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By
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"How blessed it is for brethren to dwell together in unity," might well be the motto of the Robert R. Taylor Homes and Washington Park apartments for senior citizens at 4949 Cottage Grove ave.

Because in the Robert R. Taylor Homes 27,000 persons live side by side in 28, 16-story buildings; while 92 apartments are rented in the Washington Park apartments to interracial senior citizens.

A common bond ties these families together — each one was looking for decent, low rent apartments. It made no difference what part of the city they came from or whether or not they had migrated to Chicago a few years ago or been born here.

TEEMING SOUTHSIDE

The Robert R. Taylor Homes, the largest housing project in the nation, is located on the teeming Southside, in an area that was once virtually a slum jungle.

Today, where ragged, congested apartment buildings once stood, there are now modern, clean buildings. It means that families, who once could not afford decent housing, can now have it.

SHABBY APARTMENT

It means that couples like Lorena and John Stewart can afford a warm, clean home paid for from his small retirement check. The Stewarts moved into Robert Taylor Homes when it first opened in August 1962.

They had put an application in two years earlier when they first heard about the project being built.

"The place we were in wasn't fit to live in, Mrs. Stewart said. "It was in bad condition."

Her husband had rented the shabby apartment while she was in California. "It had a beautiful view. I knew my wife would be home a lot alone, so, I thought she would enjoy it. Being a man, I didn't think about the location."

PLAYED A JOKE

Shortly before his retirement from the Santa Fe railroad, where he had worked as a cook for 18 years, John said one of his superiors had told him he had been transferred to Los Angeles.

The Stewarts packed and moved their furniture to California, only to get there and find someone had played a joke on him. He came back to his old job while his wife remained in California for several months.

Although Stewart was reared in Evanston, he worked in California for years. He and his wife returned to Chicago four years ago. Speaking of his early life here, Stewart still vividly recalls the race riot of 1919. He said he was stabbed under the arm while returning home from work during the riots.

CLARENCE DARROW

"I had just come back from the service (World War I)," he said.

He also remembers serving at the club which Clarence Darrow attended regularly.

"I often served the great attorney," Stewart related.

The Stewarts are active in the Building Council and Floor Councils in Building No. 6, where they live. Mrs. Stewart is president of the Council and Stewart is captain for his floor.

Besides her duties as president of the Building Council, Mrs. Stewart also keeps busy by helping taking care of anyone she hears of that is sick in the building.

Although Mrs. Cedella Washington, 30, has seven children of her own, she does not neglect her own children nor can she stand to see some one else neglect.

She reported that there was a family neglecting their children and she was practically caring for them along with her own brood.

SPOTLESS HOUSE

"Regardless of what you have," Mrs. Washington said, "you can wash it out every night and get up and iron it the next day. There is no sense in neglecting your children's education just because they have only one set of clothes."

Her own spotless house spoke of her cleanliness.

"My children make their own beds every morning when they get up. They know they must help keep the house clean. I'd like for you to see my house when it is really clean," she added.

DECENT PLACE

She and her husband, Essie, occupy one of the larger apartments in the Robert Taylor Homes. Like the Washington's the Stewarts moved in August 1962.

"We couldn't find a decent place to live with our kids," the mother explained. "If you can't find a decent place, your children grow up not caring about rats and roaches, even if they are surrounded by them."

"I think it's nice they built places like this. We weren't able to pay rent for a nice place — what, with a large

family and only one person working."

The mother continued, "My children (Judy, 13; Essie, Jr., 10; Scotty, 9; Everett, 7; Winona, 6; Tyrone, 15 months, and Webster 2 weeks) love living here. I don't allow them out. I don't send them out alone. I take them out."

WORKING PARENTS

"Where both parents are working, I think the mother should stay home and make get out of hand when the mother is working. That's why there are so many bad kids, here."

Mrs. Washington, who is captain of her floor, carries her cleanliness over into the gallery that runs along the entrance of the apartments.

SWEEPING GALLERY

She said, "I've been sweeping the gallery, but now that I can't, it isn't kept up too well." She added, "Parents cooperate with me when I tell them to do something."

The Washingtons have been in Chicago since 1953. They came here from St. Louis.

"I was paying \$135 a month for rent and ADC only allowed me \$110, Mrs. Allene Ellison, mother of 10 children said. "Something else had to be cut to pay the rent. Now I pay \$89.25. I'm very grateful to urban renewal."

With 10 children of her own, it would seem that Mrs. Ellison would not be able to find time for anything else. But she does. She's captain of her floor, president of the Young Democrats, sponsor of a teenage singing group, the Blenders, and sponsor of a teenage club.

"I'm always in something. I've organized a teenage club of youngsters from 14 to 17."

The Blenders sang at the YMCA recently. I like young people. They all seem to flock to me.

"I never wanted any children," the mother of 10 said. "In working with kids, I find they're not bad. All they want to do is go some place and listen to music and dance."

OPPONENTS OF HIGH RISE

Mrs. Ellison and her children, Cordella, 13; Sharon and Steven 11; Larry, 10; Cathy, 9; Don, 7; Gregory, 6; Denise, 5; Vincent, 4, and James, 17 months, moved into the Robert Taylor Homes because the house in which they were living was scheduled to be torn down.

Opponents of high-rise, ignore families like the Stewarts, Washingtons and Ellisons who live in public housing, instead, they point to what they call the high crime rate.

Robert H. Murphy, manager of the homes, said, "Considering the number of people who live here, crime is insignificant. There is no more crime here than in Lake Meadows."

INCREASED BUSINESS

While some persons feared the Robert Taylor homes being built in the area, Murphy said the apprehension has been changed.

"Most people who live in the area," he said, "would like to move into the homes. Those who feared the children attending the area schools would be dirty, lower class and have lower standards have found their thinking was incorrect."

Murphy stated, "Some of the merchants were glad to see the homes built in the area because it meant increased business. Some of the merchants are doing better than before; while some of the others, who out with what she has. Kids

have not repaired their stores or replenished their stocks, are no better off."

Not a cold, indifferent agency, Murphy and his staff take an interest in their tenants and their problems. When a mother, who was the sole support of her 13 children, died, through officials at the home, a homemaker was placed with the children.

When this proved unsatisfactory because there was no parental guidance, officials found the grandmother and got her consent to come live in the home.

Efforts like the above are the work of the Community and Tenant Relations Aides. They investigate vandalism, neighbor strife, marital problems, organize floor and teenage clubs.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Similar to block clubs, the floor clubs captains know what is going on, on each floor and they try to solve the various problems that might arise.

While there are approximately 20,000 children in the Robert Taylor Homes, not a single one is to be found at the Washington Park Apartments for senior citizens.

Yet, the basic reason for persons living there is the same as in the Robert Taylor Homes, — clean, decent, low rent apartments.

While the laughter of a happy child may ring down the gallery of the Robert Taylor Homes, only the occasional sound of a radio or television breaks the silence in the halls of the Washington Park Apartments.

In the Robert Taylor Homes, the only white faces seen belong to the Negro spouse of several tenants, in the Wash-

ington Park Apartments, Negroes and whites live side by side in harmony.

It matters not to the residents or Washington Park Apartments the color of their neighbor's skin. They want a quiet, clean, cheap place to spend their declining years.

In a neat, cheery three room apartment on the eight floor lives the Summers, Leola and Addison. They moved in to Washington Park when it first opened in 1961.

"My husband and I moved in here because it's nice and suited our income," Mrs. Summers said. "My husband is retired and unable to work anymore."

"The other place we lived was all rundown. The landlord wouldn't keep it up. We had to furnish everything including decorating. We were paying \$70. Now, we only pay \$52.50."

Describing herself, Mrs. Summers said, "I'm just a plain housewife. I've just take care of my house and my husband. I use to belong to the Order of Eastern Stars, but not any more."

She still attends her church, Coppin Chapel, and attends the knitting and crocheting classes there in the building. No one gets sick on her floor without her going to help out.

FINANCIAL REASONS

The Summers have lived in Chicago 47 years. They have no children.

Down on the second floor of the eight-story building Elizabeth, 68, and Edgar Edwards live. Edgar, 70, is round. Like the Summers, they moved into the building because of financial reasons.

"We were living in a nice neighborhood," Edwards said, "but it was noisy. People kept

knocking on the doors trying to sell their wares. Both of us are not well. We wanted a place that was safe."

Childless, the Edwards, who are an interracial couple, are interested in young people, especially foreign students.

"I'm mother to some. Some call me Mamma Betty and Mother Betty," Mrs. Edwards related. "We get along all right with the younger people, don't we honey? Our home has been the Edwards Inn."

Edgar was born in Chicago while his wife came here 50 years ago. They have been married 45 years. Until his retirement five years ago, Edwards was supervisor of operations at North Central Airlines.

Members of Bahai, Mrs. Edwards' hobby is "trying to convert people to the way of God. I love to serve mankind in anyway I can."

Although the Edwards are not able to attend the classes that are held on the first floor, they give their moral support. The classes are held for persons 55 or over from anyplace in the city.

Classes offered are hand weaving, dressmaking, general sewing, millinery, custom jewelry, ceramics and music appreciation. All of the teachers participating are volunteers.

Horace F. Johnson, II, program director, explained that there are only two buildings in the city for senior citizens. Two more are expected to be open by Summer.

In order to live in the building, where rents range from \$42.50, one member of the family must be 60. The oldest resident in the building is a 90-year old retired, industrial engineer, who still goes to 43rd Street to shop.