

**Business and Professional People for
the Public Interest, Gautreaux Files
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Summary Information

Repository	Chicago History Museum
Title	Business and Professional People for the Public Interest, Gautreaux Files
Date [bulk]	Bulk, 1965-2000
Date [inclusive]	1930-2004,
Extent	67.14 Linear feet
Language	English
Abstract	<p>In 1966, Alexander Polikoff, as a volunteer attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union, represented six Chicago public housing tenants in a suit against the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA). Filed in Federal District Court, he argued that CHA's tenant and site selections were racially discriminatory and thus violated the Civil Rights Act of 1964. That same year, Polikoff filed a similar suit against the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) arguing that HUD was aware of, and therefore contributed to, CHA's discriminatory practices. The collection covers the Gautreaux v. CHA and HUD cases from the Federal District Court of Illinois to the Supreme Court and the Gautreaux Program, which was the outcome of the supreme court decision in favor of the plaintiffs. The collection spans from 1930-2004 with the bulk of materials from 1965-2000. This collection is arranged into five series, "Gautreaux v. CHA," "Gautreaux v. CHA/HUD," "Model Cities Program," "Gautreaux Program," and "Henry Horner Redevelopment."</p>

Preferred Citation note

Business and Professional People for the Public Interest files (Chicago History Museum), plus a detailed description, date, and box/folder number of a specific item.

Biographical/Historical note

In 1965, The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) Illinois chapter established a civil-rights committee with public housing among its chief concerns. In 1966, as a volunteer attorney for the ACLU, Alexander Polikoff met with Zoe Mikva, a member of the Civil Rights Committee of the ACLU, and Harold Baron, the research director of the Chicago Urban League. Baron assembled the meeting after hearing a complaint from the West Side Federation (an umbrella group of African American organizations) that the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) only built public housing in African American communities, and Baron wanted to know if the ACLU had any interest in looking into CHA's practices.

After conducting preliminary research on CHA, Polikoff and his colleagues at the ACLU, found legal grounds for discrimination and built their case against CHA. Originally, there were six plaintiffs in the case one of whom was Dorothy Gautreaux, a local civil rights activist and resident of the South Side of Chicago's Altgeld-Murray public housing apartments. Dorothy Gautreaux was chosen by the attorneys as the first plaintiff named on the case due to her experience in civil rights causes as a tenant leader at Altgeld-Murray as well as for her unique last name.

In 1966, on behalf of the ACLU, Alexander Polikoff (assisted by Bernard Weisberg, Charles R. Markels, Milton I. Shadur, and Merrill A. Freed) represented the group of public housing tenants and filed a class-action lawsuit in federal district court against CHA. The goal was to prove that there was an intentional pattern of racial discrimination by CHA, which was outlawed by the Title VI provision of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. *Gautreaux v. Chicago Housing Authority* was the nation's first major public housing desegregation lawsuit. In the same year, Polikoff filed a suit against the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) charging that HUD shared responsibility for public housing discrimination in Chicago. In 1969, Judge Richard Austin dismissed the case against HUD and ruled in favor of the plaintiffs in the case against CHA.

In 1970, Polikoff left his private practice to become the executive director of the public interest group Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI) (founded in 1969), bringing the Gautreaux case with him. In September 1971, the U.S. Court of Appeals, Seventh Circuit, reversed Judge Austin's decision and asserted that both CHA and HUD held responsibility for discrimination in Chicago public housing.

In the midst of the Gautreaux case there was a legal controversy involving the Model Cities Program in Chicago related to the 1971 U.S. Court of Appeals ruling regarding housing discrimination. Model Cities, a Great Society Program under the Johnson administration, provided money for job training, childcare, and other social programs to several American cities, including Chicago. The Gautreaux lawyers fought to have the Model Cities funds frozen from the City of Chicago if they did not comply with the 1969 *Gautreaux v. CHA* decision to build new public housing in neighborhoods with a high percentage of white residents. In September, 1971, Judge Austin ruled that in order for Chicago to receive funds from Model Cities, the City of Chicago had to give the site approvals for scattered housing to CHA as a result of the 1969 decision that found CHA liable in the *Gautreaux v. CHA* case. The following year, HUD and

the City of Chicago appealed Judge Austin's decision, and his decision was successfully overturned in the U.S. Court of Appeals by a two to one vote.

In 1976, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously that HUD be required to remedy its past discriminatory behavior in Chicago. Out of this decision came the Gautreaux Assisted Housing Program, commonly known as the Section 8 Program– the nation's first major housing mobility program; and the Gautreaux Demonstration Program (commonly known as the Scattered Site Program). From 1976-1998, The Section 8 Program awarded special Section 8 rent certificates to public housing residents for private apartments in neighborhoods in which no more than 30 percent of the residents were African-American. The Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities aided participants in locating housing in diverse neighborhoods in Chicago and the surrounding suburbs.

The Scattered Site Program, which also started in 1976, required the building of small-scale public housing that would be dispersed throughout the city to foster diverse communities, as opposed to large isolated high-rises concentrated in less economically and racially diverse pockets of the city. In 1987, nearly two decades later, due to CHA's inaction in implementing the Scattered Site Program, the court appointed The Habitat Company as receiver to carry out the maintenance and construction of scattered site housing that CHA was not delivering.

The outcome of the Gautreaux case restricts construction of new public housing in segregated neighborhoods. However, a 1981 consent decree introduced the notion of building public housing in "revitalizing areas" (areas with a large minority population that were undergoing redevelopment sufficient enough to foster racial integration). This consent decree was utilized during the mid-1990s, when the Henry Horner Mothers Guild filed a class action lawsuit against CHA and HUD to stop the demolition of the Horner Homes and the displacement of residents. The Gautreaux Court authorized a redevelopment project, instead of demolition, of CHA's Henry Horner Homes and Lakefront Properties into mixed income communities, declaring those communities as actively revitalizing areas. These mixed income communities and others authorized by the Court are being developed through CHA's year 2000 Plan for Transformation.

In 1999, Alexander Polikoff stepped down as executive director of BPI, however he still works at BPI as the Director of the Public Housing Program. In 2006, Polikoff published his book, *Waiting for Gautreaux: A Story of Segregation, Housing, and the Black Ghetto*. Polikoff continues to oversee and implement new decisions made on Gautreaux.

Scope and Contents note

The Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI) Gautreaux files spans from 1930 to 2004, with the bulk of material from 1965 to 2000. This collection is arranged into five series, "Gautreaux v. CHA," "Gautreaux v. CHA/HUD," "Model Cities Program," "Gautreaux Program," and "Henry Horner Redevelopment." Documents include attorney Alexander Polikoff's BPI records including case files, depositions, briefs, memos, correspondence, agendas, research, press, and notes from the landmark

class action lawsuit, Gautreaux v. the Chicago Housing Authority. The majority of the collection relates to the creation and maintenance of the Gautreaux Program, which came out of the 1976 Supreme Court decision in the Gautreaux case. Also included are case files from the original Gautreaux case. The collection is arranged in chronological order within each series.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Chicago History Museum June 8, 2013

Conditions Governing Use note

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Processing Information note

Processed by CLIR funded Black Metropolis Research Consortium "Color Curtain Processing Project."
By Katie Obriot and Elise Zerega, June 8, 2013.

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

Bernard Weisberg papers, Chicago History Museum Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities records, part 1, Chicago History Museum

Controlled Access Headings

Personal Name(s)

- Aspen, Marvin E., 1934-
- Gautreaux,, Dorothy
- Polikoff, Alexander
- Weisberg, Bernard, d. 1994
- Williams, Kale

Subject(s)

- Business and Professional People for the Public Interest
- Chicago Housing Authority
- Public housing--Illinois--Chicago.
- United States. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Restriction

Research use of this collection is governed by the standard rules and regulations of the Chicago History Museum Research Center.

Cited Sources

“About Us.” Business and Professional People for the Public Interest. Accessed June 5, 2013. <http://www.bpichicago.org/about.php> “Gautreaux Litigation.” Business and Professional People for the Public Interest. Accessed June 5, 2013. http://www.bpichicago.org/ph_gautreaux.php Polikoff, Alexander. *Waiting for Gautreaux: A Story of Segregation, Housing, and the Black Ghetto*. Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2006. Shore, Debra. “The Houses that Gautreaux Built.” *The University of Chicago Magazine*. February 1995. <http://magazine.uchicago.edu/9502/Feb95Gautreaux.html> “What is Gautreaux?” Business and Professional People for the Public Interest. Accessed June 5, 2013. <http://www.bpichicago.org/GtxLit-WhatisGtx.php> Wilen, William P. “The Horner Model: Successfully Redeveloping Public Housing. *Northwestern Journal of Law and Public Policy*. Summer 2006. <http://scholarlycommons.law.northwestern.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1005 &context=njlsp>

Series I. Gautreaux v. CHA,

Collection Inventory**Series I. Gautreaux v. CHA, circa 1930-1998, bulk 1958-1971 (Bulk, 1958-1971)****Scope and Contents note**

This series includes case files, legal briefs, consent decrees, depositions, affidavits, memorandums, correspondence, agendas, notes and research relating to the Gautreaux v. CHA case from Alexander Polikoff's BPI files. Also included are photocopies of documents, such memos and correspondence, from the Chicago Housing Authority.

Box

Gautreaux v. CHA circa 1930-1998

1-8

Series II. Gautreaux v. CHA/HUD, circa 1966-1999, bulk 1966-1972 (Bulk, 1966-1972)**Box**

Gautreaux v. CHA/HUD circa 1966-1999

9-24

Series III. Model Cities Program, 1965-1970**Scope and Contents note**

This series includes materials from Alexander Polikoff's BPI files such as case files, correspondence, and handbooks relating to HUD's Model Cities Program. This program provided participating cities, such as Chicago, with federal funds for job training, childcare, hot-lunches, and other social programs. The Gautreaux lawyers fought to have these funds frozen from the City of Chicago if they did not

Series IV. Gautreaux Program,

comply with the 1969 Gautreaux v. CHA decision to build new public housing in neighborhoods throughout the city.

Box

Model Cities Program 1965-1970

24-26

Series IV. Gautreaux Program, circa 1950-2004, bulk 1969-1999 (Bulk, 1969-1999)**Scope and Contents note**

This series is arranged into four subseries, “Scattered Site Program,” “Section 8 Program,” “Press,” and “Research.” It contains Alexander Polikoff’s BPI files related to the planning and maintenance of the Gautreaux Program, which was comprised of the Gautreaux Assisted Housing Program (Section 8 Program) and the Scattered Site Program. The Section 8 program distributed Section 8 vouches to Gautreaux plaintiffs for private housing throughout the city. The Scattered Site Program built new public housing throughout the city and suburbs with the intent of creating mixed income communities. Documents include memos, agendas, correspondence, newspaper clippings, magazine clippings, press releases, and research.

Subseries 1. Scattered Site Program, circa 1969-2004, bulk 1975-1999 (Bulk, 1975-1999)**Box**

Scattered Site Program circa 1969-2004

27-84

Subseries 2. Section 8 Program, circa 1969-2000**Scope and Contents note**

This subseries contains Alexander Polikoff’s BPI files on the Gautreaux Assisted Housing Program (Section 8 Program). Materials include notes, memos, meeting minutes, agendas, press, correspondence, consent decrees, and contracts regarding the planning and implementation of the program. Also included

Subseries 3. Press,

are materials on the assistance provided by the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities in securing private housing for the plaintiff class.

Box

Section 8 Program circa 1969-2000

84-124

Subseries 3. Press, circa 1950-2000, bulk 1975-1999 (Bulk, 1975-1999)**Scope and Contents note**

This subseries contains newspaper clippings, magazine clippings, and press releases regarding the Gautreaux Demonstration Program (Gautreaux Program), including both the Section 8 and Scattered Site.

Box

Press circa 1950-2000

124-140

Subseries 4. Research, circa 1978-1995, bulk 1992-1995 (Bulk, 1992-1995)**Scope and Contents note**

This series includes Alexander Polikoff's BPI research files. Types of documents include copies of court transcripts and notes from related public housing lawsuits in the United States and notes on those cases. Also included are materials and notes from the 1993 Housing Desegregation Remedies Conference, which Alex Polikoff and BPI helped organize and took part in to present the Gautreaux Section 8 and Scattered Site programs. Also included in this subseries are Gautreaux Program evaluations.

Box

Research circa 1978-1995

141-145

Series V. Henry Horner Redevelopment,

Series V. Henry Horner Redevelopment, 1993-2002

Scope and Contents note

This series contains Alexander Polikoff's BPI files regarding the Henry Horner Revitalization. Included are copies of court transcripts from the Henry Horner Mothers Guild, et al. v. Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Also included are copies of consent decrees between the Mothers Guild and CHA, et al, as well as reports, agreements, correspondence, and press regarding the Henry Horner revitalization.

Box

Henry Horner Redevelopment 1993-2002

146-162