, and vice versa (p. 476).

Another illustrative example is put forth by Taylor and Cole (2001):

> A characteristic feature of structural racism and inequality is its ability to hide, camouflage, disguise, and conceal its true nature, which causes it to be an insidious force. Invisibility and illusiveness are its main idiomorphic mannerisms. For example, gentrification appears to be a problem that frustrates efforts to rebuild low-income neighborhoods. In reality, however, it is the operation of the urban land rent systems that drives out low-income groups when higher income residents move into a neighborhood. These structural elements are considered *racist* because of the disproportionately negative affect they have on people of color and because they produce a belief system that normalizes and legitimizes the racially based social class hierarchy that perpetually produces race and social class inequality in the United States (p. 5).

Focusing on structural racism, instead of classism or sexism, might be interpreted by some as privileging race as more important than class or gender. This is not my position, nor is it the position of those who have done the most work in theorizing and researching the dynamics of structural racism. Like the most prominent theorists of structural racism, I have focused on race more than on class or gender, however, because it is so salient to the topics at hand: public housing, employment, and "welfare" reform legislation, and because of the lack of systematic attention to the role of race in the production of public housing, in the configuration of employment opportunities, and in the reproduction of the cultural stereotypes that fueled the discriminatory legislation of the 1990s. As Eduardo Bonilla-Silva notes, "Historically the racialization of social systems did not imply the exclusion of other forms of oppression. In fact, racialization occurred in social formations also structured by class and gender (1996). Further, the structural racism lens provides a view on the role of history in the creation and maintenance of racialized outcomes, the ways in which racism persists in national policies, institutional practices and cultural representations, the amplification or mitigation of racism through public, private and community institutions, as well as the ways in which individuals internalize and respond to racialized structures (Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change, 2004, p. 12). The following table illustrates the general dynamics that produce and reproduce structural racism in the US.



Another concept that is key to the structural racism analysis is that of white privilege, or the historical and contemporary advantage in opportunity areas (education, employment, housing, health care, political representation, media influence) that is disproportionally enjoyed by whites in the US (McIntosh, 1989; Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change, 2004). Such advantages can be seen in accumulated wealth (Conley, 1999, p. 27), homeownership rates (Joint Center for Housing Studies, 2003, p. 16), loan acceptance or denial rates (Federal Financial Institutions Examinations Council), and other areas. The structural racism analysis also identifies the core American values that provide the context for the ways in which race is lived in America. These values include:

> Personal responsibility and individualism: the belief that people control their fates regardless of social position, and that individual behaviors and choices determine material outcomes; meritocracy: the belief that resources and opportunities are distributed according to individual talent and effort, and that social factors—such as access to inside information or powerful social networks—do not play a

> significant role; and equal opportunity: the belief that arenas such as employment, education, and wealth accumulation are "level playing fields" and that race is no longer a barrier to progress in these areas (Aspen Institute on Community Change, 2004, p. 18).

Further, the structural racism analysis identifies the roles that contemporary culture plays in framing, or representing people of color and perpetuating racism, including stereotyping of blacks as preferring to live on welfare and being inherently violence-prone (General Social Survey Cumulative Data File, 1990). As Stuart Hall (1998) notes, "The frames that we rely on are embedded deep in our psyche such that understandings are involuntary. Therefore, to interpret individual actions or images differently, or outside of dominant frames, requires significant work in recoding."

The progress and retrenchment dynamic also plays a role in the maintenance of structural racism. Progress and retrenchment refers to the dynamic and shifting nature of racism:

> . . . as progress is made toward racial equity on a particular policy front, a backlash may develop on another front that could undo or undermine any gains. Or, powerful interests may more to preserve the racial order in other ways. The net effect tends to be a repositioning of the color liner rather than its erasure. The clearest examples of retrenchment have been in the consistent challenges to affirmative action, but there are many more subtle and less direct ways in which equity gains can be counteracted. For example, the Fair Housing Act of 1964 guaranteed equal access to housing for all, but people of color continued to be quietly excluded from high-quality suburban housing by discriminatory lending practices, zoning regulations . . . and public underinvestment in mass transportation between cities and suburbs (Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change, 2004, p. 25).

The structural racism analysis pinpoints the policies, practices and representations that perpetuate disparate outcomes for people of color. Public policies for funding public education, for example, are inherently uneven. Funding education through property taxes results in highly inequitable funding streams for wealthier versus poorer communities.

An examination of school funding in the New York City area shows that white students in suburban communities receive twice as much funding per capita than do their predominantly black and Latino counterparts closer to the urban core (Aspen Institute on Community Change, 2004; New York State, Statistical Profiles of School Districts, June 2002). Examples of discriminatory practices can easily be found in the employment sector. Job applicants are more likely to be called for interviews if their names sound "white" (Carrie, Laurie, etc.) as opposed to those names that sound "black" (Ebony, Latoya, etc.) (Krueger, 2002).

The Reproduction of Structural Racism and Implications for its Dismantling

The ways in which structural racism is produced are deep and long-running. Taylor and Cole (2001) put forth the traditional race-based theory of neighborhood change that was so prominent in urban America in the 20th Century:

> The theory purports that the in-migration of minorities, especially those with low-incomes, triggers a community's downward trajectory. Once this happens the possibility of reversing the process of decline is almost nonexistent. The central theme in this theory is that a linear relationship exists between the in-migration of blacks into a neighborhood and its incipient decline. This way of thinking about neighborhoods became embedded in American life and culture and influence the decisions of mortgage bankers, urban policymakers, and potential homeowners even when they had no conscious knowledge of the theory (p. 9) . . . The point is once neighborhood life-cycle theory was developed, it took on a life of its own, influencing the behavior of policymakers, bankers, and homebuyers. It became a motive force driving the development of urban areas (Taylor and Cole, 2001, p. 11)

The structural racism analysis implies that sites of distinct racialized disparities, of which public housing in New York City surely is one, be addressed in specific ways, namely, it is recommended that those interested in identifying elements of structural racism and working towards their dismantling make racial equity a central goal of their

research and/or work; that the crucial public policies, institutional practices, and cultural representations that keep structuralized disparities be identified, and that alliances are developed with those sectors and/or entities that have power to change them (Aspen Roundtable on Community Change, 2004). As Taylor and Cole (2001) note: "Without attacking structural barriers, the community revitalization movement cannot uproot the causes of inner city distress . . . unless these structural barriers are identified, attacked and removed, inner city distress will persist, becoming increasingly complex and difficult to solve with the passage of time" (p. 4).

Relevance of the Structural Racism Framework to the Resident Alliance and its Involvement with the TRADES Campaign

Both the configuration of public housing, historically and currently, and the activities of the Resident Alliance provide an excellent opportunity for examining the workings of structural racism analytically. A structural racism analysis works to understand how race is imposed, or how race works as a 'scalar fix.' Housing and employment, which my project identifies as the two priorities of the Resident Alliance's work, are perhaps the two key arenas in which structural racial dynamics are in evidence. As powell, Pastor, Omi (2003, forthcoming) note, "While conceptually distinct, racial ideologies and belief systems are mutually determined in concert with the institutional organization of the labor market, the allocation of housing, and the extension of political rights among other social arrangements." Unfortunately, even though decision-making and resource allocation for public housing continues to be peppered with *discourses* of equal opportunity, meritocracy, they are, as powell, Pastor and Omi note, undermined by racist practices.

While the phenomenon and concept of structural racism remains mostly descriptive and analytical, this research on the Resident Alliance's everyday operations, activities, and influence provides an excellent opportunity to examine the root causes of current relationships between race and public housing. While this exercise will rely on the existing descriptive and analytical work that has been done on structural racism, it will be able to provide empirical detail on the ways in which the components of structural racism are and have been at work in molding the environment in which the Resident Alliance works, as well as the ways in which the Alliance and its partner organizations are working to dismantle not only its effects, but some of the structures that maintain the status quo of structural racism. Because housing and employment are two of the key arenas in which structural racism is most prevalent, this research on a public housing-based organization's work to gain further employment opportunities for residents is particularly salient. This research will be able to contribute further a) to describing instances and b) to deepening the descriptive power of the analysis by identifying particular power arrangements, cultural aspects, and policies and practices that produce racially inequitable outcomes. It will also do some of the work of articulating the relationships between the other theoretical concepts at use in the research and structural racism framework, with the aim of enriching each of the frameworks. The research also has the goal of being able to discern some lessons from the Resident Alliance's work to further implement Section 3 about the most powerful and productive *actions* that might be taken in undoing the status quo of structural racism.

Chapter 3

The Formation of the New York City Public Housing Resident Alliance

"These people need to get out of bed in the morning and brush their teeth and do something..."

-Sue Kelly, Republican Congresswoman from Westchester, New York. Said during a meeting in 2003 at the Congresswoman's Westchester headquarters with public housing residents about the Community Service Requirement provision of the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998.

"It was those forces of evil against us...That's what brought everyone together."

-Interview with Judith Goldiner (Legal Aid Society of New York)

Chapter Overview

Chapter 3 is an account of the formation of the Resident Alliance. It describes the circumstances that caused it to form, the different actors that came together, as well as the needs that the organization fulfilled. The most immediate cause of the Alliance's formation was the public housing reform measures that were introduced in the mid-1990s. Those measures, as well as the Alliance's responses to them, are described. The local New York City context in which the Alliance was operating is also detailed, as is the evolution of the group and the roles that were played by the public housing residents and the housing advocates who comprise the Resident Alliance. The chapter also includes a summary of the Resident Alliance's accomplishments, the challenges that it faced, and a discussion of the role that crisis has played in its formation and ongoing activity.

Needs Addressed by the Formation of the New York City Public Housing Resident Alliance: Public Housing Reform Legislation, Misrepresentation of Public Housing Residents, and Token Resident Representation at the New York City Level

The first of the quotes that opens this chapter is from Republican Congresswoman, Sue Kelly. The second is from Judith Goldiner, one of the two main attorneys from the Legal Aid Society of New York who has worked most closely with the Resident Alliance. I chose to open the chapter with these quotes because they represent two ends of the spectrum of decision-making surrounding public housing not only in New York, but in the US more generally. On one end is Sue Kelly, the current vice-chair of the US Congressional Financial Services Subcommittee.[25] She became a key supporter of public housing reform legislation in the late 1990s. Her comment was made during a meeting with public housing resident leaders, advocates, and union allies concerning the Community Service Requirement of the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998. The Community Service Requirement mandated that residents of public housing perform a certain number of hours[26] of community service or be evicted from public housing. Charles Rangel, Congressional Representative from Harlem, had been able to postpone the implementation of the Community Service Requirement for two years, but in January of 2003 the policy began implementation.

The Community Service Requirement was objectionable to residents and advocates on a number of fronts. It singled out public housing residents. No other

[25] The House Committee on Financial Services is a Congressional subcommittee with sixty-nine members. The Committee oversees banks and banking; economic stabilization, defense production, renegotiation, and control of the price of commodities, rents and services; financial aid to commerce and industry; insurance; international finance; international financial and monetary organizations; money and credit, including currency and the issuance of notes and redemption thereof; gold and silver, including the coinage thereof; valuation and revaluation of the dollar; public and private housing; securities and exchanges; and urban development. (http://financialservices.house.gov/About.asp?section=16)

[26] The number of hours required is determined by the local housing authority.

recipients of federal housing subsidies (such as Section 8, Mitchell-Lama, or recipients of mortgage subsidies, for example) were obligated to perform community service in addition to paying rent. It assumed that public housing residents were not already involved in their communities and implied that they owed the state something besides rent for the right to housing. The requirement was disrespectful of the existing social organization and ongoing "community service" that are already a part of life within public housing. Requiring community service is usually reserved for those who have committed a crime, and thus the community service requirement criminalized the very fact of being a public housing resident. In another vein, Housing Authorities did not receive additional funding to administer the Community Service Requirement, yet risked loss of federal funding if they did not fully comply. When the measure was introduced there was not an implementation plan or monitoring system, yet households risked eviction if even a single household member did not comply. And, finally, requiring residents to perform community service on top of paying rent is akin to extracting free or forced labor. If, in a two-parent home, the father works but the mother does not—in one case, for instance, the mother stayed at home to care for the children and the father worked—the mother is required to perform community service, though there is no provision of childcare, nor is there any compensation for childcare expenses that may be incurred.

Advocates for public housing residents and other allies joined together on numerous occasions to protest the measure. However, as time went on and pressure grew stronger from the Republican-dominated Congress and subcommittees, Rangel was no longer able to keep the requirement's implementation at bay. He suggested that the

Resident Alliance get in touch directly with Congresswoman Sue Kelly. At first Kelly would not schedule a meeting with the Resident Alliance, but thanks to the Resident Alliance's ties to labor unions (which are described in further detail in Chapter 5), one of the union contact's requested a meeting, which was granted. According to all of those who were there, the meeting started off on a decent note, but soon turned sour, and Ms. Kelly's support for the Community Service Requirement was not changed. Her comment, "These people need to get out of bed in the morning, brush their teeth, and do something" however, is a stark illustration of the stereotypes of public housing residents, and demonstrates one of the main, though perhaps indirect, reasons that the Resident Alliance needed to form, namely, the misrepresentation and villainization of public housing residents. The comment is an insult aimed at intimate hygienic routine and made by a person who has the power to make decisions that will affect that and other intimate routines of public housing residents.

Peter Dreier, (2004) published a piece on the occasion of Ronald Reagan's death about the influence that his administration had on urban (and housing) policy.[27] I refer to it here because he cites a prime example of the mischaracterizations, myths and ideologies that are formed to explain away the incongruities and contradictions of uneven social systems and their manifestations:

> Reagan is often lauded as "the great communicator," but he used his rhetorical skills to stigmatize poor people, which laid the groundwork for slashing the social safety net . . . During his stump speeches, Reagan often told the story of a so-called welfare queen in Chicago who drove a Cadillac and had ripped off $150,000 from the government using 80 aliases, 30 addresses, a dozen Social Security cards and four fictional dead husbands. Reagan dutifully promised to roll back welfare. Journalists searched for this welfare cheat and discovered that she didn't exist. Nevertheless, he kept using the anecdote (Dreier, 2004).

[27] Most scholars and policy analysts date the emergence of the neoliberal anti-welfare/pro-market-at-any-cost agenda to Reagan's administration.

The trajectory of moral and existential deligitimization of public housing residents easing the removal of public support and blunting objections to it, follows a familiar pattern: the poor are first attacked on moral grounds and then, delegitimized as human beings; all of which makes it easier to remove public and eventually material support.

The other quotation that began this chapter was from Judith Goldiner, a founding advocate member of the Resident Alliance, "It was those forces of evil against us...That's what brought everyone together." Her statement represents the opposite end of the spectrum. Ms. Goldiner has been with the Resident Alliance as it experienced both the heady successes that won the Alliance respect and recognition, as well as the relentless attacks on a segment of the population that is poor and virtually voiceless. Ms. Goldiner's characterization of the forces that the Resident Alliance works against as 'evil' could be attributed to her position as advocate who may tend to over-sympathize or exaggerate. Given what I have learned about the Resident Alliance, its day-to-day workings, and the contexts within which it operates, I have developed an alternative interpretation: Ms. Goldiner's comment expresses the feelings of frustration and bewilderment that arose when the Resident Alliance engaged with the creators and implementers of the public housing reform legislation. The engagement made obvious the seemingly impenetrable nature of the thinking that produced the legislation, the power that would force its implementation and the refusal to recognize the social and economic realities in which the vast majority of public housing residents exist. Ms. Goldiner chose the term 'evil,' connoting an undiscriminating force, and the public housing reform legislation was an uneven battle, with the government in the role of Goliath and the poor, unemployed and stigmatized in the role of David.

This tension between the remarks of the two women, Congresswoman Sue Kelly on one hand, and Judith Goldiner on the other, characterizes the historical moment that produced the Resident Alliance. The original material event, the catalyst that caused the convergence of the actors that would become the Resident Alliance, however, was the "Moving to Work Demonstration Program," a HUD initiative to which NYCHA was invited to apply by HUD in 1996.

Public Housing Reform Legislation: Moving to Work, The Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998, and The Superwaiver

HUD's "Moving to Work" demonstration program was the first in the series of public housing reforms that the residents and advocates, who would eventually become the Resident Alliance, came together to confront in 1996. Moving to Work was one in a bundle of welfare reform measures, which, having been brewed by 'conservative' or neoliberal powerbrokers at the national scale for at least 30 years (Cokorinos, 2002), had finally been released into the local and regional environments.

Below is HUD's description of the program's purpose:

> Moving to Work is a demonstration program in which HUD and public housing agencies (PHAs) . . . design and test ways to give incentives to families to become economically self-sufficient, reduce the cost of housing assistance, and increase housing choices for low-income households. To achieve the flexibility needed for this type of innovation to succeed, HUD may suspend many of its rules for PHAs involved in this demonstration . . . The purpose of this demonstration program is to develop more effective strategies and replicable models to achieve self-sufficiency among recipients of housing assistance. In this program, HUD will monitor the effects of deregulation on the PHAs' role in promoting self-sufficiency and on their efficient use of Federal resources. (http://www.hud.gov:80/progdesc/mtw8.cfm) (accessed 7/6/2004).

Residents and advocates did not share HUD's positive spin on the program. What HUD posed as choice and opportunity was to residents and advocates threatening in its

glossing over of the realities of market failure, "stagnant real wages and persistently high housing costs."[28] Moving to Work was the first program that the Resident Alliance would successfully counteract. "Large numbers of residents turned out to oppose the proposal and condemn NYCHA's secrecy in preparing it . . . NYCHA, stunned by the resident response, withdrew it the following day" (Community Service Society of New York, 2004). Moving to Work, however, would be followed by a number of other legislative attempts to reform or shrink public housing through PHA deregulation, and placing greater responsibility on tenants, including the Rent Reform and Empowerment Act of 1995[29] and the Bill to Repeal the Housing Act of 1937.[30] These measures culminated in the "Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998," and remain a threat at the time of writing in the form of the "Superwaiver." The Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 (QHWRA), which was sponsored by then-

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[28] Housing for All. "The Moving to Work Public Housing Demonstration Program in Delaware." http://housingforall.org/moving_to_work_demo.htm; accessed 7/6/2004).

[29] While no action was taken on the bill, the Rent Reform and Empowerment Act of 1995, introduced by Republican Congressman Joe Knollenberg of Michigan, sought to amend the United States Housing Act of 1937 to revise public housing rent determinations for public housing units, including abolishing ceiling rents. The rationale behind the bill was that public housing rent determinations resulted in work disincentives.

[30] The Bill to Repeal the Housing Act of 1937 was also known as the Housing Opportunity and Responsibility Act of 1997. Introduced by Republican Congressman Rick Lazio of New York, its stated purposes were to deregulate public housing agencies; provide more flexible use of Federal assistance to public housing agencies, allowing the authorities to leverage and combine assistance amounts with amounts obtained from other sources; facilitate mixed income communities; increasing accountability of public housing agencies; create incentives and economic opportunities for residents of dwelling units assisted by public housing agencies to work, become self-sufficient, and transition out of public housing and federally assisted dwelling units; recreate rental assistance voucher program so that the use of vouchers and relationships between landlords and tenants under the program operate in a manner that more closely resembles the private housing market; and remedy troubled public housing agencies and replacing or revitalizing severely distressed public housing developments (source: http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/F?c105:1:./temp/~c105GO661S:e13407).

Congressman Rick Lazio of New York (who had no public housing in his district) and the "Superwaiver" are described in further detail below.

HUD's description of QHWRA is as follows:

> The purpose of this title is to 1) deregulate PHAs; 2) provide more flexible use of Federal assistance to PHAs; 3) facilitate mixed income communities; 4) decrease concentrations of poverty in public housing; 5) increase accountability and reward effective management of PHAs; 6) create incentives and economic opportunities for residents assisted by PHAs to work and become self-sufficient; 7) consolidate the Section 8 voucher and certificate programs into a single market-driven program; 8) remedy the problems of troubled PHAs; and 9) replace or revitalize severely distressed public housing projects. (Hunt, Schulhof, and Holmquist, 1998, p. 2).

An issue brief by the Community Service Society described QHWRA in an alternative way:

> The QHWRA is a product of Washington's thrust toward capped funding and devolution of social programs to lower levels of government. Intended to deregulate public housing authorities (PHAs), the law grants them unprecedented flexibility, under minimal federal oversight, to address local needs . . . Framed by a regressive Congress, the draft bills preceding the QHWRA contained extreme provisions. The cornerstone 1937 Housing Act was targeted for repeal, as was the Brooke Amendment, which caps rents at 30 percent of household income. Echoing welfare reform, time limits on tenancy were seriously considered. Removal of "good cause" protections threatened eviction at the authority's pleasure when leases expired. Advocates succeeded in gutting the worst proposals, but a "work responsibility" provision passed, requiring able-bodied adult residents who are not employed, in training, or students to contribute eight hours of community service monthly. The QHWRA's key provisions offer housing authorities greater flexibility while they impose new federal restrictions." (http://www.cssny.org/pubs/issuebrief/no14.htm accessed 7/12/2004).

Some additional important elements of the bill also include:

- PHAs can skip over waiting lists to reach income targets or achieve deconcentration
- PHA policies can also force out low-income families, opening vacated units to higher rents. Hard line eviction policies bear down on low-income residents most at risk of

rent delinquency, criminal involvement of household members, or noncompliance with community service.

- PHAs are prohibited from increasing the housing stock they own. The law prohibits the construction of any new public housing units.
- One-to-one replacement of demolished units is abolished. Instead, public-private partnerships are promoted, permitting PHAs to invest federal funds in private "mixed-finance" developments in return for leased units. The parallel HOPE VI program encourages PHAs to demolish distressed developments and undertake entrepreneurial redevelopment. (http://www.cssny.org/pubs/issuebrief/no14.htm accessed 7/12/2004).

While some of the provisions of QHWRA that were most detrimental to residents were not included in the final version of the bill, they re-emerged as a pending threat in the form of what is called "The Superwaiver," an amendment included in the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Legislation—the laws that comprised the bulk of welfare reform of the mid- to late-1990s.

> The "superwaiver" proposal is a proposal that would allow governors, with the permission of agency secretaries, to waive federal laws and regulations related to several social service programs, including housing programs. The Superwaiver in the House bill would apply to public housing and homelessness programs. Advocates fear that with a superwaiver, under current economic pressures, states could stop funding housing programs with both state and federal dollars and only use federal dollars, freeing up state money for other purposes and essentially reducing funding for housing programs. By waiving federal regulations and laws applicable to income targeting, states could make people with higher incomes eligible for assistance than under current public housing programs, even though the need is greatest among people with the lowest incomes. There are other threats to public housing programs and residents that could happen if the superwaiver is passed, such as states imposing time limits on residents or making them pay more of their income in rent (National Low Income Housing Coalition. July 7, 2003. http://www.nlihc.org/news/070703.htm. Accessed 2/27/04).

As noted above, the spin that legislators and HUD put on the reform legislation is that of opportunity, choice and personal responsibility. However, it is considered to be dangerous to the well-being of both residents and public housing stock because it leaves more room to play fast and loose with rules. In taking away layers of regulation it "freed up" space for actors, both for resident voice and activity, but also for market-driven solutions that place priority on bottom-line financial performance rather than resident and community well-being. Advocates described the demonstration project and legislation as "disastrous," "a threat," and "alarming." (Community Service Society, 1999). Most elements of the legislation, including, but not only, time limits and the push toward homeownership were also unrealistic to tenants. As Linda Duke, resident of Mitchell Houses in the South Bronx and Resident Alliance Treasurer put it:

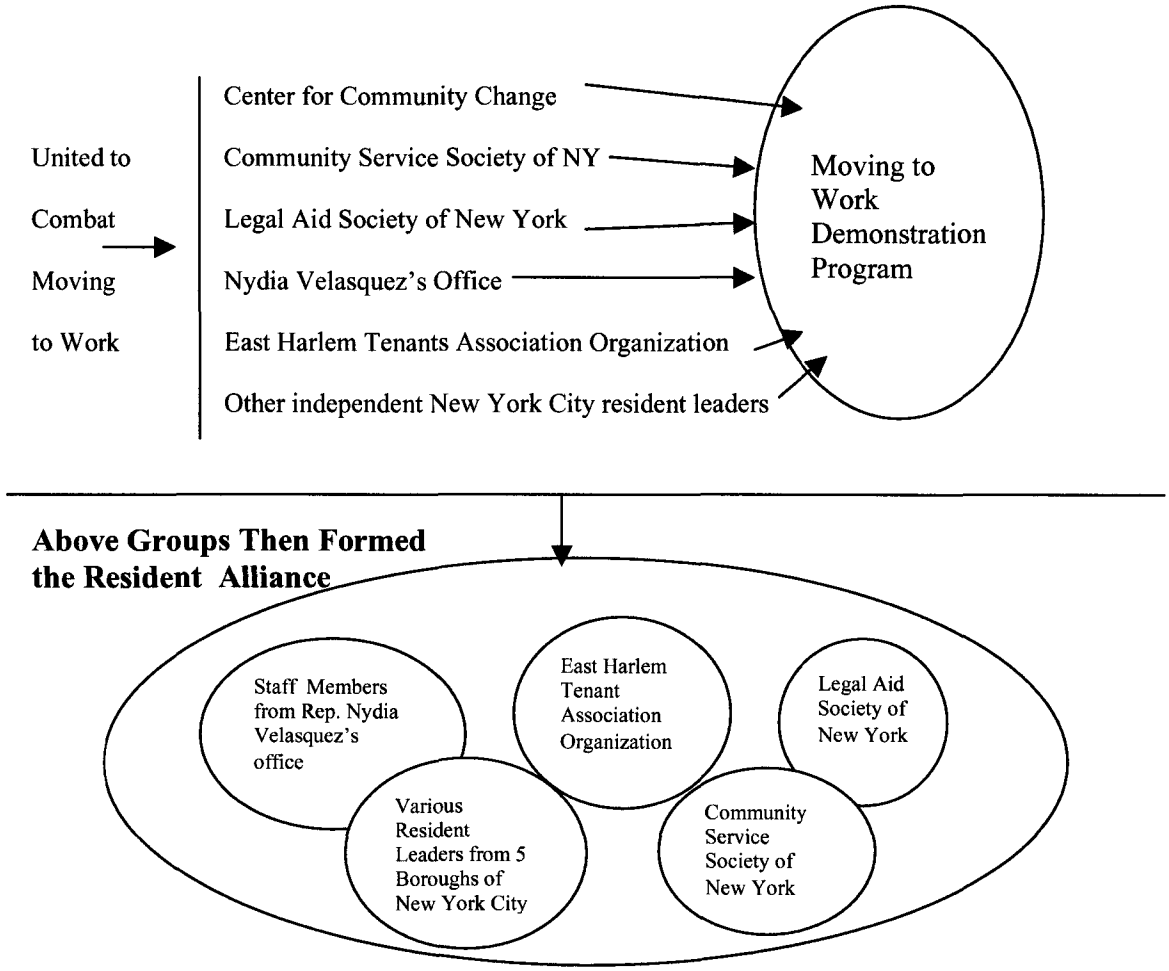
> You got a limit on welfare. So when your limitation run out, who's gonna pay your rent then? And you've got to pay something to the Housing Authority. When certain things run out, then how you going to make it? Everybody can't just jump up and buy a house.

As soon as the community of housing advocates learned about NYCHA's Moving to Work application they came together for an emergency meeting. The initial attendees of this meeting were The Community Service Society of New York, The Legal Aid Society of New York, and The Center for Community Change. While the evolution of the group is described in more detail later in the chapter, Figure 7 depicts the Resident Alliance's coalescence. City-, state-wide and national groups were represented and actively involved, as were staff from Congresswoman Nydia Velasquez's district office[31]—where

[31] Congresswoman Nydia Velasquez sponsored a public housing campaign to advocate, support and organize the public housing residents in her district. At least two of the young public housing activists would emerge from the campaign. Dushaw Hockett, formerly the first chair of the Resident Alliance, and Damaris Reyes, Director of Organizing at Public Housing Residents of the Lower East Side (PHROLES).

the highest concentration of public housing in New York City is found. Soon after the initial meetings of advocates, several resident leaders also came to the table.

Figure 7: Formation of the Resident Alliance



Token Representation at the New York City Level

While the Resident Alliance's formation was prompted by the immediate threat of the public housing reform legislation, there were a number of circumstances on the local New York City level that presented needs that the formation of the Alliance also worked to meet. The local policy and representational[32] atmospheres were characterized by: a) relative non-communication, or hostile communication between NYCHA and residents, b) token tenant representation in decision-making, and by c) a general atmosphere of misrepresentation of public housing residents. While these topics are covered in more detail in Chapter 4, what follows is a description of how they affected the context of the reform legislation.

Lack of Communication between NYCHA and Residents

There was not a chain of direct, reliable communication that existed between residents and the leadership of NYCHA. In place of a chain of communication there were tenant associations controlled or closely watched by NYCHA, poor systems of communication with or support for housing development managers, antagonistic relationships between residents and managers, as well as disaffected residents and resident leaders who had over time been misled, treated contemptuously and/or disappointed. Until the formation of the Resident Alliance and the subsequent organizing that occurred as a part of their work (as well as the urgency that the new threats lent), public hearings often went largely unattended. For years NYCHA and HUD had been able to take advantage of the fact that public housing residents were largely disengaged. For example, NYCHA tried to by-pass the resident and public information structure and

the public hearings regarding Moving to Work were held only days before the application was due.

Token Tenant Representation/Co-opted Resident Advisory Board

While a NYCHA-approved body of resident advisors, called the City-wide Council of Presidents[33] (CCOP), exists to represent resident interests and to convey information back to residents from NYCHA, there was a general awareness among Tenant Association presidents and advocates that this body was "absent from the picture" (interview with Victor Bach) and had done nothing to inform residents about the changes being proposed by HUD and NYCHA. Judith Goldiner explained the formation of the Resident Alliance in relation to this lack of representation:

> . . . the Resident Alliance was formed because we realized that the official resident body . . . wasn't doing what they were supposed to do. They had supported, in fact, the Moving to Work application. They hadn't informed the residents. The residents were furious with that. So, it was a really good opportunity . . . it was a good confluence of events because it starkly raised a lot of issues that people had known for a long time but hadn't really known what to do with. We had known that the CCOP was this ridiculous organization that wasn't doing anything, that wasn't informing tenants before then, but this was a real catalytic event and that's when the Alliance formed.

A Community Service Society of New York policy brief on the QHWRA noted that "The [C]COP has a reputation for being ineffective and unassertive. As of early 1999, NYCHA had not convened a citywide [C]COP meeting in two years, [during] a period of unprecedented policy change for public housing." The Resident Alliance, therefore, took on the role of communicating with and informing residents. In one Alliance member's words, the Alliance became: "...the watch dog group or the group

[33] The composition and structure of The City-wide Council of Presidents is described in further detail in Chapter Four.

that looks at the fine print" in order to compensate for the lack of action on the part of the CCOP. When I asked a Resident Alliance advocate to characterize the people who are on the official resident board they responded in the following way:

> ...as a group [CCOP] tends to do whatever NYCHA says. It's a really weird situation because, in other parts of the country, the official tenant organization hires legal services to be their lawyer and they sit in meetings and they get technical advice and help from people like me and people like Vic [Bach, the CSS housing policy analyst and advocate]. I can't imagine having that here, and it's not just because NYCHA doesn't want it, they [CCOP] don't want it. They don't want to be informed. The thing that's amazing to me is even when you occasionally get people who are good who are elected to it, they either become ostracized and unable to make anything happen, or they become totally co-opted . . . They [NYCHA] get their family members jobs, they have limo rides to meetings and they have fancy dinners. [So, real material co-optation] is really part of it. I mean, I will tell you that I don't know this for sure, but I believed from what the other residents told me that almost all...if they themselves don't work for NYCHA, the CCOP people, then a lot of their family members do, and if their family members don't then when their family members get in trouble NYCHA cuts them slack. When they need things to be done in their development, they get done first. There's a lot of stuff like that, which makes it really hard for them to be in any way an independent voice even if they wanted to be. And, to be fair, the people who are independent voices, NYCHA treats them like dirt. I remember Diane Jackson who was on the Resident Alliance board and the [C]COP and NYCHA ended up running somebody against her for Tenant Association president to knock her off the board because they didn't like the fact that she was on the Alliance board. So, they indirectly go after people . . . they went after [one Resident Alliance leader]. I mean, she really beat them back, so I don't think they mess with her any more, but they do go after people. And if you're not a pretty strong person, they're going to succeed.

Misrepresentation of Public Housing Residents

Underlying the lack of communication between the Housing Authority and residents and the tokenistic representation granted to residents is, as touched upon above, long-running misrepresentation of public housing residents. Public housing residents are not a monolithic or socio-economically homogeneous population. However, the environment in which housing policies are made in the US, as well as practices within

NYCHA, are rife with negative representations, often misrepresentations, of who exactly public housing residents are. This falls directly along the lines of the "representations" strand of the structural racism analysis. Adriene Holder, legal counsel to the Resident Alliance and Attorney-in-Charge of the Harlem Office of the Legal Aid Society of New York, expressed her view of the situation as follows:

> We ask people all the time, do you know people who live in public housing? We know that Rick Lazio didn't. I was actually on a radio show when he had to admit that he had never really seriously met or spent time with someone from public housing, and he has no public housing in his district. But he's going to go ahead and pass these laws as to what's best because everyone knows what's best for people who are poor, people of color, and a lot of times these folks think that what's best is that you vilify them or make them feel bad about their particular situation instead of all of us taking collective responsibility to try to deal with the issues that create situations that folks find themselves in . . . even if they were to blow up the Vladeck and Riis and Johnson, Douglas and Queensbridge [Houses], where are these people going to go? And they're the people who teach your kids, they're the people who serve you coffee in the morning. They're the people who deliver your mail, they're our neighbors and they're a vital part of how this city operates and I don't think we want them to go, and even if some folks do, I'm just begging the question, well, where do they go? And isn't it going to be at a greater expense to society?

While public housing residents are stigmatized as unemployed, lay-abouts and welfare queens, in fact more than 80% of public housing residents in New York City are either working or retired and receiving (pensions, SSI[34] or veteran's benefits. Only 17.6% of NYCHA households receive public assistance. Of those 17.6%, it is certainly not clear that those households are filled with lay-abouts too lazy to brush their teeth—as those like Congresswoman Kelly would depict them. Instead, in my experience, they are single mothers of children with chronic illnesses, or individuals who have been beaten down one too many times by the hardships of poverty compounded by racism and sexism.

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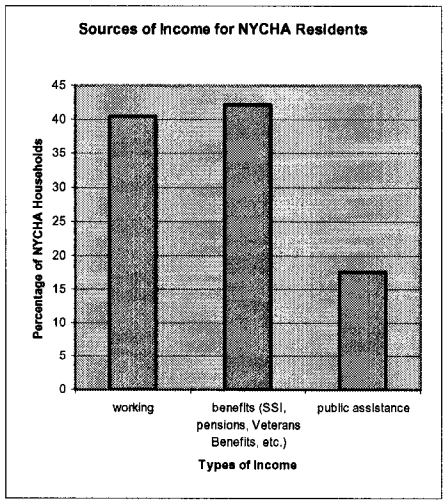
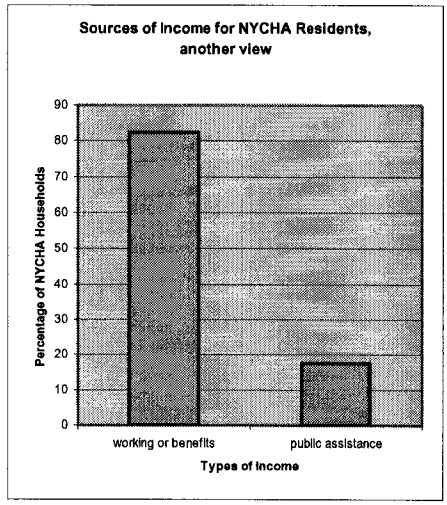
[34] SSI, or Supplemental Security Income, is a Federal income supplement program funded by general tax revenues (not Social Security taxes): it is designed to help aged, blind, and disabled people who have little or no income; and it provides cash to meet basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter (www.ssa.gov/notices/supplemental-security-income; accessed 9/13/2004).





Source: New York City Housing Authority, 2004b.

The Evolution of the Resident Alliance

The evolution of the Resident Alliance was described preliminarily in the introduction to this chapter. A more detailed account of its formation will help to convey a more complete picture of this organization, its impact, challenges and potential for producing space that fits the real needs of public housing residents.

My own relationship with the Resident Alliance grew out of an existing relationship with the East Harlem Tenant Association Organization (EHTAO). As a beginning graduate student I was employed as a research assistant on three consecutive research projects being carried out by the Housing Environments Research Group on the topics of resident action in public housing and on social capital in public housing.[35] I was a participant observer/technical assistant to the tenant association of The James Weldon Johnson Houses and to the EHTAO.

[35] See Saegert, Thompson, et al, 1999.

The EHTAO was one of the groups that the advocates reached out to when they went in search of existing resident-interest groups. It was the only organized resident group in New York City that existed before the legislative crisis. The advocates made the connection to the EHTAO via a contact at the Community Service Society of New York.[36] The EHTAO, a group of five public housing tenant leaders, had been meeting for several years before they would merge into the Resident Alliance. Under the leadership of Ethel Velez, the EHTAO was concerned with increasing education, employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, and with strengthening intergenerational community ties.

The leadership of the East Harlem group would by and large become the dominant presence within the Resident Alliance. The EHTAO members had a sophisticated and comprehensive understanding of the situation of public housing residents. According to interviews with the former leadership of the EHTAO, NYCHA tried to "divide and conquer" the group since it was not acceptable to NYCHA that residents should unite in common interest. As NYCHA's tactics were heating up, the Resident Alliance was beginning to form and the EHTAO leadership more or less flowed over to it. With an institutional home (The Community Service Society) and advocate assistance, these residents had more potential for meeting their goals than they did as a freestanding association of residents. The group's outlook combined pragmatism and agency, as the two following quotes from members of the EHTAO illustrate:

> Personally, I believe that there's a war that has been declared on the poor people of this country. I think we're in a lot of trouble. We need to organize. I think that

[36] Ethel Velez, who founded the EHTAO, participated in the 1996 U.N. Habitat conference in Istanbul, and a senior staff person at the Community Service Society who also attended the Istanbul meeting. After the conference, the two women participated in a follow-up group to the conference and it was via that follow-up group that the connection between the EHTAO and the advocates concerned about the pending programs and legislation came about. (Interview with Victor Bach).

> the privileged and the rich have forgotten that we are a part of their lives. If it wasn't for poor people, who would clean their toilets, who would wash their cars? Who would open their doors when they leave their buildings in the morning? Who would raise their children? We are a part of their lives. I think we need to fight back.

This kind of pragmatism reflects clear class consciousness and provides a strategic outlook: recognizing positionality and using it as leverage in the current political struggle. Another aspect of the thinking—oriented more toward agency—of the original group of EHTAO leaders can be seen in the following quotation from Linda Duke, who is now the treasurer of the Resident Alliance:

> First of all, I would like to see us managing our own developments. Because I know I could do the job. I'm sorry, I'm not about being uppity, but I feel like I could do the job. And I think not only the management job, but I feel like my approach would be to be much more involved. And would look at it as, 'this is my house. This is where I live. This is my community. I must take an interest.' Not to say, 'I'm just passing through, they're getting my rent money.'

While the EHTAO was active on a number of fronts, they were not aware of the pending threat represented by NYCHA's submission to the Moving to Work Demonstration Program. Victor Bach of the Community Service Society represented the chain of events as follows:

> And the question came up during the meeting, "do residents know about this?" Do resident leaders in New York City know about this? Are they doing anything? And the answer seemed to be no from everyone around the table. The word is not out.

Mr. Bach went on to describe the initial meeting of advocates and residents:

> It was held on a Saturday in June of '96. The letter was sent to everyone on the tenant association president's list and the turn-out was extraordinary. The room was mobbed. There were about 150-200 people there—all of them alarmed . . . And at the end of the meeting someone said, we've got to be mobilized. We've got to have a rally. And so there spontaneously emerged a kind of group to organize the rally, to get people's names for working committees of whatever kind and to have a voice. The group first called themselves "The Committee to Save Public Housing." And the idea was to create a resident advocate committee

> that could oversee and strategize advocacy around these issues and give them some visibility so that people knew what they were up against and could oppose it. There was a rally held in City Hall Park. A lot of people showed. I think the unions contributed mics. A rostrum for speakers. It didn't get any coverage...A second event that occurred as a result of the steering committee and its activities was a trip to Babylon, Long Island, where Rick Lazio had his office. And that was proceded by a press conference on the steps of City Hall, which got a bit of coverage. And it was through the steering committee, which was informal, had no status whatsoever, other than a group of concerned housing advocates and resident advocates. As that began to meet more or less regularly, the circle widened . . .[Eventually] the steering committee decided to pursue nonprofit incorporation. By 1998 that status had been achieved. The Resident Alliance was then a formal organization with membership, a founding board, a board, a set of procedures and by-laws.

The new organization had both a number of significant successes as well as a difficult path ahead of it. For example, NYCHA at first refused to recognize the Resident Alliance. The following excerpt from an interview with Alliance legal counsel, Adriene Holder, describes an incident typical of the first phase of the Alliance's development. It illustrates the highly antagonistic position that NYCHA took at that time in relation to residents and resident interests.

> I think there was a meeting at Douglas Houses, a public housing project on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. It's a very nice project in the 100s. NYCHA was going to have some kind of presentation there. I really forgot what we were talking about—you know, it was always some new issue. But they had invited some elected officials, too, and so Adam Clayton Powell IV was there, and I think at the time he was still a City Council member, but he might have moved to State Assembly, I'm not sure. So we were invited and NYCHA was not pleased and they weren't really having it. It was in this community center/gym/stage area. I think it's associated with one of the schools there. NYCHA tried to say that since we weren't approved to be there we could not speak even though the Resident Alliance was invited and we were their legal representative. And so the Resident Alliance wanted [us] to give some information to the residents. NYCHA was trying to shut it down. They were trying to kick us off the agenda and we were like, 'this is outrageous.' So the tenants were there in the audience and they said, it's about free speech and it's about whomever people invite, and if Resident Alliance, who are our friends in the Douglas development, if they want to have these folks here, you can't keep that out, and [NYCHA] said yeah we can because we control this area. And because it's in this facility. We[37] weren't trying to have

[37] "We" refers to Adriene Holder and her partner at the Legal Aid Society, Judith Goldiner.

> a fight because that's not our demeanor. We are loud, though, and so we said, let us sit [up there], and so we sat in the front, and we just figured that we would have an opportunity, maybe during the question and answer period. Pretty soon the folks kept asking. We asked them, what's the problem, they said because we control this. That they could not control that environment like that when we were invited. They can control it if you're not invited and you just spring up and try to be on the panel, but because the Resident Alliance was invited and they said that they wanted their representatives to speak, we were like, to us it's a natural connection. Folks just got really upset and we kept explaining to them why we weren't sitting up there and why we weren't able to disseminate our information, and so people kept getting upset about it, and so that's when all of a sudden the residents were like, 'we want to hear what they have to say.' And they were like, not here...we control this...this facility. And then the tenants were like, well, we should just take it outside. And Adam Clayton Powell IV said 'it's a beautiful day, let's just go outside.' And they really were embarrassed. But his whole thing was, as most electeds, he kind of saw where the tension was going and he was one of the representatives. This area's his district and so, he's not going to necessarily look like he's siding with NYCHA. I don't think that he thought that that would be too smart, so he was just like, you know, they're right, let's just take it outside, and he led it. He was like, 'Everyone, just come join me.' I think he had just begun his presentation. He said, 'I'll cede my time to Judith and Adriene.' So we went on the lawn in the front. We had like 100 people out there. And we got a microphone, and they were like, 'Alright, tell us what you got to say.' And we did. We left NYCHA in the gym!

In the period between 1996 and 1999 the contrast between the proposals and the real needs of public housing residents, as well as the secrecy and antagonistic nature of NYCHA's mode of operation, was so stark that it had the effect of creating new leaders and organizations. Damaris Reyes, for example, a resident of public housing and Director of Organizing at PHROLES (Public Housing Residents of the Lower East Side) describes the initial scenario that led her to abandon her business career to take a leadership role in the fight to preserve public housing:

> I come home one day in a cab, and I get off at the corner and as I'm walking towards my building I see this mob of people and I'm like, "What the heck is going on here?!?" So, I said, there's a fight? What's going on? Right away you see these congregations of folks, you think there's a riot. When I get to the front of the building there was a group of folks that were having this meeting [about the threats to residents' homes included in the proposed public housing reforms] right on the street on the sidewalk in front of the building.

Roles of Advocates and Elected Officials

As noted above, public housing resident groups existed, but had not received advocate attention to the extent that they did in 1996. As Judith Goldiner described it above, the Moving to Work demonstration program brought a number of important conflicts to the fore, and "starkly raised a lot of issues that people had known for a long time but hadn't really known what to do with."

It is not surprising that housing advocates and some elected officials would pay attention to the issues that resulted from the reforms. Had they not, they would have been significantly remiss in their advocacy role. The sheer number of people who stood to be affected was between 500,000 and 600,000 people. Had the legislation passed in its unrevised form, it would have produced immediate crisis in environments already riddled with long-term, everyday crises. Furthermore, as CSS advocate and policy analyst Victor Bach and others noted, public housing is worth preserving on a number of levels.

> I really think, despite all of the criticism of NYCHA that we have and problems that residents have with NYCHA management, it does represent a model for public housing that has succeeded, and not only succeeded, but succeeded as the largest public housing program in the country. So I think it has a lot of accomplishments that public housing can rest on, here in New York. It is the primary low-income resource in New York City. And my concern is with threats to its continued effectiveness and growth. What I would hope for is for NYCHA to continue as a developer of public housing—but that's prohibited under the 1998 Act—which prohibits any further increases in public housing. I would hope that it would get the commitment, of federal and other government capital, that it needs to do its development and management job as well as possible. I would hope that it becomes more palatable to residents through an effective form of resident participation structure, which I think is relatively ineffective at the moment. I would hope that it continues to remain a public resource, rather than lapse into privatization, because I think that's the only way to assure its continuity over time...which the last 65 years...I would hope that residents become more aware of the extent to which their future will be affected by what Washington and local government decide. And that that awareness lead them to stronger organization and a more informed residency. I would hope that NYCHA's

> governing board changes to include residents on the board. And to represent a wider group of interests around public housing issues.

Adriene Holder, the Alliance's legal counsel from the Legal Aid Society of New York, described her perspective, too:

> A lot of times the people who are in public housing and on public assistance, they still have the opportunity a lot of times because their housing is straight, to deal with raising their kids or trying to get jobs, or education and training, to be able to do stuff, because they don't have to worry about whether the rent's affordable and whether from day-to-day, for the most part, that the ceiling is not going to fall in on their kids. And so, there are challenges about crime, there are challenges about some of the conditions in some of the Housing Authorities, I admit it, but it's still as vastly improved when you think about it being affordable and the fact that they have at least one landlord whose mission it is to provide this affordable housing with not-for-profit expectations to house these people and I think we can do more. QHWRA really just screwed it all up—that we can't even build more public housing.

In addition to the sheer numbers of people who would be affected by the reform legislation, the political configurations that produced them had produced a political situation so dire that, if the suggested reforms were to go through, the results of the reforms would have created situations so challenging that advocates' jobs would have become more difficult to nearly impossible. Adriene Holder explained:

> Public housing the last bastion of affordable housing in New York City and so to me it's not just because we're inspired, but through desperation that we hold on to it. But with QHWRA we can't develop any new housing. It's just like everything the government was doing under the Clinton, well, starting even under the Reagan administration and the subsequent Bush and Clinton administrations and then especially under the Bush administration. Everywhere it seems like Congress is allowing this to go on and the administrations have their own viewpoints about it, which seems to be the elimination of public housing, or at the very least the federal government's involvement in providing affordable housing and that's sad to me and we're doing the best we can do to challenge it, but the laws are so difficult now that it doesn't seem that there's going to be a lot that we can do through the court system, and that's why we tell people all the time that it's about going out to vote and getting some new people in office.

The Resident Alliance's work is not directly involved with electoral work, but by making issues clear, by providing information about who is making decisions and about how to contact legislators, as well as providing venues for protest and making the voices of public housing residents heard, the Resident Alliance does aim to influence who decision-makers are and what decisions they make. The combination of advocate expertise that the Alliance has, that of policy analysts and of lawyers, is a great asset to the Alliance's causes. As advocates lent their knowledge in understanding issues and forming strategies around them, residents became more informed and stronger both in numbers and in their own expertise surrounding their strategies. In order to better illustrate how the dynamic between resident and advocate members of the Alliance work together, a description of advocate roles follows.

Advocate Roles

Ms. Holder described the way that advocates and residents worked together in the following way: "It was basically lawyers and organizers and policy people from the Community Service Society and Legal Aid giving [the residents] a whole bunch of information, but them deciding what they wanted to do with it." Ms. Holder went on to describe the Legal Aid Society's role:

> We would review letters for them, we would help them strategize about what the legal consequences would be to opposing a particular project, whether they wanted to take a litigation position, we had some success with that...we would let them know what things meant from a legal standpoint. When we were barred from things, we would immediately go to try to enforce their right to hold certain meetings certain places, or invite certain people certain places, or be able to distribute materials at certain types of events, protecting their right to communicate and have free speech and all those things. And there were other times when they wanted to actually oppose certain policies where we would do an assessment of what those challenges could be and how best to do them and we

> always represented them [the Resident Alliance] in front of NYCHA. So whenever they wanted to negotiate on issues of access and actual policy that was being promulgated we would represent them.

Victor Bach of the CSS described his work with the Resident Alliance as having attended the first meeting about Moving to Work and having been on the original steering committee. Mr. Bach is the Resident Alliance's policy analyst. He provides assistance in understanding and interpreting public housing (both NYCHA and HUD) policies, and technical assistance by keeping track of legislative and policy developments in Albany and in Washington. He also works with the Alliance on understanding policy issues and devising strategies that they might use to protect their interests. On a more mundane level he hosts meetings in the Community Service Society's meeting rooms, participates in conference calls with leadership, arranges for in-kind food service for meetings, maintains the Alliance's mailing list, and works on fundraising.

Nearly every person that I interviewed told me that they thought that had the Resident Alliance been an organization consisting of only advocates or only residents, it could never have achieved the successes that it did in partnership. Residents required the professional capacities of the advocates in order to act in an informed manner, and the advocates trying to protect the interests of low-income residents needed the real interests and the mobilization capacities of the residents. Dushaw Hockett, former chair of the Resident Alliance board explained his perspective:

> I will point out that in retrospect New York City was sort of [advanced] when compared to other groups that were involved in national advocacy work around the public housing reform proposals that were being pushed because in New York City we had more capacity than other groups had around the country. In CSS and Vic Bach you had a senior researcher with years of experience in housing and in the Legal Aid Society you had attorneys who knew how to write the FOILs [Freedom of Information Law documents], they knew the intricacies of public housing admissions and occupancy rules and other rules as well. And the New

> York State Tenants and Neighbors Coalition you had an organization that knew organizing, community organizing...how to do large scale organization. They led a lot of the successful organizing around rent control in New York City, so to say that when you look at how the Alliance was born and how New York City engaged the policy work around the public housing reform bills, and even Section 3, unlike with other national level advocacy efforts around policy efforts, it wasn't so much a top down approach national organization coming in, getting groups energized and activating them around an agenda in New York City. They just had such a level of sophistication around this stuff that New York City was already on its way to leading the charge around this, at least within the state.

Accomplishments, Challenges and the Role of Crisis in the Resident Alliance's Ability to Produce Space

It is important to examine what the Resident Alliance has been able to achieve in terms of the production of space (both social and physical), as well as the challenges that it has encountered. The Resident Alliance does not think of their work in terms of Lefebvre's concept of production of space, per se, but Resident Alliance leaders and members *do* understand themselves to be working towards not only preserving public housing/the spaces of public housing, but making them different, better and more supportive settings[38] than they are now.

Accomplishments

The two main accomplishments of the Resident Alliance in relation to the challenges that they formed to address have been:

a) their having gained measureably increased voice for public housing residents, and

b) actually having changed policies and practices of NYCHA.

[38] While public housing *is* a supportive setting relatively, there are also its undermining qualities.

While these changes may not yet be on the scale that the Resident Alliance would prefer, all Resident Alliance members are aware of the changes they have been able to produce.

> I am very grateful and I feel very good about [what we've done]. When we gave them [NYCHA] those [petitions against the] Superwaiver at the public hearing and they acknowledged us and they put it in the newsletter, and that went citywide, whether they want to or not, we were recognized and that was a hell of an accomplishment. Not so much that we gave them the petitions, but they had to recognize us. They had to recognize us. It's like, wow, we got to bear witness. They did their job, because when the housing authority started to recognize us and give us credit for it...it was very appreciated. In fact, I'm going to get my article and xerox 100 copies, then every time somebody says something to me, I'm going to give them a copy and let them know...recognize. We exist. New York City Housing Authority sees we exist (Interview with Linda Duke, Resident Alliance Treasurer).

Dushaw Hockett also spoke about the very existence of the Resident Alliance being a significant accomplishment:

> I look at the work of the Alliance as being a process of helping people living in public housing to build power and build a force for themselves. I think the significant accomplishment was building an organization and still having an organization that's functioning now and that provides residents with that voice in national and local policy circles. I think in other issue areas it wouldn't be considered a major accomplishment, but considering the fact that people have long considered public housing folks to be isolated, to not have any sophistication around policy and being able to represent themselves in policy discussions. I think that the existence of the Alliance in and of itself is a major accomplishment.

The Resident Alliance's ability to change policy was elaborated upon by Legal Aid lawyer Judith Goldiner:

> The Moving to Work application was really the catalyst for a bunch of us getting together and reaching out to residents all over the city and to me that was...what we saw there is that when residents were organized and mobilized they could really make a huge difference. All the efforts resulted in the Moving to Work application never being submitted and for NYCHA it was a public relations defeat. And I think it was a very empowering time... Preventing the Housing Authority from submitting the Moving to Work application that would have allowed the Housing Authority to circumvent almost all rules. They really wanted to do that and they got caught. I'll never forget that meeting. Three hundred people in the room and 500 people outside banging on the doors and NYCHA tried to speak and they shouted them down and the board members got

> led out by the cops. The next day they said they weren't going to apply . . . They were not prepared for the scope of the involvement, which has continued. They were not prepared that public officials were going to come and residents were going to come and that they were going to get blocked on every level.

The mobilization of residents around Moving to Work was unprecedented. It meant that NYCHA would begin to take resident perspectives far more seriously than they had for many years. This scope of influence has led to a number of new practices on the part of NYCHA. It can be characterized in a general way via Judith Goldiner's description:

> The other thing that's very interesting is that whatever our issue of the day is, that's the Housing Authority's. They are clearly watching what we're saying and watching what we're doing . . . we may not agree with the way they respond, but they're very worried about what the Alliance is doing and saying, what the issues are, and that's a huge success.

Not only does NYCHA watch what the Resident Alliance does, but high-level NYCHA representatives, for example Hugh Spence, Deputy General Manager of the Department of Community Operations, and Douglas Apple, Housing Authority General Manager (the position directly below the Chairman of the Housing Authority), are now both invited and ask to be invited to speak at Resident Alliance General Meetings. Ethel Velez, the Alliance's Executive Director listed the accomplishments in this way:

> The Resident Alliance has accomplished informing residents, going after Charlie Rangel when Community Service was being put out there, informing the City Council about the issues, informing residents, doing mail-outs, keeping people in tune to what's going on. I think clearly hearings will never be empty rooms any more because of the Alliance . . . I think that we've done with the Alliance right now is sustained it . . . made it very visible. Trying to make it more visible. More and more people know about us now. I get [word that] my little READ THIS[39] packet has been a whole lot of places. Definitely they're in all the boroughs. There's not enough of them.

Public housing residents as a constituency have never before had the attention or respect of elected officials or NYCHA employees in the way that they do since the Resident

[39] The READ THIS packet was the Resident Alliance's official informational packet distributed to residents.

Alliance's formation. There is still a great deal of work to be done, however. The Resident Alliance, for instance, does not have the attention or cooperation of enough elected officials. There remains a strong stigma around public housing as a form of housing, and a location of poverty and crime. Such challenges are discussed in the following section.

Pictured: Hugh Spense, New York City Housing Authority, Deputy Director of Community Operations, addressing the Resident Alliance at its monthly general meeting in February 2004. Attendance at Resident Alliance meetings represented a drastic change in the way that Housing Authority officials and the Resident Alliance interacted. Their relationships went from extremely adversarial to being in frequent dialogue.

Challenges

The Resident Alliance's successes are both real and substantial, but they represent a battle that is, in fact, only half won. While the Resident Alliance has been successful in having NYCHA pay attention to their activities and the ability to mobilize large numbers of residents, advocates and elected officials, NYCHA still does not facilitate resident participation or provide information in a transparent or supportive fashion. The most substantial threats, however, are those that emanate from the federal level, which have the potential to disrupt and damage both individual households and the operational structure of NYCHA. The Federal policies promulgated in the mid- and late-1990s appear, at least superficially, to have created new ties of allegiance between NYCHA and its residents as they recognize that their fates are at least partially intertwined. Speaking at a Resident Alliance general meeting in February 2004, Deputy General Manager of the Department of Community Operations, Hugh Spence, gave a presentation talking about how NYCHA has grown and how he and the institution are "seeing the awakening of resident involvement." He spoke about how one in twelve New Yorkers live in public housing, how public housing residents are misrepresented, and how many simply do not understand public housing. He spoke, too, about the difficult road ahead for public housing in New York City, about looming budget cuts, and the Authority's need to focus on "heat, hot water and bricks and mortar," in lieu of other programs it has been able to support in the past. He described his vision of public housing, one in which each development is like a small town where tenant leaders are the bedrock of the community. He encouraged public housing residents to continue to speak as one voice and to get the

attention of elected officials. This speech, along with Mr. Spence's very presence at a Resident Alliance meeting, was unprecedented. Furthermore, in an interview with Housing Authority top leadership, it was explained that NYCHA is currently working to foster an open atmosphere:

> Policy very much starts from the top. So, I think the mayor, Mayor Bloomberg, who has a different approach to government than traditional politicians—he didn't come up through elected office. You know his history. So I think right away you have a difference in that his view is: I have something I want to accomplish. I want people to understand and I'll talk to who I need to to do that. And I also think that this Chairman, Chairman Hernandez, has the same sort of deal. And ultimately I believe, I view it as, I'll talk to anybody. If you're reasonable, I will sit down and talk to you. It doesn't mean I have to agree with you. You're unreasonable? I'm not going to talk to you, because I don't need someone coming in here and pounding a table and telling me what I can and can't do. That doesn't work. We try to imbue staff with the same approach, because I think you do set policy from the top. You do set the tone from the top. We've done the same with elected officials, where historically staff has been discouraged from talking to local elected officials. Obviously [our] role is to take the broad edicts and make it reality, work with staff and encourage staff to talk to local elected officials so the same would go with the Resident Alliance. And I guess I view residents more broadly than just narrowly. You know, every resident, frankly, if they have an issue, it should be dealt with. I can't deal with every single resident's issue, if there are 420,000 residents I can't talk to every one, but if there are groups that represent residents and we talk to many groups outside the Resident Alliance, outside the tenant associations, that also represent residents, because they have an equally important role and an equally valid perspective.

Such recent cohesion and understanding of resident perspectives on the part of the Housing Authority may not be enough to protect public housing as a low-income housing resource, though, because of looming federal reform legislation, particularly the "Superwaiver."[40] As Damaris Reyes, Lower East Side activist and Director of Organizing at the Public Housing Residents of the Lower East Side described the

[40] The "Superwaiver", as on page 88, is pending legislation that would allow for further deregulation of Housing Authorities across the US. During the period of my research it was a pending, or looming, threat to public housing, and a point of activism for the Resident Alliance and, in the cause of solidarity, the TRADES Campaign.

situation, "slowly, people were coming together and then we defeated the two bills, or so we thought, because out of that really came the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act, it was an edited version." The two main challenges that the Resident Alliance confronts at this time are 1) the Community Service Requirement, and 2) the Superwaiver, both of which were described above.

The other challenge that the Resident Alliance faces comes not from external threats, but from the Resident Alliance's own internal lack of professional capacity. As the advocates had to move on to other pressing issues in the affairs of New York City's embattled human services world, the resident members of the Resident Alliance have had to struggle, and not always successfully, to maintain the networks of support that they need. They have not been able to develop as far as the advocates had hoped they would. While it is clear that the advocates worked to build the capacity of the resident members, they were not able to build as much capacity as they would have liked. Following is the perspective of one of the Alliance's advocates:

> I'm concerned about whether the Alliance is operating optimally and can sustain itself. I don't think, in my view, given the continuing threats coming Washington and elsewhere. I think that the Alliance has been important . . . and to the extent that I helped it form . . . I'm very proud of that work. But I think it hasn't reached the level of functioning that it needs to sustain itself and to be effective. I don't think, for instance, that the Alliance can do without the advocates. I don't think they're ready. This is the dilemma of resident organizations, these are more in the category of questions of, in quotation marks, "empowerment." I'm not sure that the Alliance has the capacity to continue itself and that concerns me. Now, I don't mean that a resident organization like the Alliance should function, should be able to function without its policy wonks and technical resources and so on, but I think that the idea is to know how to use them. No resident organization can do everything it needs to do as well as be paid to read the material coming out of Washington, to be part of a policy communications network, and so on. That's my job, and I don't think the Alliance uses me well. I don't think it's learned to use me well. And sometimes I despair about that. I don't think they have developed the capacity to have an effective board. I think there are huge gaps in their leadership

Resident members, on the other hand, sometimes accuse advocates of trying to "steer the ship" as one Resident Alliance board member said in an interview, and only paying lip service to real resident leadership. But the dynamics are more complicated than that. It is important to recognize that the Resident Alliance board members' professional capacity is not what professionals working in the non-profit sector are used to. The lack of professionalism goes beyond the fact that the Resident Alliance is, largely, a volunteer organization. In a world that is not only increasingly professionalized, but increasingly influenced by business practices of short response times and "accountability measures," the Resident Alliance leadership style often works against them. They are, for instance, invited to important strategic meetings less often than they should be. And, equally important, when opportunities for funding arise the Resident Alliance is not always promoted even by some of its allies because they do not necessarily trust that they will come through. A former board member described his perspective on the board's capacity in the following way:

> They had life experience, they had wisdom, yes, but in terms of process, getting through a meeting, processing through an agenda, formulating a strategy, getting ideas on paper, that kind of stuff that a younger person gets from academia and gets from work experience. That wasn't at the table. There was frustration. In part because while I always had patience, I was concerned that the frailty of the group, and by frailty—not just in terms of age and physical impairments—but just the fact that people...the membership at that time, the people who regularly attended meetings at that time, they weren't at the level of understanding around this stuff that one would want them to be. Listen, if you guys can't stop the bickering over petty stuff, you guys ain't going to go nowhere.

These are some of the frustrations and challenges that keep the Resident Alliance from reaching the potential power and effectiveness that they would like to achieve, and that their supporters hope to see them achieve. There are, however, few alternatives to

struggling through the realities of the situation, including insufficient funding, lack of professional skills, and so on, for an authentically grassroots organization like the Alliance. As Dushaw Hockett put it, "So, yes, the Alliance could be better, but the fact that there's an organization that we can have this conversation about is a big thing."

Crisis

In considering the accomplishments and challenges faced by the Resident Alliance, it is important to recognize the atmosphere of crisis that tempers all of their and their advocates' activity. First, there is the fundamental state of crisis or near-crisis in which poor people live. Second, there is the crisis introduced into activist activity by NYCHA (varying with administration, but relatively omnipresent). Finally, compounding the difficulties of the situation, there is the crisis provoked by the public housing reform legislation. It was crisis, in fact, that created the Resident Alliance and caused sympathetic forces to coalesce in new, closer and more unified configurations. The crisis also created *new* leaders, for example Damaris Reyes of PHROLES described how she became interested in taking on a role in her public housing community.

> And they were just talking about the possibility of these bills passing and what it would mean for public housing and privatization and how this was prime real estate and all those things. And I don't know...it just clicked for me. It was one thing that I wanted to go and I didn't really understand my neighbors and my community, but it was another thing to be forced out, and so I just remember there was this intermission and then they were going to do it in Spanish and I ran upstairs, started calling my friends, "You gotta come downstairs. You gotta hear what they're talking about." And then I just signed up to go to a meeting it was just history from there.

It also took the crisis of the reform legislation for advocates to become involved, and, moreover, join together and increase their ranks. When talking about this with

Judith Goldiner, she explained that public housing was not necessarily on the radar of many housing advocates because the public housing stock was always considered stable, was consistently maintained and was in far better condition than many private apartments that notably are not well-maintained but where there are fewer regulations governing the resident-landlord relationship or protecting residents.

> In general public housing is better housing than the housing that any other poor people live in. And the conditions in NYCHA are better than any other kind of low income housing, and they evict less. So, I think that's the reason that organizers haven't focused on public housing, but I think it's left a big hole.

The fact that advocates and residents both live in non-stop crisis and reactive mode has far-reaching implications for how involved residents can realistically be, and what kind of sustained attention advocates can realistically pay to the needs of public housing communities. While such challenges remain, it is important to note that, corresponding to the triple threats of the reform legislation, the on-going state of poverty and consistent efforts to undermine resident activism, at least three push-back areas also emerged: (1) advocates rallied together around the cause of saving public housing, (2) existing public housing resident leaders began working together in new ways, and (3) new leaders came forward.

Conclusion

The events that caused the formation of the Resident Alliance threw the very existence of public housing into question, and while public housing has, for the time being, been preserved, questions of its future direction remain unanswered. There is no question that public housing in the US is currently undergoing what is possibly the most

significant transition since it was created in 1937. It is with particular interest, then, that I observed the Resident Alliance and its relationship with this 'institution in flux.' In such states of upheaval, brief moments in time and points in space are produced in which the changing institution is vulnerable to redefinition. Even though the upheaval was perpetrated by those who wanted to do away with, or at least significantly minimize, the federal government's role in public housing, such upheaval tends to reveal much of what was long-hidden or had become camouflaged in the comings and goings of everyday life, and can empower the very populations that they were supposed to subdue or to disperse.

Public housing in New York City, as is well-established within the housing community, is exceptional in relation to public housing in other parts of the US. Its uniqueness comes both from its sturdy construction, decent maintenance, and from New York City's very tight housing market. While public housing generally may not enjoy a stellar reputation, elected officials and other high-level city decision-makers recognize its invaluable contribution to the fabric of the city. In an interview with the Housing Authority leadership the following was noted:

> It is recognized by folks who are in the know and think about these issues that there's a future, *potentially*, of the [Superwaiver being implemented] . . . I'm not saying that that's not possible, but it's certainly not happened yet today and I don't think there's the political will in New York City to do those kind of things. There's no wholesale demolition of public housing here. There's no wholesale requirements for time limits or moving people. That hasn't happened here in New York. I think that the local political environment in New York is very different than it is in many other cities.

This exceptional status, however, does not mean that the experiences of living in public housing in New York City are ideal ones, or that the discriminatory legislation has no effect on public housing in New York City. The consistent federal budget reductions

for housing programs mean that expenses for services, community programs, and maintenance will continue to be cut into the foreseeable future.

What such funding cuts and the climate of transition will mean for everyday life for residents in general and for those resident leaders who work to maintain or improve conditions in public housing is unclear. Nevertheless, using a Lefebvreian framework, and looking at what kind of space the Resident Alliance has been able to produce in this environment of deregulation, it is easy to see how 'representations of space' are evidenced in literal and somewhat extreme fashions: a policy-maker (former US Congressman Rick Lazio, who had no public housing in his district) had to publicly admit that he did not know any public housing residents although the law he sponsored would have affected them so deeply. Likewise, it is not uncommon that residents are framed as lazy, dirty layabouts who need to be forced to get out of the bed in the morning. The efforts of the Resident Alliance, on the other hand are rooted in spaces of representation, the real experience of daily life in public housing. For example, Resident Alliance members recognize the need to preserve public housing beyond the interests of current residents. They want to keep it as a resource for other low-income people and for the future. One public housing resident and associate of the Resident Alliance explained her position:

> People talk about a lot of things and folks ask me, how do you feel, would you agree if NYCHA were to go private and turn every apartment into a co-op and give people the opportunity for homeownership? I'm like, well, under other circumstances I could see, sure, I think that's great that people would have the ability to own their own apartments, but I don't think that's the right way for us to go because the same way we've had opportunities we have to think about those that come after us. And if we privatize everything and turn everything into a co-op, then what happens to the other low income folks that come in the next generation? (Interview with Damaris Reyes, Public Housing Residents of the Lower East Side).

Trying to produce spaces of representation, however, is no easy task. It is the space created according to the logics of experiences grounded in everyday life, "space as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users' . . . This is the dominated . . . space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate" (Lefebvre, 1991, p 39). There is, in the case of the Resident Alliance, a constant struggle to produce circumstances that will support people's well-being. Linda Duke, Resident Alliance Treasurer, explained her view of it in this way:

> It's like a person who wants to be a doctor. And you say to yourself, 'I want to be a doctor. I want to be a doctor.' And people constantly putting obstacles in your way, but if you really want to be a doctor, you constantly step over the obstacles, you keep moving, and that's something that we have been able to do. Because definitely it has not been easy and it's not going to get any easier. It's going to get much, much harder. There's so many obstacles.

This point of view is shared by all of the Resident Alliance members, public housing residents and advocates alike. Enida Davis, the Alliance's youngest member, described the way that she thinks of the work of the Alliance, "This is not a problem that's going to just end. Just because you get older doesn't mean that it's over. It's never over." Comments like Ms. Davis's, "It's never over," and Ms. Duke's, ". . . you constantly step over the obstacles, you keep moving . . ." are very much in the same vein as Rob Shields's characterization of Lefebvre's ideas on "the development of a society of 'total human beings.'"

> For Lefebvre, the development of a society of 'total human beings' is not the result of an inevitable historical progression, nor of economic structures, but requires continuous effort to demystify social relations. There are therefore no guarantees. This places an enormous pressure on existential choices and the need for responsible exercise of agency. Lefebvre shifts Marxism away from materialist determinism and places creative ability back into the consciousness—and will—of people (Shields, 1999, p. 111).

Following Lefebvre, representations of space have the strong tendency to overwhelm spaces of representation. Representations of space are the spaces, the lifeworld, created according to the logic of capital accumulation, it is "conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent—all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived . . . this is the dominant space in any society." (Lefebvre, 1991, pp 38-39). Where representations of space are characterized by separations (of work from home, of wages from real needs, of policies from real contexts, etc.), fragmentations and abstractions, spaces of representation are characterized by coherence and by privileging lived over conceived or abstracted experience. Where representations of space are distinguishable in their function as producers of rationalities of productivity, as "appropriate system[s] of spatial attitudes, habits, and territorial divisions essential to capitalism's survival" (Shields, 1988, p. 2), and as repressors of lived, qualitative experiences of space, spaces of representation are the spaces where the lived is reasserted and, in some cases, enshrined.

Examples of these elements of representations of space were highly evident in the public housing reform legislation policy makers worked to impose upon public housing. While, as explained above, the most severe of the reform laws were not passed, they nevertheless aimed to impose time limits, remove rent caps, and force people to perform "community service"— rational decisions from the abstracted position that public housing is a temporary source of housing, that affordable housing is there if people only looked for it, and that public housing residents have so depleted their communities that they must be forced to "give something back" to compensate for all they have been given,

but absurd given the realities of those living public housing communities in New York City. The actual situation is directly to the contrary: length of residence in public housing in New York is twenty years, hardly temporary; housing in New York City is notoriously expensive; and residents have strong social networks that, while sometimes imperfect, would be more positively affected by resource and capacity augmentation than would they by unfounded and punitive legislation that forces them to "volunteer" in their communities, and "incidentally" provide free labor at the same time. Residents and advocates, having come together as the Resident Alliance, countered these abstract impositions on their material lives. I argue that they did so from their positions within the terrains of struggle that *are* spaces of representation (Shields, 1999, p. 164). As residents and resident leaders, their understandings of the experiences of living in public housing were coherent and integrated, unlike that of the politicians and pundits creating the public housing reform legislation whose proposed dispossession of public housing residents was based on punitive ideological arguments and not on feasibility or concern for the well-being or daily experiences of public housing communities.

As Linda Duke said about the successes of the Resident Alliance, "we were recognized and that was a hell of an accomplishment . . . we got to bear witness." From Ms. Duke's point of view, and from my position as a researcher, the Resident Alliance invaded the representation of space—the space in which public housing residents are objectified, disrespected and separated from their contexts (Bourdieu, 1998)—with a space in which the realities, joys, trials, tribulations, comedies and tragedies of "the community of public housing residents" were privileged over others' skewed representations. Such a space of representation was also created when the Resident

Alliance's legal advocates and meeting attendees left NYCHA when they refused to let the advocates speak, in the gym while the other meeting participants went outside—out of the NYCHA-controlled gymnasium where the meeting was being held—and carried on the discussion that the Housing Authority was, in effect, censoring. The Alliance's occupation (however temporary) of key spatial sites like the Brooklyn Bridge (over which they marched and protested) and the steps of City Hall (where they protested and held press conferences) is parallel to Lefebvre's designation of the assertion of spaces of representation via occupation of key spatial sites (Shields, 1988, p. 5). Lefebvre's formulation also cites spaces of representation as those places through which "certain sites are removed or severed from the governing spatialisation and returned to the realm of 'communitas'" (Shields, 1999, p. 165), and which have the potential to "prompt restructurings of institutionalized representations of space" (Shields, 1988, 13).

The Resident Alliance made important contributions to such "restructuring of institutionalized representations of space." Not only were they able to bring the threats to physical and social reproduction facing public housing residents to a far wider audience than they otherwise would have been, but the unification of public housing residents from all over New York City, as well as the unification of residents and advocates in a formal way is a strong example of "jumping scales"—expanding their sphere of representation and influence (Smith, 1992a; 1992b; 2000). The very formation of the group enlarged the scope of influence not only through creating increased awareness, but also increased mobilization potential and expertise (in such areas as policy analysis, organizing strategies, legal strategies, etc.).

The obstacles that remain, however, are substantial. Many advocates and resident leaders believe that the federal government will eventually force local Housing Authorities to privatize public housing stock and fear that deregulation and further market orientation will displace many public housing households. These external threats, while speculative, nevertheless resulted in an atmosphere of uncertainty and mistrust.

Public housing residents and resident leaders continue to be faced by difficult everyday lives. The policies, practices and representations identified by the structural racism analysis are real challenges faced by residents and those who represent their interests. In relation to Lefebvre's three-part understanding of the production of space, structural racism can be thought of under the umbrella of and as a driving force behind representations of space. What is identified by the structural racism analysis is the set of social dynamics that is kept alive via the active ingredients of the public policies, institutional and private practices, and representations of differentiated races. Public housing residents, who are almost entirely people of color in New York City, face stereotyping, lack of access to quality education and living wage employment, and unfair housing policies, like the Community Service Requirement, to name only a few such complications. The significance of *representations* in the maintenance of the racial status quo in the US is, as the public housing reform legislation demonstrates, not to be underestimated. Without representations of racialized individuals as somehow aberrant and undeserving, the unfair policies and practices that are applied to populations like public housing residents would be far harder to impose. US Congressman Rick Lazio's punitive legislation and later admission that he does not know any public housing residents, and US Congresswoman Sue Kelly's remark about public housing residents

needing to get up in the morning, brush their teeth and do something, are prime examples of such discriminatory and racialized framing and mischaracterization of public housing residents.

The *practices* that flow out of the representations and policies that play roles in maintaining the status quo of racialized disparities have also been strikingly apparent in my research on the Resident Alliance, though they are more in evidence in the day-to-day lives of residents and efforts of resident leaders and will be elaborated on in more detail in Chapter Four. Nevertheless, practices like the token-representation of public housing residents via the official but co-opted representational structure illustrate the ways in which the racialized status quo survives as it is reinforced through everyday "business as usual." Other such practices, perhaps more subtle than the tokenistic representation of public housing residents, include the professionalization of activism referred to in Chapter Two. The interviews that I conducted emphasized that the professionalized environment in which grassroots groups have in many ways been forced to operate has mean that groups like the Resident Alliance do not have the capacities to survive for the extended periods necessary in order to institutionalize adequate representation for their interests as public housing residents. Returning to two excerpts that appear earlier in this chapter, one of the Alliance's key advocates described the situation:

> I'm not sure that the Alliance has the capacity to continue itself and that concerns me . . . No resident organization can do everything it needs to do as well as be paid to read the material coming out of Washington, to be part of a policy communications network, and so on. That's my job, [but] I don't think [the Alliance has] learned to use me well. And sometimes I despair about that.

And, as a former board member described his perspective:

> They had life experience, they had wisdom, yes, but in terms of process, getting through a meeting, processing through an agenda, formulating a strategy, getting

> ideas on paper, that kind of stuff that a younger person gets from academia and gets from work experience. That wasn't at the table . . . I was concerned that the frailty of the group, and by frailty—not just in terms of age and physical impairments—but just the fact that the membership at that time, the people who regularly attended meetings at that time, they weren't at the level of understanding around this stuff that one would want them to be.

Both the public housing bills that were considered, as well as those which became law, were striking examples of the kind of *policies* that a structural racism analysis identifies as playing significant roles in the maintenance of the current status quo of stark racial disparities. HUD programs like the Moving to Work Demonstration Program, proposed legislation like the Bill to Repeal the Housing Act of 1937, and laws like the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998, are all examples of policies that are designed without adequate consideration of the real circumstances of public housing residence. The Moving to Work Program would have forced public housing residents to work for free, not only displacing already employed workers, but assuming that high unemployment rates in public housing are the result of deficiencies among the individuals who reside in public housing—their lack of initiative and work ethic—and not the characteristically failed education and employment structures available to them. The Bill to Repeal the Housing Act of 1937, while it did not pass, would have totally deregulated public housing, removing the rent caps that would make public housing unaffordable to the great majority of its residents. And the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act, among other things, includes the Community Service Requirement which forces public housing residents to perform mandated "volunteer" work in their communities or be evicted from their apartments. The Community Service Requirement, the design of which was informed by racist stereotypes and representations of public housing residents, penalized public housing residents for the simple fact of being public housing residents.

One example of the Requirement's absurdity was seen in a two-parent family with two children who requested information and assistance from Public Housing Residents of the Lower East Side (PHROLES) regarding the Requirement's imposition. The father had a full-time job, and the mother stayed home with the two under school-aged children. The mother, however, because she was not working outside the home or attending school, was required to perform community service or the family would face eviction. This is a period when the rhetoric of 'family values' is deafening.

Looking at the events and circumstances (the policies, practices and representations) that caused the formation of the Resident Alliance through the analytical lenses of production of space theory and the structural racism analysis provides tools for demystifying and parsing out complicated places like public housing communities and suggests methodologies not only for understanding how representations of space maintain the circumstances through which their dominance is reproduced, but also how it can be countered, diluted, or overcome, changing the ways in which spaces of public housing are produced. The public housing reform legislation provided particular issues around which to rally and gave specific targets for the Resident Alliance to focus on. Even before the reform legislation was introduced, however, public housing in New York City was a location both valued and riddled with contradictions and problems. The following chapter describes the everyday life of the Resident Alliance by daily life within an individual housing project (as opposed to the city-wide focus of the Resident Alliance) in an effort to better understand and describe the Alliance's capacity for producing space.

Chapter 4

Everyday Life, Struggles and Projects of the Alliance

The society said, it's your fault, but actually it's not our fault. You know what I mean. You created this, and then they live in it.

> *–Percy Wynn, Resident of Millbrook Houses in the South Bronx and Former Resident Alliance Board Member*

The previous chapter described the formation of the Resident Alliance as a response to threats to public housing that emanated from the federal level. This chapter describes everyday life at the local (New York City) and the individual development sacles. It presents a close examination of the context in which the individuals who make up the Resident Alliance—all of whom (excluding the advocate members) are resident leaders in their own developments—work. I include these details in order to paint the fullest picture possible of the Resident Alliance and its work with the TRADES Campaign. At the scale of the development resident leaders face a whole other set of challenges in addition to those they face as leaders of the Resident Alliance. Most of the problems in developments stem from the general structural impediments to opportunities such as employment or education, and the hardships that such impediments visit on households and individuals. Development-level leaders also regularly deal with challenges that stem from NYCHA. Further, they have significant difficulty mobilizing the residents whose interests they represent. The main projects of the Resident Alliance have grown as much out of these local challenges as they have out of those challenges

that emanate from the federal level. In the following pages these situations and efforts are described in light of the Alliance's potential to produce space.

Local Level Challenges: lack of opportunity, insecurity, stigma

One of the most significant achievements of the Resident Alliance is the fact that leaders at the development level were given a space in which to unite—to jump from the scale of the individual housing project and become a force representing the plurality of public housing residents in New York City. While appreciating this achievement, it is important to remember the individual, development-level leaders and the common situations that they encounter within their developments. While tenant leaders had a great appreciation for the affordable housing that they inhabited—hence their commitment to preserving and improving it—it remained that they face substantial challenges. These challenges were of equal importance to the attacks presented by the public housing reform legislation that were described in the previous chapter. Participation in a development level tenant association requires a great deal of energy, knowledge and commitment. The following illustrates the multi-layered challenges that active participation entailed:

> There's some days where I have to just walk out of here because of the headaches . . . We have the association problems and then during the day you have tenants walking in with their individual problems, too. So you have all of that. And to try to figure it out and then you have to be a little bit knowledgeable in Housing Authority rules, so that's real stressful. Then to deal with governmental stuff and be able to pull people together to rally, to go to a meeting. A lot of that stuff. (Interview with Cynthia Jenkins, former member, James Weldon Johnson Tenant Association, October 10th, 1995).

Those who did choose to play roles in resident leadership on the development and city-wide levels reconciled themselves to the fact that theirs was a position of struggle,

one that they occupied as much from principle as from the belief that change could be effected. In thinking about her work in relation to the existing structure of public housing, Ethel Velez, Tenant Association president of the James Weldon Johnson Houses and executive director of the Resident Alliance said,

> I really realized that this world is set up to function just like it's functioning. The housing situation here in New York and in public housing is exactly the way they want it. It's not because it has to be like this. If you make it a little bit better, fine, but unless you can turn a whole block of peole around that l ive in that particular community, thing are not going to change. But I don't f eel like I've wasted my energy. I do feel that people do realize things can happen and will happen, and you just keep chipping at it. but it's not set up to be successful. It's set up to fail. (Interview with Ethel Velez, Tenant Association President, October 13, 1995).

A majority of the difficulties at the development level stem from the structural impediments to education and employment in inner-city communities of color. For example, in discussing why she thought that the Resident Alliance's efforts to implement Section 3 more broadly and fairly as part of the TRADES Campaign was a worthwhile pursuit, Resident Alliance treasurer, Linda Duke expressed the following:

> Believe it or not, you got some kids in the development [who would say] why should I sell drugs when I could make $22.50 an hour? Then I don't have to worry about looking over my shoulder for the police. I think if a whole lot of young people had that type of knowledge and information, we'd have less drug dealers in the development. It's as simple as that. Because the kids that work with me in the summer, that neighborhood youth corps money ain't no money. But if I tell a kid you can make $22.50 an hour and learn a trade and if you don't have your high school diploma you can get your GED, and you can constantly grow, that's something they can buy into. Not this little summer job, we work for seven weeks, you get that that little check and after that it's all over. This [TRADES] is a beginning and you can see a future, and you can see the end results...if you stick with it.

One of the Resident Alliance's founding members also noted the dynamics that result in public housing residents not being able to take advantage of opportunities:

> Families are broken living in public housing. That's what I experienced when I was growing up and I saw how some of my friends lived and what they didn't get from the parents or parent that they had at home, what they didn't get from the school system, how they tried to negotiate the broader community outside of public housing to try and find if they could work, but they just couldn't get those things to work for them.

Surveillance and policing are familiar parts of everyday life in public housing in a way that a majority of people in the US might find it difficult to imagine. To begin with, when a household applies to live in public housing, they have to undergo an uncommonly strict background review which includes, 1) a criminal background check, not only for the applicant, but for all household members over the age of 16; 2) positive references from the applicant's current and previous landlord; and 3) a home visit conducted by an outside contractor (New York City Housing Authority, (see www.ci.nyc.us/ html/nycha/html/publichousing.html; accessed October 12, 2004). Monitoring on a daily basis does not take place systematically, however. There is in public housing a conspicuous absence of security guards and camera. Instead monitoring took place on random but thoroughly invasive levels. The residents with whom I worked most closely expressed a pervasive unease created by the sense that everything is monitored. As in Foucault's panopticon, there was always the *chance* of being caught for an infraction of the rules. Perceptions of police among public housing residents have been ambivalent and tense for a long time. Incidents like the now infamous Baez, Louima, Diallo, Dorismond, and Stansbury (Dewan, 2004; New York Times, January 27th, 2004) police brutality cases have exacerbated the distrust.

There was also intense scrutiny and surveillance over tenant incomes. Even a slight income increase could raise rent or put housing eligibility in jeopardy. The system and climate of distrust often permeated community life. The reported suspicions of

neighbors, whether well-founded or not, might be the cause for investigation. NYCHA also monitored tenants' social, personal and family lives. Residents had to be able to produce proof of the home addresses of anyone who came into their home in the event of a spot check by NYCHA. Such invasions of privacy are unfamiliar to those outside public housing, but routine inside. Another example of "laying down the law" in public housing was the federal government's institution of tough "one strike and you are out" policies in the mid-1990s. Under the regulation a single arrest and conviction—even of a relative of the lease-holder living in the apartment (like a grandson living with his grandmother)—was grounds for eviction of an entire family. "Responsibility" and "guilt by association" were brought to new heights in this climate of draconian repercussions.

In addition to such structural impediments there is a current of chaos and insecurity in many public housing developments. It is important to remember that insecurity is only one of a number of currents. It does, however, play a significant part in producing the environment of public housing developments, but it is not the defining or singular element at work. Nevertheless, chaos and insecurity are symptoms of the larger barriers to gainful employment and other opportunities. Ethel Velez, the Resident Alliance's Executive Director described her own development:

> If you're concerned about security of the nation, think about how insecure the developments have been. There's no security and clearly security would make such a difference in these developments because the word public is just what it is: any and everybody comes through here. We've had contractors come through here and they've stolen valuable things that are on the grounds and residents get blamed for it. We have people come in here and take the metals because they can get money for them. So they come through and they take the aluminum and stuff like that. There are people who live on our roofs, live in the buildings on the 14th floors and whatever stairwells that they can use. So, it's just an open place. The drug dealers run through here crazy. Why? It's not like we're growing the stuff here. Somebody's bringing it here. So the drug dealers feel they own the blocks. They feel they own the neighborhoods.

In June of 2004 the New York City Council speaker, Gifford Miller, issued a statement calling for security measures in New York City public housing, "citing a recent Council investigation that found that strangers were routinely able to enter more than 200 buildings" (New York Times, 13 June, 2004).

Public Housing and Structural Impediments to Opportunity

The structural impediments to opportunity that are faced by public housing residents can be understood in light of structural racism. As members of poor communities of color, public housing residents are often cut off from opportunities and privileges that others can take for granted. While "structural racism" per se is a largely academic analytical construct, its main effects are seen in the everyday experience of public housing residents. Percy Wynn, former Resident Alliance board member and public housing resident for 50 of his 75 years, responded as follows when I asked him about his vision for public housing:

> Well, there's a history in this country when it comes to public housing. There was the civil war, and before that there were slaves. My ancestors were slaves. And after the civil war we didn't get what they promised us. We didn't get the 40 acres and the mule, we were like chickens with their heads cut off out here. So, when we came north we had no place to stay. And after WWII and WWI, this country is an immigrant country, you know that. So, no one wants to recognize a servant, a slave. So, they gave us public housing. They said it's for one thing, but it doesn't live up to the true meaning of what we said it was going to be. When it first started out in 1937 they had different types. They had low income, they had middle class, higher middle class. It was working out beautiful. Then, due to economics and due to politics, things started changing. The lower working class realized, well, we don't have to stay here, we can move to suburbia, build our own houses, borrow money, move. We will forget about the lower income, we'll just throw them together. And it's true, with the majority Caucasian leadership, if you don't have friends there to help you out . . . So, you know that the rich make the money off of the poor. That's the way life is, and then the middle class blacks, they saw an opportunity that they could make a little money. So they did

> their own thing against their own people, you know what I mean, and even up to brainwash is a hell of a thing...and even today, people want to feel superior to other people. They don't know why, but they want to feel superior. And they use the government to do this. The blacks came here from the south, from their little shacks, saw these beautiful apartments...they was glad to get here. And then moral issues broke down. One parent's home. We can't have that. It must be two. It might be alright for you, because you don't have the stigma, you don't have what I have, the black skin. But when there's no father in the home, there's no supervision. Especially if you rule the third or fifth class citizen. So, all of this...I'm trying to put it in a nutshell. All of this had an effect on housing, the conditions in the housing. So you say, 'look at them...they don't know how to live...everything is torn down.' Well, there's no father there to tell little Johnny, the mother's doing the best thing she can. The society said, it's your fault, but actually it's not our fault. You know what I mean. You created this, and then they live in it. So, you get the idea. I could go on forever talking about this. And the young generation today, from the baby boomers, their thing is, 'it's not my fault what my parents did. It's not my fault. I had nothing to do with it. I'm living today, I'm doing my thing.' Black and white. That's a problem because your great grandfather, he did this, but what are you doing? You're reaping the benefit of what he did, understand? I'm not getting the benefit from my slaves that gave them 300 years of free labor.

In describing his view of public housing, along with his understanding of structural racism, Mr. Wynn also expresses an intuitive understanding of the Lefebvrian representations of space construct: "You created this, and then they live in it." This sort of organic understanding makes it easy to see how structural racism, or racism in general, and representations of space intersect. It is far easier to create or condone environments *for* people based on conceptions (and misconceptions) when racialization exists to serve as a ready-made false construct of inferiority. It is for such reasons that instances of representations of space are so easy to identify in public housing.

Examining resident activism in public housing has provided many examples of how situations of racism and representations of space, which are obviously uneven and unfair, make themselves "acceptable." The attempts to reconcile the situation with lived experience produce striking contradictions. For instance, in order to alleviate the tension

created by contradictions, an accompanying narrative is required. In the situation of public housing in the US, and other similar situations involving 'entitlement programs,' the narrative is one that says that people are where they are because that is where they have chosen to be. The narrative is wound about pillars, the culture's national values, particularly meritocracy, individualism and personal responsibility (Aspen Roundtable on Community Change, 2004). It fails to recognize the effects that structural disadvantage has on people in the way that Adriene Holder, legal counsel to the Resident Alliance does.

> But if you really look at people who live in public housing, they really are just folks who happen to be low income, but there's a range. And they have the same range of issues that a lot of us have but what some of us have is money with which to deal with them. So you've got a kid who has ADD, some of us, who are more middle class might be able to get them into the special schools here and be able to petition certain schools to get them in, or just have the money to put them in a private school or get tutoring, or get certain types of specialists to deal with their special needs, you know, a lot of our clients just don't have that, but they have a lot of the same problems. Poverty does exacerbate it, so they may be unhealthier, they might be forced into choices that folks who are poor make that make them unhealthier, the way their lifestyle creates more stress, but, overall, I really do look at their demographic as being folks who are just like everybody else but just are poorer, so they can't meet those same needs. And then for some of my folks, who actually are a little bit dysfunctional and backward, well I can show you somebody in my family who's the same way who may have a very steady job making $60,000 a year, but they're just as screwed up as this other person but the difference is that because that person was born in my family and we have a lot of educated folks and we support them when they're not doing too well and you know, and support them mentally or emotionally, or you know when they can't take care of their kid my aunt takes the kid for a month or two because those kind of supports people take them for granted. There's no way in the world that I'd be where I was if it wasn't for the help of my parents. When I first came to New York I couldn't afford to buy furniture for my apartment, but guess what, there's a lot of people who don't have those kind of safety nets and supports.

Recognizing that people don't have supports and are often caught in vicious circles is, unfortunately, not a perspective that is shared by all those who are in place to represent public housing residents. There are elected officials, for example, with whom Resident

Alliance Leadership has tried to work who are alternately either non-responsive or highly resistant. The Alliance's executive director, Ethel Velez, spoke about the process of trying to arrange for a public information forum her East Harlem City Council member:

> Because they feel that people in public housing are really...you know, don't want nothing, worthless, don't come out and vote anyway. Don't care about nothin'. And that was his attitude. And the words that he used...I was just...I was amazed when I left out of the office. I was like, *whoa*. But if your City Council person thinks that way, what do you think the rest of the world really thinks?

Examples of interactions like the one Ms. Velez described show the complicated nature of the dynamics of perception and the actions or reactions that emanate from perceptions. There is a degree to which it is true that public housing residents are disaffected and do not participate in the political process in the way that they might. But there is also a great deal of unwarranted hostility directed at public housing residents. While it is not within the scope of this research to determine the origin of the hostility of individuals like the City Council member, it is easy to see how the stereotypes of public housing residents as "worthless" are relied upon as a basis for decision-making on the part of those who, for what ever reason—vested or ill-conceived—do not view the situation of public housing and public housing residents in New York City with the same degree of nuance and complication as a person like Ms. Holder does.

It is at the level of such interactions and the decisions that come from them that the way that the new and different types of spaces that the Resident Alliance tries to produce are either thwarted or enabled. Nevertheless, leaders like Ms. Velez know well the difference between perceptions of public housing residents and the "way things really are." When I asked her to address the perception of public housing residents as lazy and on welfare she replied in the following way:

> I describe people in public housing as *people*, people who are financially challenged. Okay, take my building 175. The first floor. [Going apartment by apartment on each of six floors...]. Retired, working, disability. The second floor. Disabled, some of the people in the apartment work but the main person in the apartment is disabled—she's had so many operations it's unbelievable—working, working, working, working. Third floor. Retired, so they were working, working, retired, working. Fourth floor. Retired, working, working. Fifth floor. Working, working, retired, retired. You know what I'm saying. So, the misconception of people not working is crazy. What has devastated this community is that they took a lot of jobs overseas. So, good jobs that took care of people, factory jobs, sewing jobs, piecing jobs, any kind of jobs like that where people worked, because everybody's not going to be a nurse, everybody's not going to be a doctor. Those jobs they took out of this community. We had tons of factories around here. People worked. People worked. Took care of their families. They weren't making $50,000 or $100,000, but they were working to help take care of their families.

The negative representations and perceptions of public housing residents and the frames through which they are viewed, play important roles in the way they are treated by NYCHA representatives, elected officials, and the system to which public housing residents are subject to. The following section describes the dynamic between NYCHA and residents (both leaders and the resident body in general).

Faces of NYCHA

The lack of security, in the form of theft, squatting and drug dealing, as well as the corruption and disrespect of contractors that Ms. Velez spoke of above, are all things that one would assume to be situations that the New York City Housing Authority, in cooperation with residents and resident associations, should be able to solve. And while such efforts are not entirely non-existent, the Housing Authority is not consistently effective in achieving security in its developments. These aspects, along with the manner

in which they affect life at the development level and the work of the Resident Alliance are addressed below.

The New York City Housing Authority cannot be characterized in an entirely negative light. Affordable housing is provided for hundreds of thousands of people; buildings and grounds are maintained at a relatively high standard; and there are NYCHA employees who work hard and seem to have the best interests of residents and their communities at heart. The general opinion of NYCHA that is held by residents, resident leaders and advocates, however, is one that portrays NYCHA as a largely unresponsive and often antagonistic bureaucracy.

The following may seem to paint the Housing Authority in a particularly negative light. It will be important to note, however, that the Resident Alliance's purpose is to represent resident interests in ways that they are not organically represented by the Housing Authority. In many cases, as was in evidence in the previous chapter's account of the Housing Authority's attempt to covertly participate in the Moving to Work Demonstration program by by-passing resident awareness and input requirements, resident interests were clearly not the priority of the Housing Authority's decision-makers.

As has been previously described, the main impetus for the Resident Alliance's formation was to counter NYCHA's strategies of non-communication by informing and galvanizing residents. The Moving to Work situation, which was not an isolated event, was a fitting example of representations of space in which plans to alter the setting of public housing in New York were made without dialogue or input from those who inhabit public housing. NYCHA's reticence toward residents ranged from neglect to

secretiveness to intimidation of those who demanded to know more. Not only does such a description mirror my own long term experience as a technical assistant and participant observer, but each of the people that I interviewed expressed their own experiences and observations of NYCHA's contempt for transparency. As Resident Alliance treasurer Linda Duke put it:

> Being a TA president and realizing the kind of problems we had up in the development in regards to information and the Housing Authority, it was like hitting your head against the wall and you felt like you were in a losing battle. And you felt like you were out there by yourself.

Enida Davis, resident at Whitman Houses and Recording Secretary of the Resident Alliance board described one particular way in which information vital to residents *could* be disseminated but is not:

> I can't find any information that [the Resident Alliance is] giving me anywhere else. If they don't tell me, I won't know. No one talks about the Superwaiver in my area at all. Nobody. No one even talks about community service requirement. I talked to Judith Goldiner [Resident Alliance legal counsel] and she's trying to get the Superwaiver out to the community. And she gave me a copy of a flyer for me to make copies of and put it out there. But that's not something that's being discussed. We had our TA meeting. They mentioned community service. He said, 'well, I got it...' my manager said, '*got a big packet on my desk and I haven't read through it yet. So, maybe next month I'll talk about it, but I haven't read anything about it yet.*' And the next month has come and gone, and this month we don't have a TA meeting. [emphasis mine]

Ms. Davis's experience, unfortunately, is not isolated either. Managers of individual developments do not have good reputations for communicating with residents—whether regarding issues particular to apartments or developments, or to broader issues like the Community Service Requirement.

Non-communication as strategy: If a tree falls but no one is there to hear it...

The New York City Housing Authority, as well as HUD, often seemed to have answered the age-old question above. In the case of the Housing Authority, the falling tree would be the Resident Alliance and its informing and galvanizing function. NYCHA and HUD's answer to the question would be: "No. If the Resident Alliance exists but nobody acknowledges it, then it doesn't exist." This was the situation that the Resident Alliance faced in its early days. Correspondence was not replied to, phone calls were not answered or returned, their meetings went unattended by NYCHA or HUD representatives, and they faced other such strategies of non-communication.

One stunning anecdote that illustrates the above point comes from a meeting that was held at the James Weldon Johnson Houses in 1998 to discuss renovations to a basement space that was to be renovated so that it could serve as a community center. The meeting was hosted by the Johnson Houses Tenant Association and was attended by the Tenant Association board members, myself, City University of New York Graduate Center Professor Susan Saegert and a representative from NYCHA's Community Operations division. The representative, a woman who was new to the Johnson Houses and to the Manhattan public housing district (she had previously worked for NYCHA in the Queens district). As we attempted to bring the representative up to date on what had been happening and on the proposed plans for the renovations (of which there were already blueprints), she hit her hand on the table and said to everyone, "Listen, there is one thing for you to understand: there is no history here." One might have thought that the woman was enacting a caricature. Since she was not willing to acknowledge that anything had happened prior to that day, it seems the entire forest did not exist.

The Housing Authority has since modified the way that it interacts with the Resident Alliance and resident associations more generally. In many ways it had no choice. After the Resident Alliance consistently mobilized thousands of residents to show-up at hearings and protests, wrote letters and postcards, and other such shows of force, the Housing Authority had little choice. This became especially true when the Resident Alliance partnered with the building trade unions. Now, not only does the Housing Authority recognize the Resident Alliance, but it sends speakers, including its Deputy General Manager, to speak at the Resident Alliance' monthly general meetings.

While the local level institution, NYCHA, has come to terms with the Resident Alliance, the federal institution, HUD has not. I learned from a confidential source in the Spring of 2004 that HUD employees are not allowed to work with groups like the Resident Alliance. According to my source, HUD would rather pretend that they don't know that the groups even exist. S/he added, "it's going to get worse...".

Contradiction and inconsistency run through the Housing Authority and through HUD, as seen in the fact that while NYCHA recognizes the Resident Alliance, HUD will not. A possible explanation for this is the general atmosphere of contradiction, and subsequent fragmentation, within which both institutions (NYCHA and HUD) are embedded. Both NYCHA and HUD oversee and work to maintain the stability of some of the most contested areas of urban life: the public, property, housing, and so on—those social "locations" where class differences are most evident. By virtue of their reliance on a contradictory, ambivalent and often vengeful state for their housing needs, public housing residents by definition are also reliant on the fluctuating political will to address the material consequences of class differences and structural racism.

In the time since I have been carrying out my participant observation I have witnessed several different 'styles' of administration, which, because they fall under the same institution, have an effect similar to that of interacting with a person with split personality disorder. A Resident Alliance advocate described some of the incidents from her own tenure as follows:

> NYCHA . . .wherever you are, they were there, too. It was amazing to me. When we first started letting people know about the annual plan conference[41] . . . it was a huge battle because NYCHA didn't want anyone to know. They didn't want anyone to testify, they called the meeting in a room that was tiny—for 300 people—and thousands of people showed up. I almost got arrested. They were really into trying to arrest us wherever we were. And like everywhere I went to talk to residents about what the Housing Authority's proposal was, there would be the guy from NYCHA in the back of the room. He would say, 'aren't you a little far from home today?' I would say, 'no, I live in Brooklyn.' Everywhere I went. I think part of it was Giuliani. It's the same people, that's the irony of it. Steve Love was the guy who was telling the cop when I was like 7 months pregnant, arrest her! And the cop was a woman and she said, how many months pregnant are you? And I said, 7, she was like, why don't you just go sit down, sweetheart. And he's they guy who now is like, 'Hey, how you doing? How are the kids?' It's all window dressing. What they do is exactly the same, but now they want to know what we're doing...they keep an eye on us. They want, they invite us to meetings, they meet with us, they talk to us, they open dialogue.

Things seem to change minute to minute. It is sometimes impossible to know what to expect, to trust that events will proceed in an even somewhat predictable direction. Such uncertainty and lack of trust plays a very important role in the often chaotic social and political environment in which public housing residents live and public housing resident leaders try to make changes for the better. I often thought to myself that half the battle of being a resident leader was just showing up.

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[41]Federal law requires housing authorities to develop, with input from residents of public housing and Section 8, elected officials and the public, a plan that sets forth its major initiatives for the coming year (New York City Housing Authority, 2004d).

NYCHA Representatives

While people who work with and/or live within the New York City Housing Authority tend, understandably, to refer to NYCHA as a monolith, those who have worked with or within the institution closely know that it *is* at once, a) a difficult institution bound by federal, state and local regulations, and b) an organization made up of individual decision-makers who occupy different positions and hold varying levels of power within the institution. Nevertheless, each employee represents the institution and produces the spaces of public housing. They have the potential to contribute either to the status quo of NYCHA—representations of space—or to contribute to producing spaces of representation, by which I mean spaces that are supportive of the everyday lives and needs of residents.

Not all NYCHA employees have the same kind of contact with residents, or the same kind of decision-making power within the institution. Housing assistants, for example, who have little-to-no decision-making power, are the employees who calculate and accept rent payments, and take care of other administrative tasks with residents. They have a reputation all over the city for being mean, condescending and generally unhelpful. Such practices reproduce both hostility between residents and NYCHA, as well as the feeling on the parts of residents that engaging with the Housing Authority is a negative and demoralizing endeavor. Linda Duke, Resident Alliance Treasurer and resident of the Mitchell Houses in the South Bronx, described her perspective on housing assistants in particular in the following way:

> First of all it depends on the individual housing assistant. And, I don't know, it's that in order to be in the people business and to work with people, you got to want to do it. It's not just a paycheck. And I understand you can come to work and it's like hitting your head against the wall and you don't see anything being done, but

> I also see you being a very nasty insincere individual. It's very easy to kill someone with honey [rather] than to give them rat poison. And I see the Housing Authority workers, the housing assistants, they would rather be nasty than to take that same nastiness [and turn it] around and they could get much more done. It's like they here and you there. And when people feel like they are below you, how do you expect them to respect you? First of all, you both are human beings.

Ms. Duke's closing point, "First of all, you both are human beings," is perhaps at the crux of relationships between NYCHA representatives (employees) and NYCHA residents. Those who recognize mutual humanity still have to work within the NYCHA framework, but are able to both get their jobs done *and* have a cooperative relationship with residents.

Where these dynamics become complicated, however, is with the professional (as opposed to the administrative) staff of the Housing Authority, in particular the staff of the Community Operations Department. The Community Operations Department is in place to oversee, as its name suggests, the happenings within NYCHA communities—or each of the 346 developments. Employees of Community Operations oversee the community centers, tenant associations, and social and economic development programming in the developments. Dealings between tenants and administrative staff, like housing assistants—however pleasant or unpleasant—are for the most part cut-and-dry: rent payment, rent calculations, etc. Dealings between residents and Community Operations employees, however, are on a different scale and different elements are at stake. Housing assistants monitor the individual and the individual household. Community Operations employees, on the other hand, monitor the goings-on of the community at large, and especially the members of the community who choose to play active political and social roles in their developments. Some Community Operations employees have been very divisive and mean-spirited in their attempts to maintain their version of control or order within developments. They have selected and supported "lame duck" residents to run

against tenant leaders of whom they do not approve. They have brought false charges against resident leaders, as well as an array of other "divide and conquer" tactics.

There are other Community Operations employees, however, who do not actively undermine resident initiative. Some are supportive and helpful and honest with residents about what may be going on behind the scenes at the Housing Authority and why certain decisions are made or not made. There is constant tension, both at the development-level and at the city-wide level of the Resident Alliance, around the degree to which such seemingly "good" representatives can be trusted. From the Resident Alliance's perspective, while they might relate to a Community Operations employee on an individual, human level, it remains that the person is an employee of the Housing Authority—which is all too often hostile to resident interests—and it is through the Housing Authority that their own salaries are paid and benefits covered. As Judith Goldiner, Resident Alliance legal counsel put it:

> I think that the real challenge is to not be taken in by [NYCHA representatives]. You still have to ask the hard questions. Like, the thing that upset me about the [meeting at which] Hugh Spence [of the Community Operations Department] [spoke] is that we didn't ask him the hard questions. And that was a mistake. We have to be the people asking the hard questions.

Ms. Goldiner's comments point to the constant tension that exists between NYCHA representatives and residents. While this tension has eased a bit since the more flexible and open administration Chairman Tino Hernandez and General Manager Douglas Apple began in 2001, the general character of interactions, having accumulated challenging characteristics over many years and in the midst of uneven power structures, remained contentious. To resident leaders and advocates it was almost never clear whether the words of NYCHA or HUD representatives were credible. The experience of

resident leaders especially was that all bets could be called off at any moment. The rules of engagement were constantly changing, as with, for example, Sylvia Velasquez's election where Ms. Velasquez was operating by one set of rules, the authority of which ended up being usurped by another set of rules imposed by NYCHA and undermining all of the work that Ms. Velasquez had done to hold the election.

The uneven and contradiction-ridden foundations and atmosphere of NYCHA do, as Kenny (2002) suggests, present serious challenges to resident leaders working to build their communities. This will present important questions, particularly as government shrinks from social provision and Bourdieu's "left hand of the state" is called into action more often and more deeply.

Token Representation

Part of the Resident Alliance's job of "asking the hard questions," as Judith Goldiner phrased it, has been to deal with the resident representation structure—the Citywide Council of Presidents (described preliminarily in Chapter 3) that NYCHA has in place. The CCOP is widely referred to as "token representation" by Resident Alliance members and associates. As Nicole Branca, TRADES Campaign coordinator and former Resident Alliance technical assistant at the Community Service Society put it:

> The Resident Alliance's stated reason for being is to do what the Citywide Council of Presidents doesn't do. They're filling that void. But they go above and beyond that. The Council of Presidents...they don't have a huge responsibility. They don't do most of what they're supposed to do under that, but I think that the Resident Alliance goes above and beyond that to really get into the issues and have town hall meetings...

The Resident Alliance has publicly raised questions about the CCOP, whether they actually represent resident interests and whether they work for all residents or for a few

"resident elite." Following are some excerpted passages from the Resident Alliance's informational flier on the CCOP:

> The Citywide Council of Presidents is accountable to New York City Public Housing Residents. The purpose of the council is to advocate for the Authority-wide concerns and interests for residents of NYCHA, to promote resident participation in public housing programs, to foster the creation and maintenance of informed, self-reliant and effective local resident associations and District Councils of Presidents and in general to engage in such activities as will improve the quality of life of NYCHA residents. (Source: Resident Alliance flier: "Who are the Council of Presidents?").

The concerns of the Resident Alliance about the CCOP are as follows:

- Public housing residents do not receive written report or minutes on what decisions are made at the CCOP board meetings.
- CCOP board meetings are not open to residents.
- Residents never see the CCOP budget or have input on how funds could be spent.
- CCOP does not have a real way to dialog with residents.
- CCOP has not tried to challenge or change the system of how residents are informed or organized. An example of leadership [would have been] if residents were organized, the passage of mandatory community service might not have happened.
- CCOP does not have a training program, resident manual or annual workshop for residents or leaders to learn or improve on their leadership skills.
  (Source: Resident Alliance flier: "Who are the Council of Presidents?").

In other words, the CCOP was a group that, while formally "elected," conducted its business in such a closed way as to have been scarcely democratic. However, the CCOP showed little to no willingness to be more transparent in its activities. Furthermore, the Resident Alliance worked to bring it to the attention of wider audiences that the CCOP was dominated by a small group of nine public housing residents and openly questioned whether "one person can wear so many hats with no accountability." The chart below depicted the structure of the City-wide Council of Presidents as of the Fall of 2004, lists the names of the residents who held those posts at that time and illustrates how redundant and unrepresentative it is.

Resident Represent-ation Vehicle	Bklyn East	Bklyn West	Bklyn South	Bronx North	Bronx South	Man-hattan North	Man-hattan South	Qns	SI
Citywide Council of Presidents	Bowman	Ballard	Wyche	Lamb	Smither-man	Barber	Azure	Taylor	Stanton
Resident Advisory Board	Bowman	Ballard	Wyche	Lamb	Smither-man	Barber	Azure	Taylor	Stanton
District Level Chairs	Bowman	Ballard	Wyche	Lamb	Smither-man	Barber	Azure	Taylor	Stanton
Resident Leader at the Development	Bowman	Ballard	Wyche	Lamb	Smither-man	Barber	Azure	Taylor	Stanton

Source: New York City Public Housing Resident Alliance. Who Are the Council of Presidents? (pamphlet). New York: New York City Public Housing Resident Alliance. 2004.

A less skewed configuration might consider four different people for each of the four positions available for each borough, bringing the total number of representatives to thirty-six different individuals representing resident perspectives and interests. Instead, there are a total of nine representatives who fill each of the different thirty-six positions.

When I asked Ethel Velez, Resident Alliance Executive Director, why she thought that the Housing Authority would not institute a fairer representative structure, she replied:

> Because, if you look at there's strength in numbers, and [as they see it] we don't need to have any strength, because, again, my own perspective, public housing is big business. There's a lot of money to be made, so why would you want them [us] to improve themselves [ourselves]. Because while you're improving someone else is being kicked out of a job . . . Let's *say* you want to help. Let's have the *illusion* of helping, but in actuality you're really not. You're also dismantling at the same time.

Another form of token representation is the usual, or sanctioned form that tenant associations at the development level take. The Housing Authority, via representatives from the Community Operations Department, condones tenants hosting holiday parties and other strictly social gatherings. But support is withdrawn and the Housing Authority

attempts to assert control when tenant associations are more politically aware and active, as well as when they direct their activities toward economic development and the appropriation of space for community needs (see Susi, unpublished, 2001). In discussing this point with Judith Goldiner, she added her own observation: "I think it's also sexist. It's mostly women who run the tenant associations, and mostly men who run the Housing Authority. And they have this, 'little girls, go run the party,' mentality."

As we see, this sort of token representation seriously limits the role that public housing residents have in the production of the environments in which they dwell. While that may be partially attributable to a perspective on public housing that positions it as temporary housing, with average residence at twenty years, public housing as temporary housing is clearly not a realistic model at this point in time.

Petty Harassment

The token representation described in the previous section is clearly problematic, but it is not as palpably frustrating or unfair as the different types of what I will call 'petty harassment' that is directed towards residents. The harassment, however, is not petty or insignificant when one takes into consideration the stressful effects of receiving unwarranted eviction notices to appear in court because the Housing Authority has determined—whether correctly or incorrectly—that a resident has underpaid their rent by sums as low as $2.00.

> I've seen people go to court over $2. Right. When you talk about taking someone to court for $2, you talking about, if you use that same amount of energy, you could send that person a letter or call that person to the office, talk to that person and get the $2. Because now you're looking at court fees, and if the person works the person got to take a day off from work, the person got to go through the line at the court. The person has to get a court date to come back. It

> may keep everybody in jobs, but it's not keeping the person in a job if she has to keep running back and forth to court. Because you got to go before the judge, and the judge could be dealing with something that's more serious than someone owing $2 to the Housing Authority. Okay? If this is part of the system, the court got a job, the security people in the courthouse got a job, the judge got a job, the maintenance man got a job, in the courthouse, the elevator operator...everybody keep a job (Interview with Linda Duke, Resident Alliance Treasurer).

Given the different facets of NYCHA as I have described them here, it is not difficult to understand how relations between the Housing Authority and residents become strained and unproductive. A majority of residents, as evidenced by low participation rates in tenant associations throughout the city, even in the face of poor and insecure conditions (not to mention the threats to public housing that came in the form of public housing reform legislation), are either satisfied with their apartments or do not see how being active in their tenant associations will be a worthwhile use of their time. Low participation rates are also attributable to people being busy, overwhelmed, unaware, apathetic, and so on. Others, of course, like the Resident Alliance members who are the focus of this research, have enough of a combination of concern for their own households and communities, as well as an awareness of and frustration with their landlord, NYCHA, that they are compelled to unite with others to counter the status quo of representations of space in order to try to produce something different. The next section describes what this agency looks like at the scale of the individual development. While the previous chapter described and considered the way that advocates came together and then joined with residents, what follows considers what the development-level challenges are, including the nature of relationships in public housing, the lack of trust that many residents have of NYCHA and of each other, and the role that outside organizing groups have or have not been able to play.

Agency

I begin this section on agency to produce space at the development level with an excerpt from an interview with Dushaw Hockett, a founding member of the Resident Alliance and its first board chair:

> From an organizing perspective I think if public housing residents in New York City and other parts of the country are to truly make public housing what they want it to be, public housing residents have to become a greater force in the electoral arena. The disappointing thing about that notion is that the capacity is there. When you look at the numbers, we have large numbers of people in clustered areas. Public housing is ripe for organizing. Every organization has tried to organize large numbers of public housing folks. So, that needs to happen if we're to use our muscle to move any kind of agenda.

If public housing is ripe for organizing, as Mr. Hockett suggests, then what are the elements that keep an organized and strong body of public housing residents from coming to fruition? I have identified four contributing factors. They include: weaknesses in development-level tenant associations/tenant leadership, active divisiveness toward tenant organizations by NYCHA, disaffection among residents, and general resistance on the part of public housing communities to the tactics and practices of outside organizing groups. I will describe each of these elements in further detail below.

Weaknesses in tenant leadership

As a general characterization it can be said that a majority of the tenant associations of NYCHA developments are headed by women who are senior citizens and, in many cases, whose leadership is somewhat dysfunctional. This is not true of every single development. Some developments are headed by tenant leaders, some of whom are also senior citizens, and who are strong and very aware of the interests of the

residents whom they represent. But given that there are 346 public housing developments in New York City, a handful of strong leaders can only achieve so much. Enida Davis, the youngest Resident Alliance board member (she is 26 years old), described the situation in her development in Brooklyn as follows:

> The Resident Alliance, which is really great about them, is that they welcome you. My Tenant Association is full of seniors and they didn't welcome me. From what I saw, and especially with public housing, this position that they, if it's sergeant-at-arms or vice-president or whatever, it's very important to them, and they do not want a young person who may be more skilled to take over anything. They don't even want them in the room. Because they want to have this position and it's very important to them and they've had it for 12 years or more...in my development...So, this is not something that they're trying to let go, and they want to die with it. I had to literally ask around to find out where we had our meetings. They did not post them before I started asking. It was an elite group...the seniors...and they were not trying to open it up to the development. So when I asked one of the seniors, she said, give me your number and I'll call you back and she never did. She had no intention...so when she saw me there she said, 'Oh! I had so many other young people to call, I guess I missed you...' There was no other young people there. They're not trying to take on real issues. I talk to young people [about being involved in their tenant associations] and they say, 'oh, my grandmother's involved with that.' We don't teach them to be involved. They say, oh, that's my poor grandmother. She's got nothing to do. Let her have it. They don't see it as, hey...community service requirement! Superwaiver! They're not hearing these issues, and I don't hear it in mine. I only hear it at the Resident Alliance. That's why I find them very important. Not in my development, or in any of my friends'. I have friends in other public housing developments. They know it's a senior's thing. They go to Atlantic City. No one thinks they're going to more than just a social thing for seniors.

While it is not clear that the low-income senior citizens, like the ones the Ms. Davis describes, actively work to undermine political action in their developments, it is clear that the "crony" relations and protection of their recreational interests surpass their interest in being politically active themselves, or encouraging political activism themselves. While it is beyond the scope of the research to determine the motivations of the people that Ms. Davis describes, my interviews and experiences shed light on the various ways in which political activity meets a dead end, as Ms. Davis's case illustrates.

Mr. Percy Wynn, whose development is in the South Bronx, described the situation there:

> Hey, at 75 years I'm living on borrowed time. We can't get the young people involved and we're not trying to improve them, and that's the sad part about it. "This is my little cup of coffee and I want it," when they should be reaching out and recruiting. We should have thousands and thousands of members coming to these meetings, getting involved, but we don't have that now.

There are a number of circumstances that result in relatively weak tenant associations, a very important one of which is the Housing Authority's efforts to control the associations, whether by manipulation or by paying off tenants. Mr. Wynn put forth his perspective on the situation:

> They're poor people. If you have no husband, no job and have seven kids on the welfare, and a little bit of money is stirred around, you better be very strong to turn it down. If you're an old lady or an old man, retired, and, you know what I'm saying...There's all kind of ways you can pay off. Your rent can be paid late, don't worry about it. Your child broke out the window...you don't have to pay for that. All kind of ways. So we said, we always said, 'you're sleeping together,' so, that's the problem.

Disaffected Residents

Beyond such active measures taken to keep tenant associations in a weak position, another reason for the relatively weak voice of public housing residents is the disaffectation felt by residents, a sentiment that has developed over the years and is symptomatic not only of conditions and dynamics within public housing developments, but of conditions and dynamics in the city and society at large, especially unemployment and underemployment. The disaffectation takes the form of non-participation, apathy, and impatience with messy political processes. Another aspect of the situation, one that is common at the development level, is that residents do not believe those tenant leaders who try to keep them informed of possible or upcoming changes. They do not trust that

any party, whether fellow-resident or NYCHA bureaucrat, tells the truth. When I asked Ethel Velez about her perspective on resident skepticism, she said, "I think people in public housing, they react to something that's affecting them right then and there..." Linda Duke provided her perspective on the situation, too:

> You know what it is, it's just like, God took 7 days to create heaven and earth. Some individuals, they'll come to one tenant meeting and they expect everything to happen right there. They don't realize it's a process. It was a process to get to the stage we're in. This didn't happen overnight. This was a process that went on and on and on and on. So, it's not an instant cure. But, if they come out to one meeting and you're not saying what they want to hear, 'oh, well, y'all not going to do anything anyway...'. It's the same old...Well, how can it be the same old? You only came to one meeting, and it took more than one particular incident to get to this stage. It wasn't done overnight. The same way it took time for this to happen, it will take the same amount of time for this to be undone. And it cannot be done overnight and it cannot be done with one person or two people. Because it comes to a stage where...'Oh, that's Ms. So-and-So...don't pay her no mind.' And you become a broken record. But the bottom line is that some people stay involved. I don't have any place to go. So I'm here for the fight. And everybody should have that same feeling, but they do not.

Sylvia Velasquez, Resident Alliance Secretary, described a similar situation within her own development in East Harlem:

> The problem that we have is that as a resident leader, going to these meetings and getting all of this information, and trying to get it always in writing, the residents believe that they pay rent and that there's nothing that can happen to their apartment, and that's the big problem right there. And the second one is that if the Housing Authority doesn't tell them, they don't believe it. And you know housing is not going to tell them, 'this is what we're going to do in the near future...' We're going increase the ceiling rent, we're going to sell these developments. And they keep saying that they're not going to sell, that they're going to preserve, and if you believe that, I'll sell you the Brooklyn Bridge. They have to keep us calm and quiet and not, you know, acting up, either.

The precise reasons for the lack of resident participation are beyond the scope of this research, but in discussing her vision for public housing Ethel Velez, she described her view of the residents in her own development—a development where she has lived for her entire life and where she has been a resident leader for at least 30 years.

> People have lost the will to dream about anything. They have no hope in nothing, they really don't. The little trips that we take, that we take people out of the community, they are just so transformed after that because they don't go anywhere. They can't afford to go anywhere. So, you think about, if somebody's working and they're making minimum wage, that doesn't help them to survive. I mean, it's a good thing that there's a lot of pantries around here because people would not survive without the pantries. When everything you do is more than your salary: childcare, carfare, you know, the basic things. Let's talk just about the basics. Let's not even get into detergent or, you know...luxuries. With people, it's not even a question. I would want everybody to be able to have a job. I would like the community once a month to go on a trip.

Tensions Between Resident Leaders and their Fellow Residents

There is a delicate balance in the thinking of resident leaders between being understanding of the toll taken by the deep challenges faced by some of their fellow residents and being frustrated by their apathy, in some cases, and their destructive behavior in other cases. Both cases, apathy and destructive behavior, leave resident leaders in a difficult position. They get little support from those whose interests they work to protect and often feel out on a limb as they risk their own security and spend their own time in meetings, strategizing and working, often with minimal success. In the case of those residents or associates of residents who destroy property and/or are a demoralizing or harassing presence to their neighbors, resident leaders have an even more irksome challenge to deal with. The following excerpt from my interview with Sylvia Velasquez describes the situation:

> I always tell my residents, put yourself in the place of this landlord. If you owned this building, and someone in the building broke the glass every other day, and you fixed it every other day. If you put, according to the Housing Authority, those tiles cost $1,000 to put in each elevator every time you burn it.[42] So, you put in that $1,000 floor and they burn it. And again you put that in. What would you want to do as the landlord? That's what the government wants to do.

[42] It is common for elevators in public housing projects to be set on fire. This phenomenon occurs throughout the city. Some fires are set by people smoking hard drugs (usually crack or angel dust) in the elevators, while other are set as expressions of boredom, dissatisfaction and rage.

> They've had it. You can't convince these people to turn their lives around. I told them in the last letter. We've got to turn these buildings around. I gave out 742 letters. I stood here for 2 weeks in this room. I put it in the letter that I will be here from 10 until 1. Come in, ask your questions, get involved, sign a petition. Tell me how many people walked in this room. None. Not one. So, they violated public housing and now they have no where to go and . . .

This type of frustration was also evident in the remarks of Linda Duke, Resident Alliance Treasurer and resident of the Mitchell Houses:

> Three-quarters of the stuff we talk about or discuss at our general meetings, people don't know. These are things that are also in the Housing Authority newsletter, and like I'll tell anybody, if Housing has to be brought up on charges for not passing out information, they would not be guilty, because they're constantly trying to put it out there. We, as residents, do not take advantage and look at or read stuff. And if you reading something and you don't understand it, then you need to question it. We don't do nothing. I pay my rent, I'm alright. They don't feel like they need to know anything else. Like I said before, they come to one meeting, things not done right then and there, they say, 'oh, well, they don't do nothing no way...' and that's the mentality that people walk away with.

When I asked Ms. Duke why she thought that was, and if she thought it is because people were too busy, she replied: "It's not so much that they're too busy. They're not too busy if they wanted cable TV. If we were passing out cheese they wouldn't be too busy." This ambivalence towards fellow residents, which verges on being almost anti-resident, does not stop Ms. Duke, nor Ms. Velasquez, from carrying out their work as activists. It does, however, point to the contradictions and complexities that have developed over time, which resident leaders negotiate on a daily basis. While the anger that resident leaders sometimes express is real and even justified, it is tempered by their deeper understanding of the socio-political environment in which public housing residents exist. For many public housing residents, participating in the political affairs of their

development is not seen as a worthwhile investment of their time or of their physical and emotional energy.[43]

The lack of participation in Tenant Associations and in other venues for being politically informed and mobilized around public housing issues is a result of long-running practices within public housing in New York City. Resident non-participation is reproduced in a number of ways, one of the main ways being the Housing Authority's reputation for not responding to requests for information, repairs, security and other urgent matters. Being ignored is at first frustrating to residents, but over time frustration turns to apathy. Further, as mentioned above, residents are often treated contemptuously and in some cases harassed by NYCHA representatives. Another reason for the difficulty in mobilizing public housing residents is, as Ms. Velasquez noted above, that many residents do not believe that the threat of drastic changes to public housing on the part of the government will actually come to fruition. This is so for a number of reasons: First, the non-responsiveness of NYCHA and of elected officials to the negative conditions of public housing give the impression that no one is paying attention; and second, many public housing residents do not have the kind of backgrounds, political savvy, or energy that would compel them to integrate a lot of what they hear about threats against public housing into their decision-making frameworks. Public housing communities have either been neglected or status quo for such long periods of time that many residents either

[43] Being the recipient of free cable TV or free cheese, to use Ms. Duke's examples, is a one-time interaction and one that results in immediate benefit. To use the terminology of collective action theory, there is an obvious 'selective incentive.' Being a person who is active in the political affairs of one's development, on the other hand, is not a one-time interaction. It is a commitment. It implies a belief that there is long term interest in which to invest as well as a degree of trust that the person has both in the system within which one is working and the others with whom one works. The rewards, beyond the rewarding feeling that some might have in relation to being in a leadership role or being in contact with people, are usually not immediate. Furthermore, engaging in the democratic process means that significant amounts of resistance, unpleasantness and messiness are encountered.

simply cannot grasp what is really going on, or grasp it to the degree that their experience has given them cause to think that it is futile. There is little sense of the kind of momentum that has been building against poor people, nor of time frame for privatization or divestment of public housing stock. Many do not see the use in fighting against things that they do not think will come to pass. Some are even angered by the work of their neighbors like Resident Alliance members, whom they accuse of trying to 'stir up trouble,' or frighten people.

Mobilizing Residents: Opportunities & Complexities

Despite the difficulties of everyday life and the difficulties faced in mobilizing the number of public housing residents that it would like to mobilize, the Alliance is by definition a success. Not only has it united the interests of public housing residents beyond the individual development or neighborhood, but there is now a formal organization with access to both policy and legal expertise, visibility of public housing issues has increased, and public housing residents have a central place to voice their concerns and look for support when they are not able to be heard or to access to the kind of assistance they need from the Housing Authority. Even so, many Resident Alliance advocates regretted that they did not have organizing capacity when they had the most momentum. Dushaw Hockett, former Resident Alliance board chair explained his perspective:

> [Community organizing was a] perspective and a skill that the Alliance could have used then as a way of sustaining a lot of the energy and involvement that it had from people throughout the city. I think it's something that the Alliance could use now, which is somebody who knows community organizing. Knows the process of building relationships, identifying issues, cutting issues that have the potential of building the base of an organization. Understanding the process of

> power and how to build power amongst low-income people, and how to help low-income people understand how to convey power on targets to get them to move on a particular issue . . . Not really grasping organizing back then caused us to lose a lot of what we had back then. We were at a high around the Moving to Work stuff and around the first big push that we did around the Annual 5-year plan process. You heard the story of the turn-out of thousands of people. Almost everybody who's been doing organizing and advocacy work in housing in the city was like, "1,000 public housing residents? Impossible!" Because almost every organizing group has the vision of, if I can just get people in that public housing development turned on by issues and if I can get them out to a meeting, if I can get them to an organizing, that'd be a humongous thing. And for them to see 1,000-plus people at a hearing at Pace University and having traveled from all over the city and having had elected officials foot the bill to bring in people by busses from as far as Coney Island. You can imagine. People were like, "how did they do it?!?!" That was just such a moment for us. That if we could have really seized on it and mapped out some paths for how to use that to grow out, I think that the Alliance would be in a different place now.

It is important to understand why the Resident Alliance was not able to use the momentum to their advantage more and why they did not have greater capacity for community organizing. My own observations have shown that community involvement in the governance of public housing had, as described above, been kept dormant for all of those years, via community operations department 'keeping residents in line,' as with my prior research experience at the Johnson Houses, in which residents were encouraged to have social and recreational events, but not anything more political or economic development oriented.

Given that organizing capacity was limited within the Resident Alliance, one might think that organizing public housing residents against the specific and drastic threats of the Moving to Work demonstration program and the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act (QHWRA) might have been an important campaign for ACORN or other organizations whose expertise is organizing. I discussed the difficulties of community organizing in public housing with a number of Resident Alliance members

and advocates. Before describing their perspectives in further detail, I believe that it is important to note that housing advocates and community organizers have not paid attention to *public housing* in a deep enough or consistent enough fashion for them to be able to be effective in that arena in a short period of time. The lack of attention to public housing was in part an outcome of the configuration of low-income housing in New York City where public housing was historically a reliable and well-maintained housing stock. The issues in low-income private or abandoned housing where conditions were much worse than in public housing were more demanding of advocates' and organizers' attention. Therefore, when the ideological attacks from the federal level were launched, the public housing and housing advocate communities, not surprisingly, were unprepared and had few effective organizational networks between them.

Beyond such contextual realities, however, the fact remains that public housing communities are not "just any community." There are special circumstances and histories in public housing developments that make doing work there particular. The work of community organizing in public housing is a delicate task. In many ways public housing developments are fragile environments. People are poor. They are stigmatized on a number of levels, including for being public housing residents. Many people are unemployed. They themselves or people close to them may be involved in the underground economy in a way that makes them suspicious of almost all outsiders, whether fellow tenants, organizers, advocates, or the housing authorities. This means that bonds of trust are very specific. Furthermore, while an outside group doesn't have much to lose, residents do. Dushaw Hockett described his view of the situation as follows:

> Public housing residents are very relational, and by that I mean because public housing communities in many ways are close knit. But, because public housing

> communities are very much close knit, any outsider trying to do organizing in public housing has to pay careful attention to the process of building meaningful relationships with key leaders over a period of time before you even get to the point of being able to roll out any kind of organizing or mass mobilization agenda around public housing. I think the mistake some groups have made is because they've been looking for quick results, i.e., large turn-out at a meeting after they do door knocking, or giving out flyers, because they've looked for quick pay-off, quick results from their efforts, and they haven't gotten them. Very sadly, groups that have tried to do organizing in public housing over time have given up. [Some groups], in their aggressive style and confrontational style sort of automatically assumed that existing tenant associations were co-opted, that they were part of the establishment and not realizing that in some developments tenant association leaders may have had a small following, but they had a following nonetheless. And that it wasn't that easy to push those folks aside. The bigger issue of an outside group coming in trying to initiate something, as opposed to taking the approach of seeing if you can get residents who are already living in that development to, through some organic process, create another organization or to improve how the existing organization operated. And that's why when you look at what the Alliance did and how the Alliance succeeded at mass mobilization, different from organizing, how we succeeded at mass mobilization was CSS and New York State Tenants and Neighbors Coalition, the Legal Aid Society, sort of respected the fact that there were resident leaders who had followings, had leadership roles back at home that these were the folks who had to be the vehicles for getting other people activated. That approach proved to work in turning out large numbers of people. I am convinced that, if another organization that didn't use residents who were already out there and who had leadership capabilities and who had followings, another group had went the route of not using that loose network of leaders around the city, they would have failed. They wouldn't have been able to go into public housing communities and go to tenant association meetings with folks who have a different culture and a different language and really get them to activate around this stuff.

The success of the Resident Alliance's organic approach did not reach the level that some had hoped it would. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the Alliance sustains itself on minimal foundation support and in an "ownership" environment that is hostile to the very idea of public housing. Within this climate the Resident Alliance serves a hugely important function. The table below provides descriptions of the Alliance's main projects, all of which grow out of the problematic circumstances (low-income, high-

unemployment, lack of communication/ disenfranchisment, stigmatization) described in this chapter.

Summary Table of Projects of the Resident Alliance

Providing information and alerting residents on issues of consequence for public housing	Informing residents is the key task that the Resident Alliance has set for itself. The premise of its information/education campaign is that residents do not know and are not informed about decisions being made for and about them by those who direct the activities of NYCHA and by HUD. The Alliance believes that bringing this information to the attention of public housing residents will result in a stronger base of public housing residents aware enough of circumstances to act in their own interest. The Alliance's informing function is carried out via monthly general meetings, mailings of announcements and fact sheets on relevant issues, and announcements of community forums.
Representing resident interests and gaining increased voice and representation within the Housing Authority and government, and networking between residents, elected officials, the press, and others.	The Alliance is in place to represent the interests of New York City public housing residents to all of the different levels of decision-makers that have jurisdiction or influence over public housing.
Section 3 work with TRADES (and as related to community service, "S. 3, not work for free)	The Alliance's efforts as part of the TRADES Campaign to ensure broader implementation of Section 3, the provision of the 1968 Housing & Urban Development Act that provides for public housing residents to be employed to work on construction and renovation projects within public housing, were taken on to further the employment interests of public housing residents.
Efforts to Repeal the Community Service Requirement and Broaden the Exemptions to the Requirement	The Community Service Requirement is regarded by the Alliance as a blatant effort to insult and further stigmatize public housing residents and as an outrageous affront. The Alliance has worked to repeal the provision. As a back-up to repeal, they successfully demanded that the Housing

	Authority expand the exemptions.
Exploring limited equity co-ops	Anticipating that public housing will be privatized, the Alliance is active in working on alternatives, such as converting developments to limited equity co-ops.
Monitoring and Reform of the Official NYCHA Resident Participation Structure	The lack of representation and transparency on the part of the Citywide Council of Presidents (CCOP) has led the Resident Alliance to launch a campaign to expose its secrecy and to insist on a more democratic "official" resident representation structure within the Housing Authority.

During my interview with Dushaw Hockett, former Resident Alliance director and currently director of public housing work on the national level at the Center for Community Change in Washington, I asked him what he thinks it will take to change the public will not only around public housing, but around housing issues in general so that groups like the Resident Alliance might someday not have to take on such an overwhelming agenda. He responded as follows:

> I have been in circles of advocates and organizers who have pondered this question time and time again. And the conversations range from projects that attempt to lift up the good that's in subsidized housing...the single mom with kids who is using public housing as a stepping stone into greater opportunities. We've talked about any value that may be in HOPE VI and changing the physical appearance of public housing as a way of changing how people—how the broader public views it. I think different things are going to work for different people depending on what their world view is and how they look at poor people of color and the housing that they live in, but that's not absolute and I think that people who live in public housing need something that's absolute. And what is the absolute is having the organizing muscle, the political muscle to push your *agenda in the event that policy makers don't see the value in sound research and sound arguments about why public housing should be preserved for low-income people.* (Italics mine).

Conclusion

I would like to return to the last sentence of the excerpt from Dushaw Hockett's interview, ". . . in the event that policy makers don't see the value in sound research and sound arguments about why public housing should be preserved for low-income people," because it illustrates in a specific and important way the different logics that govern each of the three spaces outlined in The Production of Space and, more importantly, that these logics have very few points for possible integration. In considering what it will take to change and improve life in public housing communities, researchers and advocates must take into consideration that sound research and arguments often make no difference, that decision-makers might be so impervious to the well-being of citizens as to disregard balanced, sound perspectives. It points to the role that ideology plays in the reproduction of spaces and in the ability of policy makers to disregard the needs of groups within the societies they govern, particularly in the current neoliberal period.

Chapter 5

Needs Addressed by the Formation of the TRADES Campaign & the Campaign's Evolution

My sense was certainly that folks would have preferred that the unions were more oriented to a certain kind of democratic process. At the same time I think people appreciate that it's not clear that the TRADES victory would have been won, without the power that the unions brought to the table and the [research] that they did. And so, it's complicated. This is how social forces work.

-Interview with Brad Lander, Former Executive Director of the Fifth Avenue Committee, and one of the architects of the TRADES Campaign

Introduction

The coming together of the Resident Alliance and the building trade unions—the TRADES Campaign—was the result of a constellation of circumstances and problems that the Campaign aimed to address. There were some issues that were more pressing to public housing residents, and some that were more pressing to the building trade unions. Taken together, however, the issues of each group combined into a coherent campaign to increase both the share of building and renovation work for unions, and to increase the number and quality of jobs that would be available to public housing residents via the Section 3 program, as well as the quality of construction and renovation work done in developments.

At the heart of the matter were three basic issues:

1) None of the work done in public housing was done by unions. Unions needed to regain their market share. The leadership of the unions was working for its members and its own survival;

2) Union work carries a guarantee of quality and accountability. Instead construction and renovation in public housing were carried by often fly-by-night contractors who did poor

work and exploited workers. If they were not fly-by-night contractors, they were often corrupt and either exploited workers and/or would not use workers from community. Furthermore, because fly-by-night contractors paid workers off the books, the unaccounted for payment of workers resulted in significant loss of tax revenue on local, state and federal levels.

3) While the law mandated that Section 3 be implemented nation-wide, in New York City (and in other localities as well) the program was either dormant, carried out unevenly and/or corrupt. There was little awareness of Section 3, and the legislation behind it was not strong. The procedures for application to and monitoring of Section 3-related work were faulty, and the Housing Authority, which had allowed the corruption of the process to go on for so long, had become technically and legally blameworthy, and therefore significantly obfuscated the records and processes relative to Section 3. In short, there was no way a renewed Section 3 could take root or be successful in such an environment. The TRADES Campaign therefore worked towards what is considered to be their most tangible accomplishment: the Construction Management/Build Agreement (CM/Build). While CM/Build is described in more detail later in the chapter, suffice it to say that CM/Build was a formal legal agreement between the TRADES Campaign and NYCHA intended to rectify the problems with Section 3—particularly, it would ensure that jobs went to public housing and it would assure better quality construction and renovation work.[44]

[44] While as of the Spring of 2005 the CM/Build Program had not yet resulted in quantifiable jobs for public housing residents because of legal and bureaucratic delays, the TRADES Campaign (working with NYCHA) had done all of the necessary groundwork for the program's implementation.

In the pages that follow I describe in further detail the needs addressed by the formation of the TRADES Campaign and its subsequent evolution. The chapter also covers the resistance that TRADES met, both from the Housing Authority and from some union leadership, as well as the strategies the Campaign employed in order to force the Housing Authority to work with them and to comply with the law.

The chart below depicts the flow of NYCHA construction work, as well as where the Section 3 program fits in to the construction and/or renovation process.

	Past	**Under CM/Build Agreement**
RFP	NYCHA puts out bids for construction or renovation work[45]	Not applicable
Bidding	Contractors with varying degrees of expertise and credibility bid for the work.	Contractors who have been certified as "prequalified" by the state, meaning they meet New York State safety and tax specifications.
Awarding	NYCHA awards contracts to the lowest responsible bidder, though there were not measures in place to measure 'responsible.'	NYCHA awards contracts to the lowest responsible, prequalified bidders.
Implementing Section 3	Contractors meet at development with development manager and tenant association president to discuss materials to be used, scope of work, numbers of Section 3 workers for the job, etc.	NYCHA requires the hiring of NYCHA residents as apprentices by the CM/BUILD contractor. The main CM/BUILD contractor must require its subcontractors, through appropriate subcontract language, to provide apprenticeship positions to NYCHA residents who are graduates of pre-apprenticeship programs. Apprenticeship positions are to be appropriate to NYCHA resident

[45] Renovation work might include new roofing, system (electrical, plumbing, etc.) upgrades, window replacement, cabinet replacement, painting, etc. Contracts are often awarded for entire developments where the number of apartment units can range from 50 to 2,000. Since there is a moratorium on construction of new public housing units themselves, new construction work is limited to community centers and renovations.

		graduate's skills and training. One apprenticeship position shall be provided for each two million dollars in aggregate construction. During the term of the agreement, the CM/BUILDER is also required to maintain a database tracking participation of NYCHA resident apprentices through the full term of the apprenticeship and to provide monthly reports to NYCHA. (New York City Housing Authority; Construction Management/Build Services, Requirements Contract, Article 27).

While in the past Section 3 workers were selected mainly by tenant association presidents, under the revamped department that was created in order to accommodate changes in Section 3 policies forced by TRADES, applicants turn in a Section 3 form to the manager of their development or directly to the Resident Employment Services office. Resident applicants are interviewed, go through an orientation to prepare for the pre-apprenticeship program, and then enter the Pre-apprenticeship Program. If they complete the requirements of the pre-apprenticeship program, they enter a union apprenticeship program and ultimately a union job, which offers union scale wages and benefits.

Needs Addressed by the Formation of the TRADES Campaign

Unions Had No Work in Public Housing

During the time directly preceding and during the TRADES Campaign, NYCHA had an annual budget of approximately $500,000,000 for construction and renovation within

public housing. Of that $500,000,000 worth of work, the New York City building trades unions (carpenters, laborers, painters, roofers, electricians, etc.) did only 1-2% of the total work. When I asked Elly Spicer of the Carpenter's Union what had driven the increased interest in partnering with the community of public housing residents, she replied:

> Necessity to get back the work. Recognizing that we have members in public housing and our members are walking by non-union workers in and out of their complexes on a daily basis. A huge amount of work is not going to our members in the very communities where they live.

Lack of Awareness about Section 3

A majority of public housing residents, leaders, managers and other NYCHA employees were not familiar with Section 3. As Nicole Branca, TRADES Coordinator, said, "Most of the residents and housing managers didn't even know what Section 3 is." While for some there was total lack of awareness, others did not know what Section 3 offered exactly, nor how to take advantage of the opportunities it offered. An interesting element of the awareness levels around Section 3 is that, thinking back to before the TRADES Campaign, even those who did know about Section 3 were not sure of how they learned about it. Most of the tenant association presidents I interviewed said that they knew about Section 3 through "word-of-mouth." Information about Section 3 was not publicized, nor was the program itself evenly administered. A lot depended on whether the manager of the development and the tenant association president were aware of the program, whether or not they were interested in making it happen, and also whether they were interested in seeing it operate fairly, or whether they excluded eligible residents and unfairly used the program for the gain of themselves, family or friends. Once the TRADES Campaign was underway, however, its staff and members (including

the Resident Alliance) filled the information void with informational pamphlets and presentations at developments around the city, press releases and other means of communication.

Weak Legislation

The legislation that mandated the Section 3 program, Section 3 of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968, was relatively weak and stated only that "to the greatest extent feasible" public housing residents should be trained and employed on construction and renovation projects within public housing. The phrase, "to the greatest extent feasible" led to loose interpretation of the program, or to failure to comply with it at all. Nydia Velasquez, Democratic Congresswoman from Manhattan's Lower East Side introduced H.R. 2243 in June, 2001 under the title, "Housing and Employment Opportunities Reform Act." Its purpose was "to amend Section 3 of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968 to ensure improved access to employment opportunities for low-income people." Four years later this bill still has not been written into law.

Corruption and Incompetence in Contracting Practices

Regulations governing the Housing Authority dictate that construction and renovation contracts within public housing be awarded to the lowest responsible bidder. While the lowest bid was not difficult to determine, the quality of contractors' work was not as easy to determine and track, and led to significant instances of shoddy construction and repair work. The use of cheap and sub-par materials, cabinets that fell out of walls, plumbing repair work that lasted only days or weeks, floors that buckled, and so on, were

typical. Richard Dwyer of the New York City Carpenters Union described one of the encounters that he had with a resident who experienced irresponsible practices on the part of a non-union carpentry contractor hired by NYCHA.

> I've been in a lot of housing projects talking to residents and I'll never forget Ms. Blue. Ms. Blue thought I was a NYCHA employee. I was in a suit and tie. [She said,] 'Would you like to clean your meat where you shit?' [I said,] 'Excuse me?!?' And here her apartment had been torn apart for 10 days and she had no running water anywhere but in her bathroom and she had a hotplate to cook on. She hadn't had a kitchen for 10 days. To me that's inexcusable, because if a carpenter couldn't put that kitchen back together at the end of the day, he ought to stop being a carpenter. That's one of our things that we're trying to sell to NYCHA is that you don't need to have your people dispossessed this long. They ought to be able to get in and put up the cabinets and get everything back together again in relatively short order, too. Not 10 days.

Another example was given to me by Lavon Chambers of the Laborers Union:

> One . . . handicapped senior citizen had to sleep on this small cot in her hallway because her bedroom was a pool, for 3 months. She had the paperwork and she had kept reporting this to the Housing Authority. Nothing got fixed.

Faulty Procedures: Unsystematic application and monitoring

While there was little awareness of Section 3 among the majority of residents or resident leaders, when there was awareness and attempts were made to put it into action, the procedures for residents enrolling in the program, ensuring contractor compliance, determining resident eligibility, and verifying proper compensation for resident workers was seriously faulty. Section 3 worked in the following way: whenever work was to be done in the development there was to be a meeting between the contractor, the housing development manager, and the president of the tenant association. The meetings were supposed to bring together representatives of the three stakeholders: the contractor, the development, and the residents. Each of the parties would then sign the form to allow

work to go forward if they agreed, or refuse to sign if they did not. The lackadaisical atmosphere in which such meetings took place meant that those procedures in place were often loosely interpreted at best. In some instances, corrupt tenant association presidents would award Section 3 jobs to themselves or their relatives and friends.

Where tenant association presidents were not corrupt, however, another type of problem was common: residents would fill out the Section 3 application, but it would never reach the appropriate office. Linda Duke, Resident Alliance Treasurer and resident of the Mitchell Houses in the South Bronx described how she tries to counter that problem:

> I not only give them [residents] the information [about Section 3], I tell them, take it to housing and the first sheet, xerox it and keep it, because housing has a way of losing stuff. You don't have to xerox the whole form, but definitely Xerox the first sheet.

In addition to keeping back-up records and monitoring NYCHA, informed resident leaders also monitored on a daily basis the contractors to whom the work is awarded and the construction sites themselves. In order for resident leaders to ensure the sustainability of contractor compliance with Section 3, as well as keep on schedule, use proper or agreed-upon materials, and other related issues, it is necessary to be both knowledgeable about the work that the contractor is doing and somewhat familiar with the construction processes that the contractor is carrying out.

> Because what happened was when they were doing contract work in my development and you sit at the table, you come away with 3 individuals going to work, and the next thing you know it's a different contractor, the contractor subleased, and [the] contractor [who the work was] sublease[d], they don't know what you're talking about (Interview with Linda Duke, Resident Alliance Treasurer).

Adriene Holder, the Resident Alliance's legal counsel from the Legal Aid Society described the situation from her perspective, too:

> If they [tenant association presidents] weren't aggressive or they didn't get the information on time or they didn't demand all the information from NYCHA from the contractor and all that information didn't flow, and there wasn't contact with the contractor, then it just wouldn't happen, so it was just was kind of left up to 'catch me if you can.' A lot of the contractors would come and just say, we didn't have [any residents] apply. But they had no information about when you were starting the project, what you needed, what the staff needs were, what the application process was going to be like, so it was willy nilly.

Ethel Velez's description:

> We have to be in the contractor's face all the time. To know what he's doing, how he's doing it, when he's doing it. Oh, you changed that? How come? You just have to be a pain in their behind and then, you know. So, as far as now, Section 3 is working here lousy, because we have a contractor who's real slick and you know, he talks rings around [some of our residents who are tenant association board members], because they don't understand what's going on. I don't have the time to be out there with them. To be there. I really just make sure...you better hire somebody. I don't care who it is but somebody better be out there working.

Percy Wynn, former Resident Alliance board member and resident of the Millbrook Houses in the South Bronx, explained his view of what went on in developments where the leaders were not as strong or determined to have residents hired as Ms. Velez of the James Weldon Johnson Houses is:

> A lot of the TA presidents are elderly black women who just don't know anything about this type of contractor. And the thing is, they tell the manager, 'Whatever you say, whatever you say Miss So-and-So.' Get them some coffee and talk about the soap opera and sign the paper and then they go on. And that's how it goes. With men, too, mostly. You don't have no policy...and we didn't have no power to make them do right. We could be aware of it, but there was no structure.

A lot of room existed, in other words, for doing things the wrong way and NYCHA's contracting throughout the city was infected with these practices. Eventually the Housing Authority would have real cause to obfuscate the actual workings behind and/or related to

Section 3 since so many illegalities had accumulated. Any number of parties stood to be identified as having committed some kind of wrong-doing.

Housing Authority Obfuscation

The Housing Authority obfuscated nearly every element of the processes related to Section 3. This was true before the TRADES Campaign, when residents could not track their applications to the program and where NYCHA claimed to have no records of how many residents were employed via the Section 3 program, as it was true after the TRADES Campaign when the Housing Authority persisted in not providing data until Freedom of Information Law (FOILs) requests were filed by the unions in order to gain information about both resident employment as well as about the records of contractors who were awarded NYCHA work. As Nicole Branca, TRADES Campaign Coordinator, described:

> It's not that they just won't tell us. They'll tell us something very general and then because they keep changing the forms, they keep changing the process. They even changed the department name from Department of Economic and Business Initiatives to Resident Employment Services, overnight.

Damaris Reyes, Director of Organizing for the Public Housing Residents of the Lower East Side and TRADES Campaign member thought aloud about a possible rationale for the Housing Authority's deliberately slow and stubborn pace.

> [People] always said there was corruption, and that it went from the inspectors all the way around to everyone, so I think that it was internal, and I think probably management realized that, too, to some degree, so they had to cover their asses . . . if they would have just conceded and given us everything we wanted it would have been like admitting that it was a failure. And that they had misallocated, and misspent all these millions of dollars all these years.

Corruption

There was a significant amount of corruption riddling contractor work within public housing; not only were workers not paid the prevailing wage and taxes left unpaid, but workers' wages were outright stolen. As Richard Dwyer put it, "Well, the contractors that NYCHA had are low-road contractors, to be kind. In fact all of the contractors who worked at Edgemere/Arverne, in the Far Rockaway section of Queens, have been indicted by the attorney general." Corruption took place when Section 3 was enforced as well as when it was not (The New York City District Council of Carpenters, 2003). One of my interviewees from the Laborers Union gave a general description:

> The main law they break [is the prevailing wage law]. With the prevailing wage law they have to submit certified payrolls, so they are lying on the certified payroll, so that's another crime they're committing behind [not paying the prevailing wage]. They break a lot of safety laws, OSHA violations. They make their workers work without proper protective equipment. A contractor that's corrupt, a lot of times you'll find them using substandard materials. Maybe if they're supposed to use ¾ inch sheet rock, they might use ½ inch sheetrock to save a nickel or a dime...cutting corners. So, the main ones are prevailing wage laws, the certified payrolls laws, and cheating on material.

Percy Wynn, former Resident Alliance board member and resident of Millbrook Houses in the South Bronx spoke of his experiences with corruption related to Section 3:

> They would hire these people [public housing residents], but then after a while as times went along they would find out how strong you are, how smart you are and then they would start taking your money, because there were no records of what they were paying. They don't give you no records.

Such practices were widespread. Another interviewee at the Laborers Union described his experience with such corruption:

> We go out to the city and find public works jobs where workers are being exploited. Most are immigrant and minority workers who have had as much as $80,000 paid back to [them]. The Attorney General's office has told me that last

year, alone, just us, the paper work that we turned in to them has accounted to over $1,000,000 in wages paid back to workers who were being exploited.

". . . they kept others in line by saying, 'we'll report you to the INS.'"

While there were procedures in place to prevent corruption, Linda Duke talks about how the inspectors who were supposed to oversee such procedures were also on the take:

> I've always said, and I'll say it again, that the housing inspector...I felt like they got two paychecks. They didn't only get a paycheck from the Housing Authority, but they also got a paycheck from the contractors. Because no way in the world you can sign off on different jobs that have been done in the development to a job that fell apart before the project was even finished, and you signed off on it and the contractor got paid. So, as far as I'm concerned...and they proved it, over the years, that a whole lot of inspectors was turning their head. And people were getting payoffs because the work that was supposed to get done did not get done. You cannot order a million dollar contract and you don't even get $200,000. worth of material to even try to do the job...So, it was like a losing battle, and contractors constantly running out of material. If you got a job for 500 apartments but you don't have enough materials for 200? And that means that you'll do the 200 and you'll leave the 300 hanging and never get done? So, it is like I stated before, this was a whole lot of passing the buck, and not a whole lot of stuff getting done.

"The Coalitions"

Another element, or need, addressed by the formation of TRADES was the hunger for jobs in the low-income communities of color where most public housing in New York City is located. One of the most obvious and aggressive forms of the hunger was what was called "the coalitions." The coalitions were concerned with finding jobs for young men of color from neighborhoods on construction sites in their neighborhoods. The goal of the coalitions was fair employment, but they were reputed for relying upon intimidation tactics and violence.

Ethel Velez, tenant association president at the James Weldon Johnson Houses and the Resident Alliance's executive director, described the presence of the coalitions at the Johnson Houses:

> Coalitions. Well, we had two stand-offs with the coalitions here. One of them, we were doing our grounds, and the coalitions brought their trucks up and was demanding jobs. And I was telling them, they can't have any jobs, because we got our own group of folks here. They're the ones who are going to have the job. They said they'll be back. We said, fine, we live here. They came back and they came back with *more* people...so many more people. They had chains and bats and all kinds of stuff. We had to call the police. But they came a little more sophisticated than they did before. Because when they came last time. I remember by the time we called the cops and told the cops the coalition was here, I mean, there must have been 200 people on the grounds. All up on the roofs. Our guys were all up on the roofs and stuff. I mean, oh girl. It almost could have been a real riot up in here. Really. That's how bad it was.

While the evolution of the New York City coalitions is beyond the scope of this research, the history of exclusion of blacks and other minorities from employment networks, especially in the construction industry, is well known. The vigilance and even violence of the coalitions was their "last resort" measure to break into the job network, albeit not a successful one. While certainly not able to solve obdurate minority unemployment issues, TRADES did address them head on and worked to institutionalize and monitor the procedures that ensure that public housing residents, most of whom are minority, had a route into union jobs. Not all of the coalitions resorted to violence. In discussing the way he began working with the unions, Lavon Chambers of the Laborers Union described how he came to the unions via the coalitions:

> I didn't start out in this business working for unions. In fact, I was pro-union, but a lot of people perceived me to be anti-union. Because I started with the coalitions, an organization called Harlem Fight Back. At the time the unions really weren't doing the right thing. Had a lot of people in my neighborhood who were construction workers who just couldn't get on the job even in Harlem. So back then we expressed our First Amendment rights, and we would go to these job sites and protest with sit-ins, civil disobedience. And my organization,

> Harlem Fight Back, I had union members who only got work if we found them work. The union never found them work.

Workforce Training Needs Specific to Public Housing Populations

TRADES also addressed the "workforce training" needs that are specific to public housing residents/inner city residents. Generally speaking, while many public housing residents were skilled, reliable and hardworking, there were also a significant number who were unskilled and unprofessional and thus not attractive candidates even for those contractors who were willing to participate in some fashion in Section 3. Elly Spicer, Field Representative for the NYC and Vicinity Carpenters Labor-Management Cooperation Trust Fund of the Carpenters Union, described a common scenario:

> . . . just because a resident puts down that they want to be a painter doesn't mean that you can hire them as a painter because then the residents get upset because the person *isn't* a painter and doesn't know how to paint, and so they're upset about the paint job, but a resident did it. But, if there were a way to truly provide training and access, which we hope some of this CM/Build will do, then you will have trained, skilled residents available to participate.

Some residents did not have the necessary training to be put directly on a job. Others still were hired by contractors for only short term work and usually received pay far below the prevailing wage. Most contractors kept no records of employment or payment of workers. Some noted that in the end, the program's dysfunction ended up being another item on long lists of experiences of frustration and disappointment in the labor market for those who tried to participate. When I asked Mr. Percy Wynn if, in his experience Section 3 led people to get better jobs or get union jobs he replied, "No, no, no. And it is a deterrent, because their hope is gone, and they don't ever listen to you no more."

Changing Composition of Unions

The demographic composition of unions has changed drastically in the past several decades. I include this long excerpt from my interview with Lavon Chambers of the Laborers Union Local 79 because it touches upon the types of shifts within and surrounding unions that have made them more likely to find common cause with community constituencies and ally themselves more closely with what have been mostly community interests. Just as the Housing Authority begins to see its fate intertwined with that of its resident body, unions have begun to recognize that their fates are intertwined with their minority members and an emerging workforce which includes a majority of people of color.

> Now you have all these entities that are sensitive, and rightfully so, about [minority and grassroots community] issues, they have the power to build now. So, you just can't go send two Italians to Harlem . . . That's not going to fly. Before you walk in you have to address the needs of the community. Then, as far as for business reasons, morally there were reasons to do it before, but for business reasons, why? Why should you? Now, back then there were no Abyssianian Baptist Churches...there were no Nos Quedemoses.[46] There were not all of these minority groups. Now, there's a big push. So now, if you're not politically correct or you're not doing the correct moral thing, people will put obstacles in front of you. So we should do it, if not because you have the correct upbringing to know it's right, just to know it's the smart thing to do, if you want to do it. If you don't want to become extinct. So, yeah, and also, the face of labor has changed. If you look at the people who are waking up today who are saying, 'I want to be a construction worker...' the bulk of them are minorities, and there's a lot more women. If you don't address this, if you don't learn how to receive these people, it's just going to go to a non-union market and you'll end up ending up making yourself extinct. Those who address it will grow. But if you don't, we'll see...

[46] The Abyssinian Development Corporation (Harlem) and We Stay-Nos Quedamos (South Bronx) are two grassroots community development organizations that formed in the late 1980s to protect and rebuild their communities.

Oona Adams, Research Director of Laborers Local 79 shared her view of the way that the perspective of the unions are changing.

> People have thought that there's the interests of labor here and residents on the left, and I think that part of our job is to make people understand that our members who we serve are living in these places, our members are the residents and it's really in our best interest to serve the whole, the totality of who our members are, not just serve them with the bread and butter issues, but serve them with the larger social issues which are helped by working with Section 3. I know that kind of peters off and gets vague, what I mean is, unions have focused on bread and butter wages issues for a long time instead of looking holistically at who members are and I think that starting to shift over to looking holistically at who members are stops us from having this division between labor and community. Because it brings the members into it. It brings the community into it.

It is important to note that while some unions or groups within particular unions are becoming more aware of the connections between their own interests and community interests and are trying to "do right" by communities, there are those who resist such directions. This element will be covered in more detail later in this chapter.

While the more progressive unions (including those active in the TRADES Campaign) are making headway in addressing the long-running differences between communities and unions, there is still a soured relationship between certain unions and minority communities, one that can be bridged only by consistent activity and effort on the parts of both unions and communities. While it is beyond the scope of this research to assess whether the relationships between unions and communities were being bridged in a significant way, TRADES and union representatives certainly visited more public housing developments and came in contact with more public housing residents and more issues relevant to public housing residents as a direct result of the Campaign.

Historic Barriers between Unions and Public Housing Residents

Another important need addressed by the formation of TRADES was the historic barriers between communities of public housing residents and labor unions. While the rifts began long ago and are mostly based on union histories of racial discrimination, by finding common cause through such things as prevailing wage issues together with the effects of poor work and lack of union market share, public housing residents and unions bridged a serious gap in solidarity and potential political power that had been subdued for many years. Lavon Chambers described how the TRADES Campaign conceptualized the alliance of the unions and public housing residents that came under the TRADES umbrella.

> In New York there's a union movement, but we've always been restricted to our books. But not a real working class movement in this industry. So what made a difference was we said, okay, here's what we're going to do. This is not going to be a union thing. We're going to make it a working class thing. And so we did it differently. It wasn't just unions attacking the HA. It was apartments . . . we videotaped people's apartments. They showed stories on channel 7, channel 2, channel 9. One of them was of a handicapped senior citizen who had to sleep on this small cot in her hallway because her bedroom was a pool, for 3 months. She had the paperwork and she had kept reporting this to the Housing Authority. Nothing got fixed. So we were able to tie in the labor perspective, but also the resident's perspective. And that made the difference. Any unionist group would fool themselves if they believe that this would have even gotten close to working without the residents and without the community . . . we're trying to build a movement, or a way of thinking, which, in my industry, is not that easy. I love my industry, but there are still a lot of people around who have old ways of doing things that would pretty much make us extinct if we continued to follow their way.

Brad Lander, former director of The Fifth Avenue Committee in Brooklyn, one of the founding members of the TRADES Campaign, described his perspective of the unique

configuration of TRADES and its contribution to bridging the barriers between unions and communities:

> [TRADES is made up of people who] genuinely see the future of the trade union movement as being rooted in people of color who are going to be their workers. I mean, partly those three trades, Painters, Carpenters and the Laborers, unlike the rest of their brethren, ...I wouldn't call them anti-racist, but they certainly were more open to diversity than the other trade unions, and even these couple of people, I think you have folks who genuinely cared about opening up their unions, who genuinely saw the future of their unions as being about kind of a different set of folks. And who therefore were more open to building these kinds of partnerships in a real way. Now, it still is fundamentally about the union self interest and the ways that they got buy-in from the rest of their unions was by selling market share. And they certainly didn't stop being 800 pound gorillas and so when they have the opportunity to negotiate with NYCHA they negotiated with NYCHA. They didn't say, well, we won't negotiate with you unless you bring in our public housing residents partners. But, you know, I don't think they were looking to sell out their partners, I just think they have a way of doing things which is, you know, about getting results and not necessarily about democratic process.

The circumstances described above were compelling enough to unions and public housing residents to have given birth to the TRADES Campaign. The Campaign would survive on funds from foundations and would grow in influence to the degree that it was able to convince NYCHA to implement the fundamental elements of TRADES's agenda, and also to force NYCHA to take its concerns seriously. The following section described TRADES conception and evolution from its inception to the present.

Evolution of the TRADES Campaign

As the previous section illustrated, the TRADES Campaign addressed very specific policies and practice within the New York City Housing Authority. The Campaign identified and highlighted the processes that were not allowing the Section 3 program to reach its potential for increasing employment and employment opportunities in public

housing. The Campaign also identified and highlighted the processes that allowed poor quality and corrupt contractors to continue receiving contracts in New York City public housing from the perspectives of the resident, NYCHA, and the contractor.

Fighting Workfare within the New York City Parks Department: The first step of what would eventually become the TRADES Campaign

After the federal government passed the welfare reform legislation, the New York City Parks Department sought to lay off a significant number of its civil service carpenters who were members of the Carpenters Union and replace them with welfare recipients who were now required to work in exchange for their welfare benefits. In order to try and redress this situation, the organizing department of the Carpenters Union came together with community based groups and advocacy groups. Richard Dwyer, Director of Labor Management of the NYC District Council of Carpenters, and one of the architects of what would become the TRADES Campaign explained the chain of events in this way:

> This grew from when the Fifth Avenue Committee was trying to help welfare mothers and others in the Work Experience Program (WEP) program and we were suing the City of New York because they were laying off civil service carpenters, our members, and replacing them with WEP workers. The law was very clear that you could not lay off permanent city employees and replace them with WEP workers, welfare people as workers. And so we put that coalition together with the Fifth Avenue Committee and the others. That was fairly successful. We won our lawsuit, well, we never went to the suit, because the city really came back to us and said, 'uncle.' What do you want? Anything you want you can have, just drop your suit. And what to me was very interesting was I went to Parks [department] for that negotiation. And my thing was, look, you've got a problem. You've got a problem of your welfare workers. You need to find them jobs. We've got a plan here that can help you and help us. We promised to take into the unions 'we'll-discuss-a-number' welfare workers. What we want from you is we want you in Parks to say that all of your capital construction work will go to companies that have state-approved apprenticeship programs. In response was, 'we don't want to talk about that. What's it gonna take? How many carpenters do we have to put on for you to drop your suit?' And it became

> clear to me, that the welfare workers had no standing with the City government. They [the city] were just trying to cut the budget and they [the WEP workers] were cheap chattel labor. I knew we had no support in the government and I knew that we had to enlarge our coalition so we got the residents, we got other unions, we got the community groups . . . So, anyway, the reason we got involved in TRADES was we were not getting the support of the politicians in the prevailing wage, and so we had to look at another strategy for claiming back this prevailing wage work, and I felt that the unions themselves were not strong enough to do that, but they needed to make coalition with people who have common interest, and the Resident Alliance, and any other resident group that were interested in jobs through Section 3 or whatever they need to do that, and in return, for work.

Brad Lander, then director of the Fifth Avenue Committee noted, "that coalition introduced some unusual allies." The outcome of this initial collaboration was a City Council bill that aimed to get jobs for welfare workers and get a certain number of them into unions instead of, as Richard Dwyer described, treating the WEP workers like chattel labor. The Giuliani mayoral administration never created the program, but the momentum that had been attained by the community groups and the unions led to a series of brainstorming sessions during which the group devised strategies for placing the low-income population whose interests they were representing in good jobs. Brad Lander described how events unfolded:

> We put out a paper. We did some research with a lot of people, a lot of different organizations, people brainstormed ideas, and put out about ten different ideas for what a next campaign might be and what we were looking for was something that would do the same two things: be about good jobs, and bring together some unusual allies really fighting for those good jobs. So, real participation from the people that needed the jobs, but with some interesting allies that might make the campaign something that really would be interesting and had a chance to win. And one of those ideas didn't start out with any pride-of-place, but one of those ideas was what became TRADES—Section 3 enforcement in alliance with the building trades unions. And it was probably suggested by the Carpenters, because they were sort of already at the table as a result of the 'WEP Workers Together' campaign.

With the idea that there was the possibility of "an interesting marriage between Section 3 on the one hand and prevailing wage violations on the other," the TRADES Campaign was born. During the early stages of the group the Resident Alliance was not involved. Recognizing that the unions and other groups needed to find common cause, the campaign's organizer at the time, Jahahara Alkebulan-Ma'at, met with the Resident Alliance and brought them, and eventually the group called Public Housing Residents of the Lower East Side (PHROLES), into the campaign. At first the extent of the Resident Alliance's involvement was executive director, Ethel Velez, attending meetings and getting familiar with the campaign. Eventually the Resident Alliance would inform residents about the campaign by hosting community forums, among other ways; help to mobilize residents for Section 3-related protests and hearings; and provide input from the resident perspective on what would enable the program to be sustainable.

The TRADES Campaign and the Resident Alliance had similar developmental trajectories: the catalysts for both were neoliberal welfare reform measures that sacrificed employment, income and housing supports for families in order to reduce the costs of public assistance, devolve public responsibilities for social welfare programs, and dismantle the so-called welfare state. Both the Resident Alliance and the TRADES Campaign had difficult paths. If solidarity among public housing residents was a cause of concern to the Housing Authority, then solidarity among public housing residents and unions was sure to be an even greater cause for concern.

Resistance to the TRADES Campaign

When the TRADES Campaign began to make forays into the dynamics of NYCHA, the chairman was John Martinez, who was brought to NYCHA by the Giuliani administration because of his expertise in aspects of privatization. Privatization of public housing was on the agenda in New York City as elsewhere in the US. While privatization remains an option for the future, discussion of it has dwindled significantly since that time. With Martinez heading NYCHA and pushing for privatization, it is hardly surprising that the Housing Authority refused to entertain discussion or negotiation with the TRADES Campaign. TRADES would have no better results with Martinez's successor, Ruben Franco.

It was not until Tino Hernandez took over as chair in 2001 under the mayoral administration of Michael Bloomberg that the TRADES Campaign made any significant inroads with the Housing Authority. It is important to note that the inroads were not the result of magnanimity on the part of the Housing Authority. Rather, the TRADES Campaign devised a number of strategies that forced the Housing Authority into negotiations. The strategies will be elaborated upon in upcoming pages, but I will first describe a bit further the Housing Authority's initial resistance to the campaign.

While the Hernandez administration has been more receptive to the TRADES Campaign, as well as resident involvement overall, there was still some resistance to these initiatives. A union representative described one example of the Housing Authority's resistance to the TRADES Campaign that, actually, went beyond resistance

and toward the type of divide-and-conquer measures that the resident leaders had long-experienced.

> NYCHA was very shrewd about their divisive ways. I mean, when Doug Apple called me at home, he didn't call me at home, but he called me at 8 in the evening, which meant he was calling from his home and our conversation was nice but then right at the end of the conversation, or what became the end of the conversation—because I cut it off there, he went into, 'well, you know the residents don't really want those jobs. They say they want them but they don't have people who live there that could actually hold a construction job like you guys do.' Right there. That's a belief that a lot of people believe. I don't believe that. I know there's people for those jobs. I know there's people hungry for those jobs that would do a lot of things and be very grateful. I know that, so...he was talking to the wrong one, barking up that tree, but you know, he laid out a nice plan, said that these jobs are going to go union, don't worry about it, but you really shouldn't get to close to the community groups because they're gonna put people in your union and they're going to make the unions look bad. And they were doing that to everybody. And they were trying...that's why they were getting in touch with the campaign, trying to find the weak link. I'm sure they had people after every meeting running back and telling them how the meeting went and whose position on what was what (Interview with TRADES member).

There were (and are) more overall advantages than drawbacks to the Housing Authority supporting resident employment opportunities through Section 3. Well employed residents would help the Housing Authority to achieve its goals of mixed-income developments and would increase the rent rolls—and the quality workmanship that is typical of unions would improve physical conditions in its properties. Nevertheless, as has been demonstrated, NYCHA representatives individually and collectively were slow and often uncooperative. Such shortsightedness may have been the result of any number of vested interests within the Housing Authority. As Damaris Reyes noted above, however, the layers of improper practice—literal corruption in many instances—meant that NYCHA's reluctance to be cooperative could have had any number of causes.

Resistance from the Building Trades Unions

A second and significant source of resistance to the TRADES campaign came from factions within the building trades unions themselves. The turn towards addressing progressive political issues was not a wholesale change within the unions. When describing the resistance to TRADES, or to using union power and networks to advocate progressive politics, union members of TRADES described such resistant parties as "dead wood" and "parochial." Nevertheless, resistant elements within the union hierarchy held a great deal of decision-making power over agendas and resource allocation. They refused to lend support, blocked possible gains, used noncommunication strategies, spoke disparagingly of public housing residents in negotiating processes, and actively sought to cut the TRADES Campaign out of negotiations. These actions on the part of unions were the result of some of the bizarre power structures that continued to govern some of the unions and union organizations participating in the TRADES Campaign (to say nothing of those unions that did not buy into it at all), including arcane and undemocratic practices like appointments for life. All of these concerns were made worse by the enduring racism of some of the trade union leadership as well as some members of the rank and file.

TRADES Strategies

In order to cut through NYCHA's resistance—including its divisiveness, obfuscation and stalling techniques—the TRADES Campaign relied on at least three important strategies: a) consistency and professionalism; b) awareness and mobilization

campaigns; and c) research, including the commission of research. Each of these is described below.

Consistency and professionalism: The paid staff and adequate resources of the TRADES Campaign allowed it to lobby NYCHA and conduct its efforts with consistency and professionalism. Meetings and phone calls received relatively immediate follow-up, materials were accurate and understandable, and key TRADES Campaign members possessed legal and research expertise (as well as passion for the work) that allowed the Campaign to cut through the often dense obstacles in the way of its success.

Education and Mobilization: TRADES conducted a Section 3 education/awareness campaign and mobilized both public housing residents and union members. Rallies were held at City Hall, a march of thousands crossed the Brooklyn Bridge in August of 2001, non-compliant job sites were picketed, and action drives educated workers about their rights.

Research and Report Commission: TRADES also conducted a great deal of research, both legal and field, from which research was commissioned. In what would become a clinching strategy of the Campaign, the results of the research were sent to NYCHA Chairman, Tino Hernandez and to Mayor Michael Bloomberg with the caveat that it would be released to the *New York Times* by the next day if the concerns represented in it were not formally and immediately addressed. The research that the Campaign conducted consisted of uncovering contractors with criminal convictions and investigating bad work. As put by Chaz Rynkiewicz of the Laborers, "Since we've been involved several contractors have been indicted and are no longer in the business. Some

have just been debarred, meaning they're not allowed to do city work any more."

Richard Dwyer's (Carpenters Union) explanation provides a few further details:

> [We] had a contact and he brought the attorney general to a meeting with just the unions that are a part of TRADES, and he indicated that he would try to work with us to weed out the bad contractors and to help the workers to get their rightful pay. And so we, that is, the four unions, did all of the leg-work and I guess we brought about 150 workers here from 27 different companies that NYCHA had used . . . we then wrote a report I think on a dozen contractors and maybe 40 or 50 workers. That became the [research] that led to the negotiations. We were able to get the deal because of the [research]. Bloomberg got the [research report] at 10 o'clock on a Monday morning. He was told that the next day the [research report] was going to the *New York Times*. At 1 o'clock on that Monday Tino Hernandez called me and set up a meeting. So, that was the impact of the [research report] on it. Now, from that [research] the attorney general has convicted three contractors. They've indicted four more and they've issues a global search warrant in which they take the computers out of the offices of 18 more contractors. And they're in the process of indicting those.

As indicated above, the research report would win the most tangible results for the Campaign, though all TRADES Campaign members I interviewed stated that if it had not been for all of the other elements of the campaign, the research report would not have been nearly so potent. As Nicole Branca, TRADES Coordinator, put it, "There was so much union and community pressure, so many people watching...more people accountable, a City Limits article, the oversight hearing . . ." All of these factors combined in what has thus far been the culmination of the Campaign—the CM/Build Agreement.

Achieving The CM/Build Agreement

The TRADES Campaign achieved many important successes, but the centerpiece of TRADES's successes was the CM/Build Memorandum of Understanding. The Memorandum of Understanding, to quote Nicole Branca, coordinator of the TRADES Campaign,

> was an agreement for the Housing Authority to systematically change the way they do their procurement process so that they would only hire responsible contractors, so they wouldn't take the lowest bidder, they would actually take the lowest *responsible* bidder, which they are supposed to do by law, but they don't.

Relevant parts of the MOU's text are paraphrased below:

> The MOU applied to all contracts and subcontracts, all contractors and subcontractors, and all work relating to NYCHA construction, modernization or construction-based maintenance projects valued at $100,000 or more. It required that NYCHA require contractors performing major construction, modernization or construction-based maintenance projects to participate in state-approved apprenticeship programs. Further, The Building Trades Unions agreed to fill a designated percentage—to be determined through further research and negotiations by NYCHA, resident leaders and the unionized building trades—of all new positions in their city-wide apprenticeship programs with NYCHA residents. [The MOU also required] NYCHA to contract with an appropriate training provider to supply the pre-apprenticeship training since experience in New York and nationally has shown [that pre-apprenticeship training] is crucial to the success of such a program. Through training and mentoring, pre-apprenticeship ensures that residents can meet the formal requirements for entry into union-affiliated apprenticeship programs, and are prepared for the rigors of careers in the construction trades. (The TRADES Program: Working Together for Jobs for NYCHA Residents. Memorandum of Understanding among The New York City Housing Authority and The Trade Unions and Residents Apprentice Development and Economic Success Campaign (TRADES) and T he New York City Building and Construction Trades Council and The New York City Building and Trades Employers Association, September, 2002).

The MOU also included a requirement that the Resident Pre-Apprenticeship Program "be governed by a TRADES Program Advisory Board, on which all parties to this MOU shall be represented," though that article of the MOU was still being negotiated at the time of writing.

The process of achieving the MOU was difficult from a number of perspectives. Nicole Branca described her view:

> Part of why it took three years to get this was not just for the coalition to learn how to work together, but to learn how to work together to get their foot in the door with NYCHA and then only two years into the campaign did we start meeting regularly with NYCHA and that NYCHA would even admit to who we are and that they've met with us.

The hard-won victory of the MOU developed in an equally difficult context within the TRADES Campaign itself. The context is described in the following section.

Context for the TRADES Campaign's Development

The most important and influential element of the context in which TRADES developed was the mistrust of residents towards unions and of unions towards residents. Residents and union representatives often did not feel respected by each other. While this topic will be covered in more detail in the following chapter, it is important to note what a challenging process it was for the Campaign members to work together and to feel comfortable doing so. As Elly Spicer, of the Carpenter's Union said, "It's been a very gradual step by step process of keeping people together. Of trying to build a level of trust." There were episodes of the TRADES Campaign in which each party was, technically, "sold out" by the other. I learned from my interviews, however, that each party had a certain understanding and sympathy for the rationale behind the so-called "selling out." Transgressions were remembered, but they did not cause the working relationships or personal rapport between parties to deteriorate.

Another important part of the interpersonal/social context of TRADES's development was the acknowledged power differential between the residents and unions, a tension that is important to understand if two such "unlikely" groups are working together for change in the way that the TRADES Campaign suggests is possible. Resident Alliance members of TRADES were appreciative of the resources and support lent through their work with the unions, and took the opportunities (as they should have) to use those resources to their advantage—for example, in requesting that the unions

photocopy flyers and information packets. At the same time, there was at times a subtext that Resident Alliance TRADES members did not always necessarily trust the unions to do the right thing. This mistrust, it seemed from both my interviews and participant observation, was based more on clear power differentials between residents and the unions than on any particular instances of untrustworthiness on the part of the unions. Under these circumstances there was a great deal of emphasis on process, in particular by those members of the Campaign who had less power.

While power differentials did play a role in the dynamics of TRADES, at the same time those involved (particularly union members) felt quite proud of the effort and spoke of the solidarity that was built. In the words of one union representative, "we came out brothers and sisters." The fact that TRADES still exists and that it was able to survive the challenging, to say the least, environment in which it sought to make change also points to the importance of the integrity and commitment of the individuals involved. Had the key TRADES members not recognized the complexity and urgency of the social justice issues on which they were working, the Campaign would not have been able to weather the many storms it did.

Conclusion

Like the Resident Alliance, the formation of TRADES was a reaction to neoliberal policies disregarding social reproduction. In the former the concern was the social reproduction of public housing residents, while in the case of TRADES the social reproduction at risk was that of members of the Carpenters Union. While the Campaign at first formed in response to programs that replaced union carpenters with the nearly free

labor of Work Experience Program participants, its savvy leadership identified ongoing problems within the pre-TRADES Campaign Section 3 (such as living wage violations, stealing wages from workers, etc.), and was able to unite the two causes and the momentum around them. Such unification greatly expanded the scale of the Campaign and began the unprecendented relationship between the building trade unions and public housing residents. The formation of the Campaign also made clear the potential for social movement that such a group possesses.

Examining the needs addressed by the formation of TRADES and the problems with Section 3 that it sought to redress reveals many of the issues suggested by the structural racism analysis, particularly regarding the way that the policies, practices and representations at work in the environment reproduce the negative and disparate income, health and well-being outcomes evidenced in so many public housing communities. It provides answers to questions of why a program such as Section 3 was not functioning to provide opportunities to public housing residents as it was intended to. By allowing policies to go unimplemented and/or unmonitored, individuals in local, state and federal decision-making positions operating idiosyncratically and systematically blocked the sort of opportunities offered by Section 3 for countless public housing residents and their families. The clause essentially lay dormant for more than thirty years in New York City, and many other locations nationally. The institutions charged with its implementation clearly did not, "[carry] forward the objective of providing within our housing programs maximum employment opportunity for disadvantaged workers in the community," as the 1968 bill states. The practices surrounding the unenforced and lame versions of Section 3 that went on in developments also shed light on how the program blocked instead of

promoted the progress of those who might have participated in Section 3 programs. Examining the practices also reveals how the poor construction/renovation work in public housing was able to go on for so long. Frameworks characterized by corruption and/or incompetence guided how the program was carried out and the space that it produced in the developments—both physical and social.

TRADES's purpose was to rehabilitate the dilapidated structure of the Section 3 program, and to allow it to produce social and physical space in a different, better way. The accomplishments and challenges of TRADES, as well as their contribution to producing spaces of representation, are covered in more detail in the following chapter.

Chapter 6

Accomplishments of and Challenges to the TRADES Campaign

NYCHA's come full circle, [from] not believing that their contractors would do something as bad as this to admitting that their contractors are horrible. And so I'm very pleased with the progress we've made with NYCHA and it's a good progress. It's not as fast as all of us would like, but it's a good progress.

-Interview with Richard Dwyer, New York City District Council of Carpenters

If one were to make a strictly physical evaluation of what physical or concrete space the TRADES Campaign has produced, there is not necessarily any stunning new structure to visit, nor are hundreds of public housing residents visibly working on NYCHA construction sites at this point. This is because the spaces that the TRADES Campaign has produced are social configurations; the social spaces that precede the creation of physical space. TRADES has created the conditions—however embryonic—for space to be produced differently: from actual construction in public housing, to the fair wages for residents who can then produce household spaces that are less likely to be undermined by poverty. As Richard Dwyer notes above, "It's not as fast as all of us would like, but it's a good progress." The CM/Build agreement is only in its beginning stages of implementation, and as yet there has not been a drastic increase in jobs available to public housing residents, or contracts being awarded to union contractors, but the CM/Build agreement does mean that a whole new system for contracting has been implemented within the New York City Housing Authority. Marcus Gomez, Field

Organizer for the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades, District Council 9, expressed his perspective on the status of the TRADES Campaign's work:

> My whole scare, my worry right now is that this program works. It's started, but it's nowhere near finished. That's what the results are: that it started, the money's there. The unions are willing, let's see what happens.

While the Campaign's leaders would prefer that the program had come even further along, it remains that TRADES has produced significant and tangible results. The procedures related to the Section 3 process have changed, as have the relationships between public housing resident leadership (as represented by the Resident Alliance and PHROLES) and unions. The accomplishments of the TRADES Campaign include, but are not limited to:

- having increased awareness about the Section 3 program among public housing residents, union leaders and members, elected officials, and others;
- having created networks and culture shifts among public housing residents, unions, elected officials, and foundations (specifically there is openness to working together where it did not exist before);
- having won the CM/Build Agreement, which provides a means for resident training, employment, and the opportunity to become union members;
- having changed institutional practices, and;
- having built alliances between unions and public housing activists in an effort to build a broad based working class movement.

I will describe these successes in the section below.

Creating Awareness of Section 3

Creating awareness about the Section 3 program was one of the TRADES Campaign's most obvious accomplishments. Nicole Branca, TRADES Campaign coordinator described her assessment of the situation:

> The greatest benefit that I have seen since this has started is that people know about Section 3 now. People talk about it and it's a real issue and it's not going away. In terms of concrete results, this morning [City Council Member] Gale Brewer's office called me and said "I need 4 residents..." That happens all the time now. Elected officials in the last year, with increasing frequency, have called me and said I have this worker who has been laid off or getting paid under the table, or I need three workers for this job, and I think that's been one of the biggest indicators for me . . . I'm getting these calls, so, I can't track if the residents are getting the jobs, but I know that people at least are looking for it, are aware of it, and know who to contact.

The awareness was created via the Resident Alliance's community forums, which were held in cooperation with and sponsored by City Council members, rallies, meeting with elected officials (for instance the Speaker of the New York City Council, Gifford Miller, Congressman, Charles Rangel, City Council Member Diana Reynas, among others); and by conducting post-card campaigns, email campaigns, making presentations at public housing tenant association meetings throughout the city, and writing and distributing press releases which appeared in the newsletters and on the websites of some of the unions, housing justice organizations and so on. The different sides of the TRADES Campaign also became more aware of each other's perspectives. Kate Rubin, Research Associate at the Brennan Center, had this view of what happened over time between the different parties that comprised TRADES:

> I think that there's even been sort of culture shifts and language shifts and things that have happened at the table over the couple of years as people have just been forced to work together. So, I think that falls under both a real challenge and a success. A success that it's happened at all, but definitely a challenge to make it happen.

The CM/Build Agreement

By far the most important accomplishment of the TRADES Campaign was the CM/Build Agreement. Not only, as above, will jobs and union apprentice slots be contractually guaranteed to public housing residents, but an unprecedented relationship among unions, the public housing community and the Housing Authority have been established. Awareness and respect for the agreement have increased in significant ways within the Housing Authority, too, though it does remain imperfect. Chaz Rynkiewicz of the Laborers Union described his perspective:

> What I have seen is that NYCHA has been getting their contractors to hire more Section 3 workers. Because when you go out there on an action drive you see they're hiring more, but they're still underpaying them. But it's still a step in the right direction. Steps. You want to get it all overnight? You can't. They went from hiring nobody, where they were picking up day-laborers off the street corner at $10-hour or $60 a day, now they're hiring residents at $20 an hour.

Whether or not increased awareness and these gradual changes will lead to more substantial institutionalized changes remains to be seen, but it is clearly the motivating hope of the TRADES Campaign that the changes will gather momentum. I again quote Chaz Rynkiewicz's interview to demonstrate the overall vision of the kind of change the Campaign worked to effect:

> If we can get somebody into the electricians union...an electrician has no problem making $70,000 a year, with full medical coverage for an entire family. These are significant jobs. These are good jobs, these are high quality jobs. Section 3 could alter substantially . . . the way I look at it, if one person's life is changed, it changes one-hundred people around them. Their kids and their kids' kids, other family members, a mother that's been in a vicious poverty cycle for generations, to see that cycle broken. The change that makes for people . . .

In addition to individual- and household-level changes, the Campaign has also had in its sight for the CM/Build Agreement the kind of system-level changes that Elly Spicer, Field Representative for the NYC District Council of Carpenters described below:

> They have $550 million worth of work going to go to signatory contractors who pay the prevailing wage, who give benefits to their workers, who provide training for new apprentices coming in who pay taxes to the city of New York, whose employees pay taxes, who have workman's comp. It's money that will now go into a system and really have some effect on the system because that money will go back into the system through taxes and other things, whereas before you had that money being spent and it was all in the underground economy.

Institutional Practices

The TRADES Campaign has also had the effect of changing institutional practices within NYCHA:

- NYCHA's procurement process for awarding construction contracts has changed
- NYCHA has established a precedent for working constructively with labor unions and with its community of residents.
- NYCHA has doubled the number of Section 3 inspectors in its employ.

As Richard Dwyer, Director of Labor Management at the NYC District Council of Carpenters, notes below, it is precisely this type of institutional-level change that is required (Ganz, 2002) if the work of the TRADES Campaign is to have lasting effect:

> . . . you've got to get the right contractors in there doing the right thing and it's got to become institutionalized. It doesn't become institutionalized it's very easy just to go, bye-bye. And five years we could be right where we are, we were two years ago, back to square one, fighting all over again. And I don't like to fight the same fight twice. Been there, done that.

Policy Changes

The TRADES Campaign has also been able to influence changes in the policies of NYCHA. Not only was the TRADES Campaign able to force the Housing Authority to take Section 3 seriously, but the Campaign forced the overhauls of several departments

within NYCHA, including staff and procedural changes that my interview sources indicated caused some ruffled feathers.

Representation of Resident Perspective

While the relationships between residents and unions have not always been smooth over the course of their work together, the campaign was successful in keeping the issues that were most pressing to residents on the agenda. Resident members of the TRADES Campaign articulated needs that they knew public housing residents had which would most likely not have been recognized by those who do not live in and/or occupy leadership positions within public housing. For example, resident input (from the Resident Alliance and from PHROLES) in the Section 3 recruitment process meant that the forms were made clearer and more accessible. Resident input also meant that a social service piece was added on to the CM/Build Agreement since the resident leaders at the table came to understand both sides of the equation: the jobs require a certain amount from the workers, and in order to meet those requirements in a reasonable and sustainable way, public housing residents are likely to require certain supports that would not otherwise be available, for instance child care and preliminary training in "soft skills."

Another important example of the representation of residents' perspective within the TRADES Campaign was the conscious effort to create active solidarity among the unions and the public housing residents by the TRADES Campaign taking on as one of its issues the fight against the Community Service Requirement, which was important to the Resident Alliance and the Public Housing Residents of the Lower East Side (PHROLES). TRADES members helped to create the anti-Community Service

Requirement slogan, "Section 3! Not Work for Free!" TRADES also helped to mobilize union members and public housing residents alike for press conferences and City Council hearings on the Community Service Requirement. Brad Lander, (formerly of the Fifth Avenue Committee, one of the organizations that created the TRADES Campaign) related the scenario in the following way:

> They [the unions] certainly did not start thinking that this would be something else they would be working on. But the public housing residents said, this is our number one issue, so if you want to be in partnership with us, you have to work on it. And they really did step up in a big way, and actually the height of the organizing was this demo in August of 2001, just a month before September 11th this big march over the Brooklyn Bridge to the downtown Brooklyn Marriott with like 2,000 people. Mostly union members. Not mostly public housing residents, to the NYCHA hearing and though certainly TRADES was on the table, the number one issue was the community service requirement, and for elected officials to come and see all the unions and advocates against community service requirement, it was really . . . a high point.

The TRADES Campaign and the Resident Alliance were also jointly able to influence the agenda of the newly resurrected public housing subcommittee of the New York City Council. For example, the subcommittee's chair, City Councilwoman Diana Reyna, had a hearing scheduled for April 2004 before the Council on public safety in public housing. After meeting with representatives of the Resident Alliance and of the TRADES Campaign, however, and hearing their perspectives and the pressing points of their own agendas, Ms. Reyna postponed the hearing on public safety and gave precedence to the TRADES and Resident Alliance's wishes by focusing on oversight of the implementation of Section 3.

Union-Community Relationships

In discussing the accomplishments of TRADES with its members during the interviews I held with them, each of them felt a great deal of pride about the relationship that was built between community and labor through working together on the Campaign. Elly Spicer of the Carpenter's Union described the situation in the following way:

> Historically labor was very involved in the community. Labor cared about the workers' lives and workers saw the union as their family. And a lot of that broke down...it was labor's responsibility to maintain that, but it became a bread and butter issue. So labor has to get back into the community. The building trades will not solve the employment issues of public housing residents. But to the extent that there's been the split between labor and community, this will serve as a bridge—in a very small way—to bring those two together. You'll have union members who will be working and living in public housing. And if they are not working in public housing, they will at least be working in the building trades.

She went on to add:

> As a strategy for community and labor to work together I think that this is probably one of the best examples. This worked incredibly well because of the self interests of all parties that were involved and it found and built on that common interest, and that's...and hopefully that's the relationship.

The strength in numbers and in resources (both material and organizational) that the relationship afforded were also very important. That the campaign organizers recognized that there were real interests on the part of both residents and unions that could be authentically represented was, as many of the TRADES members noted, the key to the Campaign's success thus far.

TRADES was not an easy group to keep together, as has been mentioned above. Adriene Holder, Resident Alliance Counsel from the Legal Aid Society replied as follows when I asked her about what she thought TRADES's accomplishments were:

> Just keeping that coalition together is just huge. It's just huge . . . that delicate balance. They were able to walk that line and I don't think they've taken enough

> credit for that. Because it was a hard coalition to maintain, and they maintained it and they continue to maintain it. Although some people are more active in it than others I think at this point I think because of what seems to be the apparent victories and the implementation is more what's going. I think the unions have more of a role in that, but it was huge and I think it's a case study in organizing and community empowerment, and it's not easy. Just because people have a common vision doesn't mean that you can hold it together, and they did, they held it together and they purged themselves of stuff when it was bad. Anyone who does this work should understand the magnitude of that. It was just a huge victory and I hope that they can build off of that. We were meeting like every other week at one point. It was just a lot of work, and people juggled that. People had other responsibilities, and the unions were really concerned about building trust and having some visibility with the public housing residents and bringing their white as well as their people of color. They understood the importance of both. How they couldn't just have the people of color members. They wanted to bring the white members, too, to these rallies off of the work sites that said 'This is about working people in New York and we need to get more people these opportunities.' And that was empowering and I think for any of us to forget those lessons would be tragic, because we have to keep doing it over and over.

There is real recognition among TRADES members that the campaign had, beyond the obvious self-interest of all parties, a vested interest in doing things differently in terms of union/community relationships. As Oona Adams, Research Director of the Laborers Local 79, said:

> It's really hard. There have been times I've really hated sitting with everybody. I just wanted to say, 'fuck you all.' I don't need this . . . and at the same time, they're people who are very dear to me. It's been tremendously useful and I think more useful than just what we gain from it. I think it's useful in changing the ways that community groups and unions do business in general.

And while the TRADES Campaign is but one example (and somewhat limited in scope), it does have potential for consistent growth both within New York City and nationally.

TRADES as a Model Campaign

Beyond the CM/Build Agreement, perhaps the most formal form of recognition that the TRADES Campaign has been the fact that, as Nicole Branca said, "The few

funders in this world who know about Section 3 are very excited about it and want to give money to the program and to grow the program to other cities."

TRADES Projects

While the TRADES Campaign can claim the above accomplishments, the campaign continues. The foci of its work at the time of writing include:

- Ensuring that the CM/Build Memorandum of Understanding is carried through, particularly the creation and implementation of the pre-apprenticeship program;
- Ensuring that an entity for monitoring and ensuring the accountability of the CM/Build Program is created so that the legacy of the TRADES Campaign continues. This component of TRADES's work includes monitoring how many residents enter the pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs, how many graduate, etc. As Marcus Gomez, Field Organizer from DC 9, summarized, [We must] "monitor it because this is a new program. There's going to be mistakes made. There's going to be problems and if we have somebody overseeing it we can correct those problems before it becomes too drastic that eventually NYCHA will say, 'the program's not working. And we can't back it up and show, well, why the program is not working is because of a,b,c."
- Remaining vigilant in opposition to the Community Service Requirement;
- Promoting transparency within the Housing Authority, particularly in terms of ensuring that the hearings surrounding NYCHA's annual plan are well-publicized and well attended, maintaining a website that features information on Section 3 and other

relevant issues, as well as continuing awareness promotion and outreach about Section 3 opportunities for residents; and

- Continuing efforts to strengthen Section 3 legislation in cooperation with Congresswoman Nydia Velasquez.

Challenges, Frustrations, and Tensions Encountered in Trying to Produce Different Spaces of Public Housing

The TRADES Campaign's accomplishments are both impressive and, in some cases, unprecedented. Since, however, my argument is that the efforts of the TRADES Campaign have helped to create environments that are akin to spaces of representation and thus are likely to foster or enable better outcomes for public housing residents. It is important to understand its internal tensions and the challenges that it came up against. This understanding is all the more important if the successes of TRADES are to be repeated elsewhere. I have identified three main categories of challenges and tensions:

a) Those inherent to the TRADES project of changing the contracting and hiring practices of NYCHA;

b) Those that were a product of NYCHA's unwillingness to work on the goals of the campaign; and

c) Those inherent to the project of bridging barriers to solidarity between public housing residents/community and unions.

Changing the contracting and hiring practices of NYCHA

Constraints on the Number of Apprenticeships

The TRADES Campaign was a long and sometimes arduous effort that required a great deal of energy from all who participated. Given the amount of work that went into TRADES, many of those I interviewed expressed a degree of frustration that a greater number of apprentice slots would not be available to residents. Kate Rubin, then Research Associate at the Brennan Center, explained the feeling of some, especially those more sympathetic to the need for good jobs among public housing residents, about this aspect of the Campaign:

> I think that one big difficulty was that in the end we were only ever able to talk about a few hundred jobs over a few years. Over maybe ten years, hundreds of jobs, but it's hard to ask people to organize and put a lot on the line, or put a lot of resources into something that actually is just going to help a small number of people...get really great jobs, but it's a pretty narrowly focused thing. But, I do think that when you're talking about public housing and people have so many...I mean, there's just so much bad stuff that's coming down from federal policy, it's hard to ask people to focus specifically on Section 3 and creating these jobs when chances are they're not going to get them and their kid's not going to get them...percentage wise.

Real structural changes were made, however. While lamenting that more jobs had not come out of the campaign, TRADES Coordinator, Nicole Branca also recognized this, saying, "but our purpose was to create system change."

The small number of jobs is also a window onto an inherent conflict of interest that exists between members of TRADES. I again quote Kate Rubin, whose explanation provides further detail:

> And I think that that's just hard when it gets down to the bottom line of things. The residents and the unions actually have one goal in common, which is to make this work, have NYCHA go union and get people into apprenticeship programs, but they have one goal that's in opposition, and that's the resident advocates need to get more people, want to get more people into the union apprenticeship

> programs, and the union apprenticeship program's interest is to keep them pretty closed. And both sides are definitely open to seeing the other one, but it's hard and it's hard to be allies and try to work together to try to pressure NYCHA when clearly at the bottom a conflict of interest between them exists. But I think that those two groups need to keep working together, the building trades and public housing residents, for sure, and I think that, I would say that one of the successes is just getting people to the table to begin with, and starting to have the conversations and starting to work together.

The unions also understood this conflict of interests, but credited it to the realities of the construction trades. While the union members of TRADES were definitely practically minded, they did their professional best to see to the CM/Build Agreement's success. The following quote from Elly Spicer, Field Representative of the New York City District Council of Carpenters summarizes the thoughts on this topic put forth by almost all of the union members of TRADES whom I interviewed:

> I think that residents are left with the disappointment that there aren't more jobs and I think that residents aren't real clear, still don't understand the industry about how many "jobs" you can offer untrained, unskilled people, entry level people, when you're really trying to get a construction job done. I think you're unrealistic. And that's to be expected because they aren't in the business. But they many times ascribe sort of nefarious doings as to why you aren't taking in more. It doesn't warrant more. There's only so much money for the apprentice because they are [the ones learning on the job], so, that's too bad. Over time, my hope is that they'll see that we did do everything that we could to live up to our word which is what we intend to do. We have to watch NYCHA. NYCHA, I think, in their own meddling bureaucracy can screw anything up, but the end result hopefully will be that there will be people who did get jobs, who did get careers and that it will be a success and replicate and it won't be a five year experiment or a two year experiment.

Difficult employment histories of public residents

Another real challenge to the success of the TRADES Campaign is public housing residents' low-skill level and lack of exposure to work and their uneven employment histories. One TRADES Member and union representative used to run pre-apprentice

training. According to them, as a group, public housing residents were the most difficult to deal with.

> I think that the Section 3 thing is difficult because the residents of public housing have difficult employment histories, have difficult work histories. Have a concept of a job instead of a career. Get them to understand we're not handing out jobs. That's not what this is about. "Where's my job!?!" I don't know where your fucking job is. That's not what this is about, and take that shift and talk about developing your life and your career.

Every public housing resident leader whom I interviewed noted, as well, that their efforts to get residents into good jobs are not helped by the lack of professionalism or work ethic that is sometimes exhibited by residents who have gotten Section 3 jobs in the past. Damaris Reyes, TRADES member and Director of Organizing at Public Housing Residents of the Lower East Side (PHROLES), had the following to say on the topic:

> I know of some folks doing painting, they were doing painting. And actually some of those folks that were doing painting did have opportunities to go into the apprenticeship program and they just weren't cut out for it. *They* weren't cut out for it. They defaulted on the job.

The push for pre-apprenticeship training as described above was a result of the recognition on the part of all members of the TRADES Campaign that getting and keeping a job is not only a learned skill, but what might be considered to be an inheritance. As Richard Dwyer, Director of Labor Management of the NYC District Council of Carpenters, probably the main architect of the TRADES Campaign put it,

> Traditionally, in the construction industry, the people who were successful in it were father/son. Because you needed someone who had been enculturated in the industry who could enculturate the next generation.

Such enculturation into the workforce is precisely one of the elements of social reproduction that has been missing from typical public housing communities in New York City (as well as elsewhere in the US) since much of the industry formerly located

there was disbanded or moved away. As Ethel Velez, executive director of the Resident Alliance and president of the Tenant Association at the James Weldon Johnson Houses described:

> It's not so much that residents need to be babied, but it's almost like a 12-step program. We, this country, this nation, on one hand has almost enabled folks and so they're not used to really working, you know. They're not used to...they control their schools, they control their neighborhoods. So, if you're going out to a job, who are tough folks, you know, they're not ready for that syndrome. They're not ready for somebody to huff and puff on them and say things to them that they ain't gonna want to hear. Because construction workers are rough. And they say terrible things to people. And this generation ain't tryin' to hear that. And so, for them it's just as easy...they'd walk off a job because, why...I don't have to stand here and listen to that. They have to be taught to separate the emotions from what your goals are. That's a tough thing. I'm constantly talking to kids about that. Nobody can disrespect you to the point where you start disrespecting yourself. You're the one, you have to feel that you always respect yourself. So, nobody else respects you, that's fine. You just respect yourself first. Nobody can put you down unless you let them put you down. And even talking to this one guy now, just trying to get him back into the whole job thing with working with the painter's union. He says, I'm not going to let nobody talk to me like that, they can't ....you know. That's what our kids are used to right now. You just can't say any thing to them. Construction workers are going to say any thing to them. And the construction people call it babying. But it's not babying.

Ms. Velez's description of the dynamics that necessitate programs like the TRADES pre-apprenticeship program provides an important example of, among other elements, the scalar dynamics at work in the production and reproduction of the spaces of public housing. Structural barriers to employment and education have psychological effects, which in turn have repercussions for the way that those with public housing or "inner city" backgrounds can or cannot navigate the worlds of work and making a living. Ms. Velez's example also provides important insight into the value of using the framework of geographic scale to understand the way that structural racism works: the psychological

effects of policies and practices that emanate from national, regional and city-level decision-making locales cannot be overestimated.

Challenges Stemming from NYCHA's Unwillingness to Promote the Program

A challenge of a different order was witnessed in the practices of NYCHA: their lack of transparency, or, as it was referred to above, obfuscation around process, numbers and timing. NYCHA refused to release reports on numbers of applicants, numbers of jobs placements, and so on. Whether this is because they don't have the numbers in a presentable format, or whether they simply don't want to share the information was not clear. While it was easier to get NYCHA to share information after the Campaign was underway, there continued to be problems. One of the architects of the TRADES Campaign explained his view in the following way:

> I'm not sure what to say about NYCHA. I mean, obviously there just was not a lot of interest in doing this. I think in the early days there was a tone in the Giuliani administration which was just like, we don't like low-income people, we don't like people of color, whatever they're asking for, we don't like that either. I really do think there was a lot of that. And then more recently, you know, obviously I think the current leadership is not ideologically intransigent in quite those same ways, but partly I think it was bureaucratic, not wanting to be bothered. Partly I do think that in a certain way maintenance of that, ...they don't have enough money from HUD, and handling the construction and maintenance projects are just an overwhelming task that they constantly feel overwhelmed by, and the notion of changing in order to accommodate some interest different than 'just get it done,' you know, was not at the top of their radar screen. The top of their radar screen was just 'get it done.' And this seemed like a headache.

The type of ambivalence manifested itself in many ways, all of which were frustrating to the efforts of TRADES. As Nicole Branca explained,

> It's not that they just won't tell us. They'll tell us something very general and then because they keep changing the forms, they keep changing the process. They changed the department name from Department of Economic and Business Initiatives to Resident Employment Services, overnight.

Looking at the operational style of the Housing Authority in trying to understand the Resident Alliance and TRADES's efforts to produce space, understanding the way that confusion, non-communication and stalling techniques are deployed by the Housing Authority sheds a great deal of light on how the often antagonistic relationships between the Housing Authority and those working to change its practices and the spaces that it oversees are reproduced. It becomes difficult, but nonetheless important, to decipher which elements are discriminatory, which are the result of incompetence, which are typical of bureaucratic functioning, and so on.

Technicalities

There are a number of items that are considered to be limitations of the current Section 3 structure. One of them is that the household of which a Section 3 program applicant is a member must be in "good standing" with their rent. Resident Alliance leaders take issue with this stipulation because it means that if a young man or a young woman belongs to a household that is behind on their rent because of some "fault" of the head of that household, then they are not even eligible to apply for a program that could reverse the situation of the household owing back rent. Those who are at a disadvantage are put at further disadvantage and penalized for circumstances beyond their control. As Linda Duke, Resident Alliance Treasurer explained it,

> In order to get Section 3, they tell you you have to be a tenant in good standing and your rent got to be paid. If I don't have no job how's my rent going to be paid? How am I going to be in good standing? Everything that come out their mouth...In order for you to get a job with Housing, this gotta be done, that gotta be done, but these things cannot be done. It's stupid. A kid don't get a job because the mother's rent wasn't paid. His mother don't pay the rent. What does

> that got to do with this kid? Things like that bother me. It's two different issues. Talk to the mother about why the rent isn't paid, don't deny this kid a job.

Other technicalities that concern resident leaders and TRADES members alike include the loosely defined procedures of the Section 3 program. While all parties involved expect this to change as the CM/Build Program becomes more institutionalized, it remains at the time of writing that application forms are often lost and not kept track of carefully, the forms are difficult to fill out, and application forms are often put to the side and not entered into the system if something is not filled out correctly. While resident leaders and those TRADES members who participate in Section 3 awareness outreach sometimes set up individual sessions with residents to help them fill out the forms, it remains that the program has a number of inconsistencies that TRADES hoped to rectify.

Challenges Inherent to Union/Community Relationships

Trust and Process

Every person I interviewed, whether public housing resident leader, public housing resident advocate, union representative, or economic justice advocates, was vocal about the issue of trust as a challenge for the TRADES Campaign. As Richard Dwyer, of the Carpenter's Union and architect of TRADES put it:

> I felt the coalition was always a challenge, keeping it together. I felt that the unions never gained the trust of the residents. They always felt that in the final analysis we'd sell them out. And I think that we the unions felt that we had been honorable and honest.

Another union member of TRADES made a very similar statement,

> Off the top of my head the difficulties and the results tie together. Some of the greatest difficulties were keeping this coalition together. It's a fragile coalition. Nobody trusts anybody. I mean just on labor's point of view: we don't trust the carpenters, and we don't trust the plumbers and they don't trust us. Now we got

> to get community groups that don't trust other community groups, and definitely none of them trust the labor unions. And we've all got to trust each other. So, the most difficult part was keeping everybody together. Especially when NYCHA *shrewdly* was trying to divide us.

There was one particular situation that was brought up by every union representative I interviewed. Ethel Velez, Resident Alliance Executive Director and Tenant Association President of the James Weldon Johnson Houses had been working for upwards of ten years to have a community center built at the Johnson Houses. The planning and negotiations for the center were going on at the same time that the TRADES Campaign was going on, yet Ms. Velez never brought the project to the attention of the TRADES members so that the project could go union and hire Section 3 workers at the prevailing wage. The union members of the Campaign were all deeply offended by this and each of them mentioned that they thought it ironic that they should always have been the ones that everyone was looking at as untrustworthy, while it ended up being the Resident Alliance side of the Campaign that was not forthcoming with relevant information. Below is one union representative's understanding of the situation:

> They didn't let us know us that the work was about to go and it was about to go non-union. We would have liked to make a little more effort to get it to go union. And if it would have gone non-union, so be it, but we didn't get a chance. And now, you know, par for the course, they're not getting paid what they're supposed to get paid, and they're not being treated the way they're supposed to be treated. And they have a limited voice. The Section 3 workers are getting screwed up there. They have a voice through the Resident Alliance, but they could have had twice as strong of a voice because they'd be working with a signatory contractor in a collective bargaining agreement to enforce certain laws. On an issue like that, their main concern, and understandably so, was to get their community center up. They wanted their community center up and it's probably been held up for years. So, the main concern is, 'let's get the community center. Let's not hold it up another year with this TRADES Campaign. I could completely understand that.

While there was a degree of such understanding that was evident, union representatives were often frustrated by the mistrust directed at them and thought that they had worked with enough sincerity for long enough of a time to have gained the confidence of the community. One union representative member of TRADES explained his perspective:

> I expect to run into people who have animosity [towards the unions]. I expect that, because labor has definitely dropped the ball. But what's the bottom line? The bottom line is: if today on this day we could put our heads together so that we could send five people to the carpenters and two there...and you could take some of these folks. We have to make a decision here. Are we going to spend the next couple of hours talking about what happened ten years ago, or in some cases two years ago? Or are we going to say, listen, let's do this. I don't mind sitting down with somebody, but the problem is this: most people sit down and then repeat stuff that they heard. They weren't there when I was out there getting arrested, protesting. They weren't there. So, if you don't really know what happens, you're just repeating what people tell you. It's really hard to sit down with these people and say, okay, how can we make it better. Because they don't really clearly know what's wrong. And unfortunately a lot of these people are sitting in seats that do control other people's destinies. And they are on community boards, or they are somewhere that they can say, oh, the unions are no good. They don't even know why. But the unions are no good. Or, that union is racist, they don't take Black people or Latinos, and the union that they're talking about is [now] two-thirds Black and Latino.

Once trust is undone, however, it takes a very long time for it to be re-established. A positive aspect of the union representatives of TRADES is that they do have this impatience coupled with their commitment to make unions work for more people, particularly those who have historically been excluded from unions and living wage employment. They see the potential of the union-community alliance and want to see changes happen so that both the unions and the communities can jointly benefit. Such impatience means, as the quote ("It's not as fast as all of us would like, but it's a good progress") that begins this chapter signifies, that process issues that are valued more by the community side are not necessarily respected by the overall TRADES Campaign in the way that some would prefer. It is an interesting example of potential power and how

it is negotiated. The important but cumbersome process involved in the joint decision-making that in theory drove the TRADES Campaign was abandoned at crucial points. It is not clear, however, what would have happened if the Campaign had been unable to adopt the "professional" tactics that were in use by NYCHA and the decision-makers, bureaucrats and lawyers with whom they were working. Richard Dwyer's perspective on the topic succinctly represents the situation:

> Now I thought I kept faith with what the issues were that I thought they wanted and I thought I brought back that. And yet I got hit for ruining the process stuff. But still. Give us a break. I'm more concerned with winning than process. I've died a fiery death many times. I don't like dying fiery deaths. What I have to do is what I'll do. And if that means you're upset about the process, I'm sorry. I think we came out with a phenomenal success here.

The circumstances as described by Dwyer and other TRADES members follow Levi (2001) and other scholars who point to the uneven power differentials and different styles as often being points of contention between unions and community groups. Levi also points out that unions often don't trust that residents will "perform" their part, while community members often fear that they will be sold out by the unions. Both of these dynamics were in evidence within the workings of the TRADES Campaign. Richard Dywer's comments lend an illustration of the dynamics:

> [But] again, it's just Nicole and the unions. ... Damaris [public housing resident and PHROLES Organizing Director] does come some. I forget Damaris, and Damaris is excellent. She did a presentation on apprenticeship that I couldn't have done better. It was that good and I've only done this for 35 years. Limited limited knowledge, but it's very clear that she's very bright, she was on point. Sounded a lot better coming from her than coming from me...she was wonderful. But it would be nice to have more residents involved because it's certainly...and that's one of the things I've been thrilled with the Construction Managers, their at least articulation of their sensitivity to the resident. At least they articulate it. I don't even think that contractors that NYCHA had doing business would even articulate that the resident was important. Because I don't think it was to them.

As important and potentially powerful as partnerships between unions and poor communities may be, they are also inherently uneven. Dealing with such dynamics successfully required much skill, wisdom and sophistication of the collaborative members in order to negotiate the complicated terrain.

Conclusion

Using the case study of the Resident Alliance and the TRADES Campaign, one of my goals has been to shed some light on the possibilities and the potential sustainability of collaboratives between unions and poor communities. The union members of the TRADES Campaign were well-aware of the potential and expressed high hopes for the premise and the future of the Campaign and the CM/Build Program that it produced. As Chaz Rynkiewicz of the Laborers Union noted:

> Public housing could be a breeding ground for successful economic development. This campaign, if it works, these are jobs...there's so much construction in the housing projects. Every housing development. There could be five people whose lives are dramatically changed, breaking a vicious poverty cycle. So, the housing projects could be viewed...if word gets out, and this campaign works and word gets out that it's working, people will look at housing projects...the residents of the housing projects will say, there are opportunities right in here in our development to make a better lives for ourselves. That's what...as well as I want to see the unions be strong forever, because I love construction work. I also want people to know that they don't always have to live like that. That there is an opportunity. It's not only looking at sports. You can just be an honest, hard-working person. If you're not somebody that's into schoolbooks and you can go outdoors and work with your back a little and make enough to get by and support a family on. So, residents could look forward to getting career opportunities that would support a family . . .

Such an ambitious vision clearly requires a great deal of strategy and work, as did the formation and evolution of both the Resident Alliance and the TRADES Campaign. Both groups consisted of courageous individuals who put their credibility on the line, as well

as organizations who put their resources on the line. Their hard work and devotion to the larger cause played significant roles in cutting through the multiple and varied layers of opposition that protect the status quo. Not all of the key individuals were TRADES or Resident Alliance members. In the case of making the CM/Build program happen, there were NYCHA employees who stuck out their necks. As one of my union informants stated:

> I think [that a particular NYCHA employee] played a very, very significant role. And I think that [his] job is on the line. I think that if this doesn't work he's in trouble. I think he sold the administration on this and I think there's a lot of personal stuff on the line for [him] . . . [he] has a lot personally standing on the line: his job.

The TRADES Campaign in particular would not have happened had it not been for the dedication and devotion of the Campaign's first organizer, Jahahara Alkebulan-Ma'at. As Marcus Gomez of the Painters Union noted:

> He had the drive to go out there and visit us on one on ones, talk to us. You know what I'm trying to say. And I got to give him the credit. He's the one that, for us, started this campaign.

The risk-taking and dedication evidenced by the leaders of the Resident Alliance also are not to be underestimated. While they are quite modest about their contributions in this area, residents not only put in their time and energy, but *even risked their housing* by participating in both the Alliance itself and the TRADES Campaign. There was really no way for residents to know if the "capriciousness" and bully tactics used by the Housing Authority in the past would be used against them again.

That being said, the hard work of the members of the Resident Alliance and the TRADES Campaign, combined with the fact that NYCHA was exhibiting unprecedented

degrees of cooperation were the elements that ultimately drove the TRADES Campaign to success. As Ethel Velez, Executive Director of the Resident Alliance, said:

> . . . this is a different administration, a much milder administration and I keep telling people that, you know, this administration is *nothing* like the one we had before. I don't think these things would have went as smoothly as they did, even though they think that it's not going smoothly, it really is, in comparison.

The same sentiment was echoed by the union members of the TRADES Campaign. In one of the most explicit expressions of the less contentious relations between the Housing Authority and the TRADES Campaign, one of the Laborers Union members had this to say:

> It's not popular right now for unionists to give a certain amount of credit to [the Housing Authority's Chairman (Tino Hernandez) and General Manager (Douglas Apple)], but I will. Because the bottom line is if those guys weren't there . . . it started off as adversarial positions, it really did. It started out like a fight, but the bottom line is if those guys weren't there we could not have gotten it this far. It got heated sometimes, it got rough. But, they were open-minded to learning something: we're going to have to at least let these people come in and hear what they have to say. The guys before them . . . we definitely wouldn't have gotten this far . . . we would have had to deal with a lot more . . . a certain amount of credit has to be given to them because I don't think anyone likes anyone coming to their office telling them what they should do. I understand that. But once we got past a certain hump, I believed in my heart that they wanted to do something. Now I don't know if they want to do as much as certain other people, but they definitely wanted to affect more change than either of the people before them.

While the progress made by the TRADES Campaign, the Resident Alliance and even NYCHA cannot be denied, the work they had done and the programs they created were still not "sure things." An atmosphere of uncertainty continued to pervade the TRADES Campaign's efforts. The Campaign, of course, was never a "sure thing." As Brad Lander, formerly of the Fifth Avenue Committee when it played a role in spawning the TRADES Campaign, said:

> I think that people knew from the beginning that there was an opportunity here and that it would go with real challenges and tensions and that you never work out

> those challenges and tensions, but that maybe there's a victory that you could win by working together that would be worth struggling through them. Is it? I can't answer that. I don't think anybody knows. We don't have enough of a victory yet to know how big a victory it is and whether it's worth the pain and suffering.

Recognizing the inherent challenges, tensions and uncertainties of the Campaign was an important element of the existence of TRADES, and one that its members confronted rather successfully. Larger uncertainties loom in the future of the CM/Build program that the TRADES Campaign fought so hard to create. As Marcus Gomez of the Painters Union put it:

> I told you, there's a big shake-up going on right now with Tino Hernandez. I feel, as the head, the chair of the Housing Authority, Tino's appointed. He can be dis-appointed. What happens if Bloomberg loses the next election. [The mayor-elect] brings in his own chairman and right there things change. Policy changes. So, we have to be thankful for what we have right now.

Beyond such routine changes, there have been very recent (January 2005) proposals from the federal level that will drastically shrink, reorganize and/or eliminate many of HUD's community and economic development programs (Weisman, 2005). The future of public housing, and of poor urban *and* rural communities, is, not surprisingly, being subsumed to the interests of the market.

The challenging environments in which both the Resident Alliance and the TRADES Campaigns formed and evolved required a great deal of sophistication and patience. Navigating the difficult bureaucracy of NYCHA—in addition to the multi-layered challenges around race, uneven power distribution and contentious relationships between unions and poor communities—meant that the TRADES group required a great deal of strategic resolve and tactical patience. As Chaz Rynkiewicz said, it was all about "steps...you want to get it all overnight? You can't." Given these circumstances, it is not surprising that so many of the Resident Alliance and TRADES members cited "just

keeping together" as the main accomplishment *and* the main challenge faced by the Campaign.

Chapter 7

Conclusion: "For any of us to forget those lessons would be tragic, because we have to keep doing it over and over."

As I was preparing for my defense, clarifying sections and filling in footnotes and citations, Sylvia Velasquez, the Tenant Association president at the DeWitt Clinton Houses, asked me to monitor the tenant association election there. The election was scheduled for the evening of 15th of December, 2004. Ms. Velasquez felt that she needed an election monitor. She did not necessarily trust that all would go according to plan. A representative from NYCHA's Department of Community Operations, Mr. Summers, was also scheduled to attend the elections. His presence was mandated by HUD and NYCHA regulations. Upon the representative's arrival, a half of an hour *after* the elections were to start, however, he told Ms. Velasquez that he had been informed just before his departure that election procedures had not been carried out properly and that while she was free to carry out the election, NYCHA would not be able to certify it. While Ms. Velasquez and Mr. Summers spoke, I was seated in a chair about five feet from them and so was privy to their entire discussion. Ms. Velasquez was operating from one set of regulations, Mr. Summers (as a NYCHA representative) from another, though he did not have them in hand.

Ms. Velasquez asked why she was not informed by anyone[47] before the very evening that the election was to be held. She was told that not everyone knows all of the regulations and that there are several sets of regulations that have to be followed. Mr.

[47] While the representative, Mr. Summers, was there to oversee the election, he was not the District Coordinator for the DeWitt Clinton Houses. The District Coordinator was aware of the elections, but did not inform Ms. Velasquez that she had to do anything in particular, nor that she had done anything improper in the steps in the process leading up to the election.

Summers admitted to Ms. Velasquez that the issues at hand were technicalities. The regulations that Ms. Velasquez was supposed to have followed included the following:

- 30 days before the nomination/election, fliers are supposed to be distributed to every household in the development
- a NYCHA representative is supposed to be present to monitor the meeting at which nominations for tenant association governing board are to be held
- a NYCHA representative is supposed to be present to monitor the election proceedings

Mr. Summers did not have any of the regulations in question in hand to show Ms. Velasquez. He seemed to feel bad about the situation. At least ten residents of the Clinton houses had been waiting since six o'clock p.m., when the elections were supposed to have started. Mr. Summers volunteered to help make and distribute the 748 fliers that Ms. Velasquez would have to distribute again, and said that he would come back on a Saturday to help out if need be. He said repeatedly that he realized that everything was probably done properly, but because he did not have the paperwork to verify it, it could not stand as an official NYCHA election and the standing of the officers would not be recognized.

After the representative spoke with Ms. Velasquez, I approached him in a friendly manner and asked him about what had just transpired. I said, "So what happened, Mr. Summers? Did someone come into your office this afternoon and tell you that they had examined the paperwork and found it deficient?" He said that that was basically what had happened. He went on to say to me, "You know that there are people who don't want Ms. Velasquez to be president. The Citywide Council of Presidents (CCOP) is watching this election very carefully. If they see anything that is wrong, they will contest the election and we [NYCHA/Community Operations] will end up paying the price." He

said that he stays out of the politics surrounding the CCOP, but because the proper paperwork was not in place and the CCOP was taking the steps necessary to use the election to discredit Ms. Velasquez, secretary of the Alliance—which, as described in Chapter Four, is leading a campaign to make the CCOP more representative—as well as president of the DeWitt Clinton Houses, and to divert her attention and energies.

I found it curious that this information was divulged to me, but not to Ms. Velasquez. After Mr. Summers left I told Ms. Velasquez what he said to me and verified with her that he did not say the same thing to her—since I was within earshot of their entire conversation. While I can only speculate about why Mr. Summers divulged the backroom story to me and not to Ms. Velasquez, it appeared as if he wanted that the truth be told, but did not want to be "involved in the politics." While he clearly did not have the time to have "premeditated" the scenario, caught up in the contradictions and witnessing the disappointed residents, Mr. Summers may have wanted the truth to be known, and may have thought, subconsciously or not, that by telling me he could at once convey the real situation to Ms. Velasquez in an indirect way and could also not be "held responsible" for telling tales or meddling with the politics. Or, putting a less generous spin on the events, was Mr. Summers not taking Ms. Velasquez seriously enough as a tenant leader to explain what was actually going on, but taking me, as a "professional" seriously enough to "level with" me?

Interestingly enough, about one month after this "election incident," City Limits magazine published an article about the CCOP, bringing to a far wider public the struggle that the Alliance had been fighting for several years:

> Nine public housing tenant association leaders . . . make an extraordinary number of decisions on behalf of the city's 420,000 public housing residents. They meet

> directly with NYCHA officials and help set agency policy . . . and the city has authorized them to distribute the resident participation funds—roughly $3.8 million each year. Tenants outside the power structure have long complained that the group is too small and unaccountable. Most of its members have held office for decades. Their meetings are private, their minutes unpublished. Despite claims like these, NYCHA entrusted the CCOP with the money. Now, three years later, an agency spokesperson hints that CCOP leaders botched the deal, slowing the allocation process so much that HUD was close to rescinding the funds . . . All the back-and-forth has kept the money mired for years. In the meantime . . . NYCHA took the liberty of spending it. 'Because we faced the risk of HUD reclaiming unused funds if not used within a specific time frame, 2001 and 2002 were used for resident participation eligible activities,' wrote agency spokesperson Marder in an e-mail to City Limits.

Not only is rather high-level decision-making power at stake with the CCOP, but $3.8 million. It is not clear why the CCOP initially delayed the disbursement of the funds, why the Housing Authority spent the money supposedly unbeknownst to the CCOP, nor why the CCOP is now upset with the Housing Authority for having done so. It does remain, however, that with an unrepresentative body representing residents, and no one but the agency and the unrepresentative body overseeing the allocation of millions of dollars that are supposed to be spent on empowering residents, speculation is sure to arise about whether there has been improper conduct among CCOP members, whether the Housing Authority, which has faced consistent and ongoing federal cuts to its budget, has rewarded in some way the CCOP for allowing the money to return to the agency's coffers, or whether money for resident participation, never taken seriously, is being embezzled in some way or another.

I thought that the story of the delayed election at the DeWitt Clinton Houses—stymied by the CCOP—as well as the magazine report on NYCHA and the CCOP in relation to the disappearance of $3.8 million would be a relevant way to open the conclusion to the dissertation. While there is never really a shortage of examples of the

confusing and contradictory—not to mention seemingly corrupt—atmosphere in which public housing and public housing residents in New York exist, these seemed to be culminations. Having looked at public housing resident leadership for nearly ten years now, the interrelations between residents and the Housing Authority are no longer "surprising," but there are ways in which the sheer gall and overt contradictions promulgated by the Housing Authority (and, in this case the CCOP as a branch of the Housing Authority) continue to be mildly shocking. I have focused on understanding, in the midst of environments like this, what shot the Resident Alliance had at making changes in their public housing communities.

To summarize, in investigating what space is produced as a consequence of the efforts of the Resident Alliance, and in particular in relation to its involvement with the TRADES Campaign, I examined the individuals and organizations that Alliance and TRADES members encountered and interacted with, as well as where their efforts took place. I tried to align my position as much as possible with that of the public housing tenants and tenant leaders with whom I worked. I looked at how residents were represented (or not) before the formation of the Resident Alliance, and at the paths to Section 3 jobs that the TRADES Campaign tried to forge for residents and how they were different from the paths that were (or were not) there before.

The Resident Alliance was not only able to produce a space for voicing the interests of public housing residents that went from being isolated to individual developments, neighborhoods or boroughs, to being city-wide, but partnerships between residents and advocates meant that residents were very well informed (as opposed to being purposefully kept in the dark) about policy changes that would affect them. The

Alliance was also able to gain recognition from the leadership of the New York City Housing Authority. In an interview with Douglas Apple, the Housing Authority's General Manager, Mr. Apple expressed the following:

> I have met with them regularly, both as a group and individually, members of the Alliance. I have generally found them to be incredibly well informed. I have generally found them to be actually pretty thoughtful about these issues and pretty reasonable.

The Resident Alliance was able to represent their interests not only at the New York City level, but also at the state and federal levels in unprecedented fashions—for example, serving as a force in delaying the Community Service Requirement at the federal level for two years.

While there were pathways, so to speak, to Section 3 jobs before, they were often overgrown, treacherous and not necessarily leading anywhere. The path that the Resident Alliance, as a part of the TRADES Campaign, has forged included more formal institutionalization of the Section 3 program via contracts and a memorandum of understanding. There is now monitoring of the entire Section 3 process as well, including the application process, training and movement to jobs. There is more oversight of contractor selection and contractor performance, as well as monitoring of training providers. Furthermore, pre-apprenticeship training for public housing residents was finally approved by the NYCHA Board of Directors on April 6, 2005 and actual training is supposed to begin in the Summer of 2005.

In the pages that follow I review the major points from each of the chapters through the theoretical lenses that I have utilized throughout the dissertation, namely: production of space theory (spaces of representation, representations of space and spatial practice), scale, structural racism, social movement and social reproduction. Finally, I

return to the title "Represent" in order to more fully explore the Resident Alliance's bearing witness to the experiences of being a public housing resident in expanded arenas, its connections to the theoretical framework of production of space (particularly spaces of representation), and the research's implications for the opportunities and challenges that underrepresented grassroots groups are likely to encounter as they try to represent their interests and those of their communities within current political economic arenas.

Scale

I begin this final discussion of the theoretical framing with scale because while the production of space framework is somewhat abstract, the movement "through" geographic scale—evidenced by the Resident Alliance's formation and activities—is a tangible and obvious composite of producing space. Both upward scalar movement, jumping scale, and lack of scalar movement (scalar fix), connote, and even map, in a simple way, the accomplishments and challenges faced by the Resident Alliance (and the TRADES Campaign) as they worked to gain increased voice and employment opportunities for public housing residents. Looking at the Resident Alliance's activities in terms of scale jumping and scalar fixes also allows for easier identification of the circumstances surrounding scalar movement—what facilitated their successes and/or failures? Scalar jumps or fixes?

In the case of the Resident Alliance and the TRADES Campaign, it was threats that forced their activities to go to scale. The main points of change, public housing and welfare reform legislation, equaled a rupture that consisted of both threats and opportunities. Advocates and residents were brought together and began working

together in unprecedented ways. Had the crises not occurred, it is not clear that the groups would have formed. For public housing leaders, struggles at development level were already so substantial that tenant leaders may not have found the time or energy to unite under common causes. For advocates and union leaders, embroilment in pre-existing crises may not have allowed them to take the extra time or energy to meet and strategize with public housing resident leaders. While resident leaders and advocates were quite taxed in terms of time, energy and other resources, they did in fact rise to the occasion. While determining the *precise* factors that did allow resident leaders, advocates and union people to come together is somewhat beyond the scope of this research, the stressful circumstances of poverty and often and undemocratic atmosphere within which public housing residents live, along with the overburden put on advocates indicates that had resident leaders, advocates and unions representatives not been inclined or aligned in the particular ways in which they were before and during the formation of the Resident Alliance and the TRADES Campaign, the climate of neoliberal reform would have undermined even more seriously poor communities than it already is. This was particularly true in relation to the expertise lent by the advocates. Had they not come into the picture and supported resident leaders in their struggle in the highly professionalized (read: not conducive/ intolerant of grassroots resistance) and deeply competitive atmosphere, it is not clear that the Resident Alliance would have formed, would have been able to achieve its accomplishments, or would still exist today. This research has suggested the importance of facilitating and building more—and more even—advocate relationships, advocates who fully appreciate the experience of public housing resident leaders (unlike some of the Resident Alliance advocates who sometimes

too easily lost patience, perhaps because they lacked a full understanding of the real strength and endurance that is required of a public housing resident leader). Without strong bases, like the one available to and cultivated by the Resident Alliance resident leaders, much about community life in public housing would otherwise be left to chance.

Jumping Scale

The most obvious scale jump made by the Resident Alliance was bringing the scale of resident activism from individual developments to city-wide representation of public housing residents by an open, democratically elected group of resident leaders. The Resident Alliance also significantly increased the profile and power base of public housing resident interests, especially by joining TRADES. The increased number and robustness of the networks of the TRADES Campaign provided entrée and concretely increased the Alliance's access and resources. It also provided contact with groups and individuals with levels of influence not readily available to public housing leaders in the past, for example Elliot Spitzer, the New York State Attorney General to whom the corrupt contract practices of the Housing Authority were brought to light. One important example of the Resident Alliance's jump in the scale of their efforts was when the entire TRADES Campaign, particularly the unions, took on the Alliance's fight against the community service requirement.

Access to the union's reach within the political system meant that the Alliance had access to politicians, for example Congresswoman Sue Kelly, to whom they otherwise would not have had meetings. While the encounter with Sue Kelly was not necessarily productive, it did provide Alliance leaders and advocates with an "up front"

view of the rationales of decision makers and the way that they as public housing residents are represented in the minds of such decision makers.

An example of a more productive encounter with a politician was the Alliance's and TRADES's interactions with City Councilwoman Diana Reyna, who resurrected the City Council's Public Housing Committee. While it is possible that the Councilwoman would have met with the Alliance and taken them seriously, the coherence of the group, the different players (advocates, residents, union leaders, etc.) at the table, and the access, presentation and transmission of information about the causes in question to the Councilwoman for the purposes of her getting up to speed and making informed decisions was clearly aided by the Alliance's partnerships with its own advocates and with the TRADES Campaign. Out of the meetings with Councilwoman Reyna came hearings over which the Alliance and TRADES were able to have influence.

While I will return to this below, it is also important to note that the jumping of scale, particularly joining with the unions, has been the key element in positioning the Resident Alliance's activities within larger a larger social movement framework. Progressive union agendas, especially relevant to living wage campaigns, represent activity on the national scale that strives to force both business and government to pay attention to the needs of working class and poor people, and to put in place monitoring systems that will safeguard their agreements and not allow poor and working class populations to be so entirely vulnerable to political economic movements and fluctuations. While the Resident Alliance's experience was with a limited set of unions, and an even more limited set of actors within those unions, it is important to recognize that they have had the experience and thought through the implications of working with

the unions. They have made formal and productive links with the unions, making it more likely that they will continue to partner on issues of mutual interest. If the relationships are to continue, it will be important to maintain and/or increase the exposure and working experience that public housing resident leaders and union leaders have with each other. It also suggests the need to cultivate more union leaders like Elly Spicer of the Carpenters Union who are explicit about "not [being] against moving a business agenda along with a social justice agenda."

Scalar fix

The scalar fix conceptualization has also been useful in gaining deeper understanding of the Resident Alliance's ability to affect change in public housing communities. Scalar fixes, those elements that disallowed or thwarted the Resident Alliance's (and TRADES's) efforts, came in a variety of forms. Some seemed to have emanated from spatial practice—the different, often counter-productive, ways in which different actors internal and external to the Resident Alliance/TRADES collaboration navigate the tensions that define everyday life between representations of space and spaces of representation. An example of this was the dynamics of the CCOP and the Resident Alliance's relationship to it. Other scalar fixes were more direct results of representations of space, for example included the public housing reform legislation which not only disallowed the construction of any new public housing units, but forced punitive sanctions on public housing residents simply for being public housing residents.

Overcoming scalar fixes resulting from "spatial practice origins" and those resulting from "representations of space origins" requires different strategies. The circumstances surrounding each type of scalar fix are different. With spatial practice, the

terms of engagement are more concrete. They are the many movements that make up a day in the life of any phenomenon as well as the accumulation of those movements. In thinking about it in terms of scalar fixes, though, and how they might be overcome, it is interesting to note the continuum of spatial practice: from the interactions of a public housing resident and a NYCHA housing assistant, to the very existence of public housing since 1937—from the minute, fleeting and current to the embedded institutional and historical. This begs the related questions from how to change the interactions on the individual level to how, and over what span of time, to make shifts with in institutional frameworks.

Revisiting the Research Through the Lens of Lefebvre's Three-Part Dialectic

I chose to rely on the production of space framework because of its potential, as mentioned in Chapter One, to transcend some of the usual points of contention, particularly around class, race and place, that often do not allow those in similarly uneven circumstances to unite under a common banner in order to advance social justice issues with greater depth and breadth. This is a direction similar to that suggested by Cindi Katz (2001a) in her article *On the Grounds of Globalization*: "politics that works the grounds of and between multiply situated social actors in a range of geographical locations . . .". Having spent considerable effort applying Lefebvrian theory to the formation and evolution of the Resident Alliance led me to conclude that Lefebvrian theory is particularly useful because it highlights and demystifies the role that framing plays in the production of space. It takes the common experience of the human being *in* the world and obviates, names and sorts the often confusing and contradictory invisible

social "frames" that have significant influence over the production of space and the construction of everyday life in current 21st century capitalist and neoliberal social formations, as is abundantly clear in US culture and social policy. Lefebvre's theory, as suggested by Shields (1999, p. 15), implies a revolution of thought. How, for example, might the current focus on and interest in the commodity form of housing be balanced with or transferred to housing as shelter?

Spaces of Representation

In focusing on the Resident Alliance's ability to effect change, this dissertation has been at its core about how to amplify, expand and reproduce spaces of representation. It has been about how to create environments that are more conducive to Lefebvre's notion of "the total human." In "defining" spaces of representation, Lefebvre is not very specific. He names art, the symbolic, and space as directly lived, but these are rather vague and somewhat distinct from each other. Sheilds elaborates by saying that space of representation is "Space as it might be, fully lived space (l'espace veçu) 'moments' of presence." Some examples of spaces of representation that I have witnessed in my research, and which are described below, have in common that they were moments of presence. By presence I mean the opposite of erased, un-entitled, alienated, other, outside or apart.

The Alliance and TRADES's presence on the Brooklyn Bridge, for example, produced a space of representation, so did their presence on the steps of City Hall, at City Hall hearings, at meetings with elected officials, at every general monthly meeting held by the Resident Alliance, on every informational flier, at every presentation at a Tenant

Association meeting or community forum, at every NYCHA board meeting and at every TRADES meeting held in the union halls. The Resident Alliance is in and of itself a space of representation. The Resident Alliance, and the TRADES Campaign, created spaces of representation within the Housing Authority and disrupted business as usual there. Where the Housing Authority was entrenched, corrupt, and contradictory, the Resident Alliance was direct and coherent in their stance and their demands. In joining with the TRADES Campaign the Resident Alliance joined a young and lean organization with lots of access to expertise, real material interests, direction and goals, the power of exposure and mobilization, as well as perhaps the key ingredient: participants who were devoted to the cause—and where there were traces of 'vocation' (Ganz, 2002) in the actions and words of both Alliance and TRADES members.

Because spaces of representation have such variance, it is important to note that some are stronger than others, have longer durations, or are more or less inspirational. Spaces of representation were created, for example, when the Resident Alliance gathered and disseminated information relevant to living in public housing that was not otherwise available to public housing residents. Those spaces of representation were made stronger by the pairing of professional advocates and residents since the advocates lent their expertise in navigating the professionalized and often treacherous environment in which the struggles over public housing were taking place. The creation of the pre-apprenticeship program was another example of a more institutionalized and hopefully lasting space of representation created by the Resident Alliance and the TRADES Campaign: by having resident input into the design of the construction apprenticeship program, the program was designed to meet the extra needs that public housing residents

would need in order to succeed in the program. While possibly less tangible, the Resident Alliance—on its own and as part of the TRADES Campaign—rescripted some of the most damaging stereotypes that are used against them, including being lazy, uninvolved in their communities, and being powerless. The Alliance also indirectly rescripted stereotypes about public housing and public housing residents by working with researchers and others, including journalists, activists, advocates and organizers, who observe and promote different and more accurate perspectives on public housing influential audiences.

Varying degrees of risk seem inherent in attempts to produce spaces of representation. The public housing resident leaders were active in challenging the Housing Authority even though it was possible that they could have lost their homes if someone in the Housing Authority had decided to abuse the Authority's power. As I struggled to come to terms with Lefevreian three-part dialectics, I remember feeling a wave of sobriety when the real meaning behind Lefebvre's designation of spaces of representation being dominated by representations of space sunk in. I realized how fleeting a space of representation can be, but how necessary, and how simultaneously strong and fragile such spaces are. Sheilds, too, notes that space of representation is "Space as it might be, fully lived space (l'espace veçu) 'moments' of presence." Space as it *might* be connotes potential and *moments* are short periods of time. These are the moments that need to be increased in both size and scope for the sake of the well-being of individuals, families, communities and places.

Representations of Space

The fleeting nature of spaces of representation produced by the Resident Alliance and TRADES is directly related to the dominating and overdetermining nature of representations of space. Within the frameworks of those who consciously try to produce spaces of representation, the operating logic places human well-being as the dominant priority—both individual and universal. Within representations of space, however, like the majority of the public housing reform legislation, the operating logic prioritizes freedom of the market. An important implication of such a guiding framework is that under representations of space, those things related to well-being of people are left to chance, like the "chance" movement of the market. An example of this is the relative absence of health and well-being feasibility (as opposed to financial feasibilities, of which there are many) studies on the likely effects on residents surrounding the public housing reform legislation of the mid-1990s.

A further example of policies emanating from representations of space included reforms that demanded that public housing residents join the labor force, ignoring that there were not necessarily suitable places for them within the market, but demonizing them at the same time. The community service provision of the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act is an additional example of public housing residents being singled out as only the only recipients of housing subsidy, the only people who get housed for "free," when all, especially middle-class housing through the mortgage deduction on the income tax, is subsidized. Not only did the community service provision unfairly stigmatize public housing residents to the general public, but for public housing residents directly, it added another layer to bureaucracy, another vehicle for

being evicted, and another drain on energy and income. A final example includes the Giuliani-era policy of elected officials not being allowed to meet with NYCHA residents on NYCHA grounds. This policy implied that public housing residents, by virtue of being public housing residents, are criminal, not law abiding, so therefore not worthy of democratic representation or protections of the law.

For those populations that are most vulnerable to its twists and turns, Bourdieu's characterization of market consequences as tyranny rings true. By insisting on puncturing the deafening silence and making their voices heard, the Resident Alliance resisted the tyrannical representations of the spaces of public housing. By resisting the dismissal of the Housing Authority and policy makers in its early days, the Resident Alliance also resisted the erasure not only of its own efforts, but also of public housing residents themselves. Their fellow public housing residents in cities like Chicago, with poorer housing stock and a looser housing market, have not fared so well (Venkatesh, 2004).

By carefully strategizing and navigating the labyrinthine and often blunt bureaucracy of the Housing Authority and by being clear about its conflicts and contradictions, as well as about its strengths and potentials, the TRADES Campaign insisted that the Housing Authority change its unfair practices that were undermining individuals and communities, and make the practices instead work for the individuals and the communities. The TRADES Campaign's work is an excellent example of changing spatial practice: coming to terms with the potentials and challenges of their given situation and figuring out how best to insist that potentials be met and challenges be kept at a minimum.

Spatial Practice

Spatial practice, in the words of Rob Sheilds (1998) "...with all its contradictions in everyday life, space perceived (perçu) in the commonsensical mode—or better still, ignored one minute and over-fetishized the next", is the intersection where the forces that produce both spaces of representation and representations of space "collide." The spatial practice conceptualization has been very helpful in both categorizing and analyzing the topics of my research, including the absurdities like the cancellation of Ms. Velasquez's election and the disappearance of the millions of dollars for resident participation. While most of the dissertation has focused on the juxtaposition between representations of space and spaces of representation, understanding spatial practice has been key to understanding the ways in which space is produced in public housing. If spaces conducive to the development of "total human beings" are to be produced—spaces more akin to spaces of representation—then it is essential to be clear about those types of space (spatial practice and representations of space) that are currently its fellow travelers.

Spatial practice, returning to the quote that opened this dissertation, "might thus be defined—to take an extreme but significant case—by the daily life of a tenant in a government-subsidized high-rise housing project" (Lefebvre, 1991). That example, however, gives somewhat of an impression that the production of spatial practice is one-sided, dominated by government or state, when I have found it more helpful to unpack Lefebvre's distinction and to understand spatial practice as being carried out by both those who govern (and dominate) as well as by those who are governed. While there are myriad of accumulated and embedded difficulties existing within spatial practice

presenting challenges and stumbling blocks to those working to produce spaces of representation, spatial practice nevertheless remains an area of contestation—it is possible to alter spatial practice. While spatial practice under capitalism is clearly space dominated by largely uneven capitalist practices, it is also the actual space where struggles over the production of space are carried out (Lefebvre, 1991). Whose interests come to the fore? Whose interests dominate? How are interests combined, convoluted or compromised in the struggles to produce public housing in New York? I have attempted to find the "answers" to these questions by looking at the spatial practice of the Resident Alliance, the TRADES Campaign, and their interactions with the Housing Authority. The spatial practices in question were most certainly dominated by capitalism, particularly since my examination of the Resident Alliance has taken place during an important phase in the rise of neoliberalism: ownership of private property (individual homeownership, in particular to housing) is dominant, bottom-lines and profits are privileged over collective well-being—as well as individual well-being—and those whose labor is not highly valued or not required are dealt with in punitive, ahistorical and acontextual fashions, held "responsible" and "accountable" as if they have caused their own hardships and difficult circumstances. Some of the most telling examples of spatial practice that I have kept track of during the course of this research have included the un-enforced Section 3 legislation itself, the professionalization of activism that often results in the exclusion of grassroots activists from important decision-making tables, the difficulty that public housing leaders have in mobilizing their fellow residents, the reluctance of the Housing Authority leadership to "accommodate some interest other than 'just get it done'," as well as the exclusion of young people from the Section 3 program if

the head of their household was not current with their rent payments. Each of these examples of spatial practice took place on different scales, but what they have in common is that they contribute to the fraught environments within which groups like the Resident Alliance and TRADES try to produce spaces of representation, or what might more commonly be thought of as supportive public housing communities.

Understanding spatial practice as put forth by Lefebvre, and, further, parsing it, whether by the scale at which it takes place or by some other method, is an important aspect of understanding how to produce increased spaces of representation within it. The overly deterministic character of spatial practice *can* be infiltrated by spaces of representation—though the duration and the magnitude of the infiltration vary depending on the strength of the space of representation and the context in which it is asserted.

Structural racism

The instrumentalism characteristic of representations of space has clearly played a role in the creation and maintenance of the system of structural racism that is so prevalent in US (and world) society. Combining Lefebvrian three-part dialectic with the structural racism framework has allowed for further pinpointing of the complex system of structural racism. By identifying particular power arrangements, cultural aspects, and policies and practices that produce racial disparities, the structural racism analytical framework shed further light on the deeper significance of race, particularly as it is lived in environments like US public housing.

Having relied on the structural racism framework also helped me to highlight how representations of people end up producing space and places. Mischaracterizations of

people of color in public housing as lazy and criminal resulted in social policies that paid no actual attention to the real circumstances of their lives, their well-being, or their futures. The Resident Alliance changed representations of public housing residents by simply existing, but also by doing things like showing up in the offices of elected officials. Referring to the remark made by Congresswoman Sue Kelly, "these people" *had* gotten up in the morning. They had brushed their teeth and arrived at a meeting in an elected official's office ready to discuss unfair social policy that she was advocating.

For both theorists and strategists it is important to emphasize that structural racism produces and is reproduced by policies, practices and representations. If they can be named and their contours understood, they can be actively altered to promote more even balances of power and resources and better quality of life.

The Resident Alliance, TRADES and Social Movement

Producing spaces of representation within the spatial practices of our time requires directly countering the representations of space that produce alienated environments via sophisticated and coordinated social movement. I embarked upon this research because I was interested in whether grassroots action like that of the Resident Alliance had a shot of making change and whether such groups can produce space and communities in the overdetermined setting of public housing. While the Resident Alliance and the TRADES Campaign in and of themselves do not qualify as social movements, they do contain the elements that social movement scholars and practitioners suggest are essential to making significant and possibly structural changes.

While clearly not sufficient for the kind of large scale changes that the leaders of the Resident Alliance would like to see in the long run, the Resident Allianceand TRADES models made significant progress in establishing the kind of links—among legal professionals, policy analysts, elected officials, the progressive labor union movement, researchers and so on—that are essential to maximizing grassroots power and moving communities toward the production of spaces of representation. The Resident Alliance/TRADES work highlighted the importance of combining such links with strategic and consistent mobilization. When the Housing Authority's board was confronted not only with legal challenges threats of exposure of long-running corruption, but also with hundreds of public housing residents showing up at their board meetings their non-communication strategies, belligerence and stalling techniques took a different turn and they became increasingly willing to meet and negotiate. As put by Frederick Douglas, "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."

One of the key findings of this research, I believe, is that it is necessary not to curtail critiques of the professionalization of activism, but to go beyond them, recognizing that the current political-economic climate has become nearly impervious to grassroots action. It is not clear at all that grassroots groups like the Resident Alliance would have been able to achieve the impressive and scale jumping achievements that the did without the expertise and savvy of their legal and policy advocates. The consistent expressions in my interviews that the TRADES and Resident Alliance victories could not have been won without the collaborative effort of different types of groups is supports this. The advocates with whom the Resident Alliance worked possessed capacities and resources that grassroots activists simply do not have. Reluctance to confront these

dynamics will only stall the progress of groups like the Resident Alliance. Instead, it is important to amplify existing and create new venues for *authentic and respectful* cooperation between grassroots activists and advocates.

Concluding Remarks

When I asked Adriene Holder of the Legal Aid Society about her perspective on the accomplishments and challenges of the TRADES Campaign, she said "I think for any of us to forget those lessons would be tragic, because we have to keep doing it over and over." This, I would like to conclude, is the key lesson that has come from my examination of the formation and evolution of the Resident Alliance and the TRADES Campaign. The TRADES Campaign in particular exhibited the capacity to be explicit about its purpose, goals, context (including racialized education and labor systems) and challenges in ways that allowed the group of diverse and sometimes contentious actors to stay together and achieve a significant victory. Had the TRADES members not been explicit about these elements, it is not clear that they would have succeeded. The production of spaces of representation that have staying power is ultimately dependent on such awareness and determination.

My focus, the collaboration between the unions and the Resident Alliance, is one that has many of the necessary elements for producing spaces of representation. The neoliberal environment is creating "new" and interesting bed-fellows. As I conducted the interviews and participant observation that were the backbone of the research, union representatives spoke of creating a new working class movement. Resident leaders spoke of transforming their developments and nurturing new young activist leaders. The

TRADES Campaign has the support of city agencies, foundations, significant leaders and public housing residents. The pieces are in place. This model, however, and its supporters, exist in an extraordinarily harsh environment. It is my hope that this research adds to the strong voice—but one that is not quite strong enough—that speaks and acts for fairness and that is itself impervious to harsh disregard for human well-being.

the unions. They have made formal and productive links with the unions, making it more likely that they will continue to partner on issues of mutual interest. If the relationships are to continue, it will be important to maintain and/or increase the exposure and working experience that public housing resident leaders and union leaders have with each other. It also suggests the need to cultivate more union leaders like Elly Spicer of the Carpenters Union who are explicit about "not [being] against moving a business agenda along with a social justice agenda."

Scalar fix

The scalar fix conceptualization has also been useful in gaining deeper understanding of the Resident Alliance's ability to affect change in public housing communities. Scalar fixes, those elements that disallowed or thwarted the Resident Alliance's (and TRADES's) efforts, came in a variety of forms. Some seemed to have emanated from spatial practice—the different, often counter-productive, ways in which different actors internal and external to the Resident Alliance/TRADES collaboration navigate the tensions that define everyday life between representations of space and spaces of representation. An example of this was the dynamics of the CCOP and the Resident Alliance's relationship to it. Other scalar fixes were more direct results of representations of space, for example included the public housing reform legislation which not only disallowed the construction of any new public housing units, but forced punitive sanctions on public housing residents simply for being public housing residents.

Overcoming scalar fixes resulting from "spatial practice origins" and those resulting from "representations of space origins" requires different strategies. The circumstances surrounding each type of scalar fix are different. With spatial practice, the

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