

The Abell Report

What we think about, and what we'd like you to think about

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Abell Salutes:

Students who could only dream of being college bound, thanks to CollegeBound, really are.

Kandra Baltimore is an 18-year old graduate of Southwestern High School. While in school, Kandra maintained excellent grades and a 95 percent attendance rate during her junior and senior year. Kandra, then, had good reason to feel college bound. But Kandra was one of five children of a non-working single parent pressed to deal with the attendant problems of that unhappy circumstance. The chances of Kandra's being able to afford college were proving to be slim.

Enter, CollegeBound. As it does currently for 163 college freshmen, sophomores and juniors who were once in Kandra's circumstances, CollegeBound Foundation advisors provided Kandra assistance in securing financial aid and then helped her to subsidize the remaining costs of tuition through CollegeBound grants. (Last year CollegeBound awarded \$72,000 in last-dollar grants to 59 college freshmen and more than \$100,000 to 120 college sophomores and juniors.) Kandra was able to enter Notre Dame College and begin her studies towards her goal—to become a pediatrician.

There are thousands of Baltimore area high school students like Kandra—students with the qualifica-

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Reducing Impacted Concentrations of the Poor In America's Cities; Is it an "answer"?

Deconcentration holds the promise of not only helping the poor; but also the suburbs they move into; and the cities they move out of.

Can American cities ever reverse their decline if the proportion of their population that is poor continues to increase? Programs designed to enable poor people to move out of economically impacted city neighborhoods and into the suburbs not only benefit the affected poor, but, arguably, also benefit the cities the poor leave. Such programs make it easier for those among the poor who choose to move out into the suburbs to do so. At the same time, they may well provide cities with a formula to enjoy a measure of relief from the burden of carrying a disproportionate number of a region's poor.

One of these initiatives is the Chicago-based "Gautreaux Assisted Housing Program." It takes its name from the landmark Supreme Court decision addressing racial discrimination in public housing, analogous to the Brown vs. Board of Education decision in public education. The Gautreaux program operates as a laboratory for studying the effectiveness of efforts to assist inner city poor to move to the suburbs.

Through it low-income families are afforded the opportunity to live in communities with what the program describes as "good schools, good housing and good jobs, the opportunity for their children to develop their potential and to dare to share

dreams and ambitions that had seemed impossibly out of reach."

During the past 15 years, Gautreaux has made it possible by providing federally funded rent certificates for 4,200 low income families (more than 15,000 people) to move out of pockets of concentration of poor within the city of Chicago into privately owned apartments in more than 100 suburban environments outside Chicago.

According to a Northwestern University study, the low income children (all African American) who moved from inner city Chicago to predominantly white middle class suburbs through the Gautreaux program were more than twice as likely to attend college as those who stayed within the city.

Does the program hold the potential to work on a larger scale?

The two year study which tracked one student each from 107 families indicates that by changing their environment poor people can find the motivation and opportunity to improve their lives.

Authors Rosenbaum and Popkin, commenting in the Brookings Institute's, "The Urban Underclass" (Brookings Institute, Washington, D.C., 1991), concluded overall that participants in the program see the suburbs as offering good role models and social norms that encourage work ("both absent in their city neighborhoods"). They believe these factors have encouraged them to enter the labor force, where they appear to experience "improved employment."

But given the historic resistance by the middle class to the poor moving in among them, does the program hold the potential to work on a larger scale? In evaluating that potential, it is important to know at the outset what the record shows of community resistance to the Gautreaux model.

The program's success . . . offers stirring lessons for all cities.

One record, "The Center Report," published by the Center For Urban Affairs and Policy Research of Northwestern University, reports optimistically on the subject: "Despite a high level of over all acceptance, (the poor moving into the suburbs) did experience some social rejection from their neighbors. About half reported at least one incident of racial harassment in the first year after they moved. However

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210 North Charles Street
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(410) 547-1300

these problems appeared to decline over time. Many of these incidents were relatively minor, involving name calling among children or neighbors complaining about participants to building management."

"These findings have important implications for policy. First they demonstrate that this type of racial and socioeconomic integration is feasible. The low income black women are very satisfied with their move to the suburbs; and despite popular fears, they are not rejected by most of their neighbors. Rather (the poor moving into the suburbs) form interracial friendships and report the same level of interaction with neighbors as their counterparts in the city."

The New York Times, editorializing in its November 1, 1988 issue, commented: "The program's success, documented in a new study, offers stirring lessons for all cities with isolated underclass communities." It points out that Gautreaux families, unlike families involved in integration plans that move people en masse into new housing projects, are moved by ones and twos into existing housing, where none of the neighbors know of their public housing background or of their rent subsidies. The editorial goes on to observe: "Managers of the program marvel at the emotional strength of the mothers, who sacrifice everything to give their children the advantages of safe suburban schools and neighborhoods. According to the research, their sacrifices pay off."

It can be concluded from data that the Gautreaux program offers the poor a viable opportunity to move into middle class neighborhoods in the suburbs; that many take advantage of it; and that many benefit from it. The consequences for the families affected by the program are demonstrably salubri-

ous; they get to enjoy a more wholesome lifestyle within the mainstream of society. But these results give rise to another consequence: cities may find in the formula long-sought relief from their unequal burdens in serving the poor.

The case for the poor themselves benefiting by volunteering to move out of the city into the suburbs is quite clear; but it is not so clear how the cities the poor move out of would benefit. No one has thought to determine what the effects on a city would be if it were relieved of a certain number of its poor. The argument is new to social scientists. In the world of urban affairs no model exists to project its potential; no commentary speculating on the idea has been published; the subject has apparently never appeared on the agenda of any conference concerned with the plight of America's cities. Hard data projecting the phenomenon in various scenarios do not exist.

For example, we do not know how many people a city needs to help move from "concentration of the poor" before deconcentration has become meaningful—in terms of dollars saved, lifestyle enhanced, and civic services becoming more effective.

Cities may find in the formula long sought relief . . .

Marsha Schachtel, an urban affairs consultant now with the Maryland Department of Economic Development, has suggested an approach to the answer, a modest model that needs to be developed further. In her study, "The Paradox of Baltimore City: Fiscal Health, Empty Pockets," she concludes that

if 10 percent of the city's poverty population were deconcentrated, the city would experience savings (and presumably an improvement in the quality of service delivered) in the areas of social services, health, recreation, police, prosecution, courts, and correctional services. This move would account for a three percent reduction in the city's total population. Because the residents moving out can be assumed to be among the city's neediest, an unusual proportional reduction in expenses might be projected. Savings of \$7-million to \$8-million a year to the city government would be the result.

*... would mobility
create "unacceptable
social costs"?*

"A very rough guess," she argues, "of the effect of expanding low income housing opportunities in the suburbs for 5,000 city families suggests that, under the current aid structure, education funding in the city would be reduced but moderate savings overall might be realized."

John Nagolski, with HUD in Washington, views any urban deconcentration program as one that could work in real terms only if "large numbers" of the poor were to be assisted in moving out. "There are several formulas to compute how many dollars per person HUD provides a city to assist in supporting its poor. But the figure is between \$31.00 and \$53.00 per person. That would mean that for every thousand poor who chose to move out, the city would lose \$31,000 to \$53,000 in federal funds. But the city might not in fact be losing any money at all, it might actually be gaining, because the

service rendered to the poor by the city may well be costing it more than the \$31.00 or \$53.00 it is receiving in reimbursement."

But raw data, well-intentioned speculation and what-ifs aside, there is no question that urban-poor density is linked historically and inextricably with the deterioration of establishment societal values. Theft, gambling and drug-related crime, the loss of educational aspiration, the nurturing of a culture that breeds a citizenry living and working on the edge of, or even outside of, organized society—all appear to be born and to thrive in urban-poor density. The ability to manage great numbers of poor people crowded into small geographic areas has too often proved to be overwhelming for municipal government. A reduction in the number of poor concentrated in the city holds the potential for having the following effects:

**Housing:* According to Alexander Polikoff, a director of Business and Professional People For the Public Interest, which monitors the Gautreaux program referred to earlier, "With fewer people to house, the city's antiquated highrises might at long last come down. They have long been recognized as totally unsuitable answers to the housing needs of the poor. With fewer people to provide housing for, the city might be able to get rid of the highrises, and turn its attention to more suitable answers to the problem."

**Crime:* Crime very often follows the crowded poor. With fewer poor people concentrated in the city's impacted areas, it might well be easier to police, not necessarily by reducing the number of policemen, but by lowering the density limits (reducing number of poor people who live per acre). Some of the poor, freed of the crush of "crowded conditions," may see a

"way out" at last, and be responsive to programs that offer hope, and promise a better quality of life. Lowering the numbers could mean breaking the cycle.

**Jobs and Employment:* If the smaller number of students in the schools could be translated into smaller class sizes (and it is not clear that it always can be) comparable to the class size in the suburban schools, it is reasonable to speculate that the quality of urban education would improve. This improvement in city schools' performance could result in the city's system turning out more graduates, and more graduates better prepared to compete for jobs in the marketplace.

As recently as March 23, 1992, Neal Peirce, among America's leading urbanologists, focuses on the problem in an article in The Baltimore Sun. He concludes that "we are paying a heavy price for what he calls "the new American Apartheid (the economic separation of the rich from the poor, often at the same time the black from the white)." He makes the point, quoting newly released statistics from The American League of Cities, that "the regions with the greatest income differential between center cities and suburbs have suffered the most in the recent recession."

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There is, according to Peirce, strong evidence that relieving the cities of some of their poor ("creating cities without suburbs") does indeed work to make the whole area better off economically. Specific examples include Jacksonville,

Florida; Colorado Springs, Colorado; Lincoln, Nebraska. Conversely, cities where municipal boundaries create economic firewalls, have suffered the worst: Baltimore, Newark, Cleveland, Boston.

Peirce suggests that the new research indicates that regions are paying a prohibitively high price for a social policy that works to keep concentrations of its poor impacted (he uses the term "garrisoned") in the cities.

Abell Salutes: CollegeBound

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tions but who lack the funds and the family culture that moves young people along in the college admission process. It is the mission of CollegeBound Foundation to encourage and enable Baltimore City public high school students to go on to college. The program works with students by encouraging them to take the SATs; sharing with them in college selection; assisting them in their filling out of complicated financial aid forms; and awarding them with, when all else fails—last-dollar funding. During the 1991-92 school year CollegeBound awarded \$186,170 to deserving students. Since it was founded in 1988 CollegeBound has provided financial support for about 1,600 students; including SAT fees for more than 1,000 students, and financial aid application fees for more than 500 students.

Since its inception in 1988, CollegeBound efforts have resulted in a 24 percent increase in the percentage of Baltimore City public high school students taking the SATs (compared to a slight decrease statewide); a 46 percent increase in the percentage of students completing Financial Aid forms; a dramatic increase (77 percent) in the number of students who completed college applications, increasing from 25 percent in 1990 to 46 percent in 1991.

A closer look at these students shows their families' per capita income to be an average of \$6,435. Yet families were able to provide an average contribution of only \$1,035 towards the costs of a child's education.

CollegeBound has its work cut out for it. According to a report issued by the Baltimore City Department of Planning, Baltimore has the third worst percentage of college graduates in America (ranking only behind Cleveland and Detroit) and the worst percentage of students graduating high school.

The community, happily, sees hope and promise in CollegeBound; it has passed judgement on its value and has opened its heart and its wallet to it, contributing \$13,000,000 towards College Bound's goal of \$25,000,000; \$12,800,000 of that amount has been earmarked for endowment; the remainder to date, \$200,000, has been designated for operating funds. CollegeBound was founded by the Greater Baltimore Committee, Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development and Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke.

Through the creative and energetic efforts of CollegeBound Foundation, many aspiring and deserving students who could only dream of being college bound, thanks to CollegeBound, really are.

Some Recent Grants By The Abell Foundation

Goucher College \$101,657
For the development of an Advanced Placement Calculus program to increase participation of students in selected Baltimore City public high schools.

**Sandtown Habitat for Humanity/
1992 Jimmy Carter Work Project** \$30,000
Start up funds for housing renovations which will serve as revolving funds as long mortgages are repaid, as part of major community action project to provide permanent shelter for low-income families earning less than \$7,000 a year.

**Towson State University/
Maryland Writing Project** \$10,170
For tuition costs to enable 18 Baltimore City public school teachers to participate in the Maryland Writing project summer training.

**University of Maryland/
Department of Pediatrics** \$39,660
to fund a portion of a collaborative project with Health Care For the Homeless to establish a comprehensive health services program for 200 homeless children and their parents.

Baltimore City Foundation \$5,000
to organize and conduct a geography contest for Baltimore City public elementary schools at the College of Notre Dame.

**Associated Catholic
Charities/Baltimore SHARE** \$20,000
Seed funding for a monthly food distribution project designed to promote self-help and community building.

**Baltimore City Public Schools/
Federal Hill Elementary** \$498,890
A two-year grant for the purchase and installation of computer equipment for the Science Technology Model School Program, encouraging greater academic achievement and interest in science and technology.

The Nature Conservancy \$45,000
Joining forces with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the Nature Conservancy will develop a strategic plan to protect the Nanticoke River watershed, a model approach to the Nature Conservancy's new ecosystem conservation (bioreserve) initiatives.

Parks and People Foundation \$48,027
Seed funding to establish an inner city baseball initiative in the fourth and fifth grades of Baltimore City Public Schools in collaboration with the Orioles and the Junior League.