

# Public Housing: View of Boston's Columbia Point Seventh and Eighth Graders at the John W. McCormack Intermediate School

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In the following article, twenty-one of the six thousand plus residents of Columbia Point Housing Project respond to their "home," a word noticeably missing from their thoughts. These twenty one people have the commonality of being 7th & 8th graders of the John W. McCormack School. They were asked by their English teacher, Dan Dingfield, to tell him what they thought of the Project and then show him pictures to take describing what they meant in their writing. Columbia Point is one of the federally built post-WW II housing projects and is most commonly referred to in sociology and planning textbooks as a "rational disgrace." It is located in the Dorchester area of Boston on a large fill site and is soon to be the lonely neighbor of the University of Massachusetts, Boston and its 20,000 new inhabitants.





### MY VIEW OF THE PROJECT

Well the housing are akoy but it's crowded. They haven't got that much room, no up or downstairs. All it has is 3 to 6 room apartments. On the outside you see children, lots of children especially when you come from school. There's no special place for you to go really. Only that beat up old play ground. It's the same, no swings, brick slides and everything else. Right behind it is freezing ocean you see ships it looks real lonely with the tides out, old clams and seagulls. Sometimes when you come into the project, you might as well moveout. Thot smell WOW! it'll knock you out. All I can say you may want to visit but, I hope you won't.

- Sonia Parker

*Public Housing*



1. Theres no light in the holl it's dark like tunnel
2. The window's are broken it's cold as ice box
3. Them floors are full of garbage like a dump
4. They break the elevators as often as there fix
5. They piss in the corner like a bunch of dogs
6. Throw trash out the windows like incenerators
7. The water was rusted like a bunch of shit
8. The cellers crawling with rats as if there people

- Richard Crowley



## COLUMBIA POINT

*It a place that has tall buildings that hang over you or caving on top of you. It has small apartments with people jamed in them. If you just moved in you could get lost in that puzzle. The dogs howl and bark and bite all day and night. You can't even walk up those narrow stairs without a dog standing at the top about to bite your head off. Don't bother with the elevators they're all ways broken. When you walk in the hallways, its pitch black, the teenagers take the bublbs and through and through them in people's windows. The teenagers mess up everything. When there is a black out it seems your locked in a prison, can't*

*see a thing. Some people think its nice living by the ocean. Forget it. When the wind blows, that sickning oder gets to you. In the winter, the wind blows, and the coldness of the water will make you freeze to death.*

- Renee Allen

... Now I'll start with the most annoying and that, is the pests, for instance rats and roaches! Last year the rats got into an apartment and ate a baby's toes! All 10 ten of them...

- Gail Chin

## THE RATS AND ROACHES OF COLUMBIA POINT

*One bad thing about the project is the rats and roaches. Every night I can look out and see a few rats lurking around the building trying to scrounge, some grub to eat. The office should have these animals offillth poisoned, because they carry many germs and diseases. If anyone should ever be bitten, it could mean death. After all, they do carry deadly diseases. People might be happier without the roaches. Though many apartments have been exterminated, there are still many roaches. Roaches crawl all over our house, and in through our floor cabinets. We're al-ways stepping on them and waching all the food off thoughrolly. Things could be worst, but again things could be better. The End.*

- Cynthia Parsons

In the street as the cars go by seems like horns in a parade. People rushing by scurry along in a whisk. Smoke coming from factories and cars smells like some gases and oil. Some of the old shabby houses on the next streets look like they come out of a horror movie. Some kids that hang on the street corners look like they're Panda Bears hanging onto a tree. The neighbors next door always seem to have an argument or a fight sounds like a rocket blasting off, never to return. Roaches come by the hundreds, like an army, as soon as you get rid of them, they seem to retroop and starts all over again. In some houses there are rots, and mice. Mice and rats creep around as though they were foxes.

- Mona Russell

*One day while I was over in back of 60 Monticello we were playing stick ball my friends said, "Look out". I looked up and there was a matress coming. I just took a dive forward it hit my legs but I was alright. We started swearing. I won't mention any swears, but we sweared up a storm. The project has*

*roaches as everybody knows, and especially rats. Why just this morning, January 15, 1969, on the third floor in the hall a cot was frozen to death. The kids I think aren't good my friend Joey was playing with some sparklers and his friend were to, one of them threw it right in his eye he became blind in that eye. If we didn't have that Health Center we would be in pretty bad shape.*

- Lorry Oliver

Last night the dirty rotten water was rusted no shit. The fucken rats crawling around outside all night. Shit what should we do? There is a empty apartment in my building that looks like hell and it is a fucking shit house. The shit is so high you can't walk in it. And besides the rats are taking over the place to make their own civilization. Some mothers teach there kids to fuck and stael.

- Leonard Grey

*... The odor of some of the elevators aren't to plesent and the walls aren't to clean. The elevators aren't safe eather. Some of the mail boxes are broken and the street are filled with dimolish cars and broken glass. Its not safe for the younger children. Some of the rich people should come down hear and find out if we carrie guns to school and kill the teachers. Thats what I hear about the Point and I live hear.*

- Marla Chisholm

## TRUE FACTS ABOUT THE PROJECT

True facts about the project are: the nasty hallways that smell like plain shit. Thats the only word to describe it. You have to supply your own lights in the hall-ways. I think the city should be doing that. Once in a while they come around putting bulbs in. Men and women are in the hallways doing pussy. Olders go around teaching younger to steal, swear. The locks are not reliable. All you have to do is to slip a piece of cardboard under the lock and the door just pops write open.

- Ronell Seay

*The project is a large place with tall buildings that look like your on top of a giant. Its really not a bad place compared to other places. I'd rather live here rather than a lot of other places. Most areas around here can be compared to little trash and paper. But not in all areas. Its clean one time and dirty the next. As I walk through the hallway sometimes it seems like I'm walking through a clean place. Sometimes its a little dirty. The roaches come crawling down the pipe like they were invited for dinner. Some people don't try to keep the halls clean. If the stairs and halls were swept more often maybe there wouldn't be so many roaches. But I don't know if we'll get the roaches out of here. It's not bad in all areas some are worst than others. There are good things about the project too. For instance right in the neighborhood we have a shopping mall, something that is needed. There's a playground for people to go and play. A place to play baseball, and basketball. And other things. Mostly at all we have a big new school. I wish there were more schools like this one near by because we can't go to the J.W.M. for ever. I hope I can go to the good school like this one next year. A clean one, with good teachers and good equipment. So there are good things and bad ones about this project. The projects improving but a lot of things have to be improve. But as I said before its better to live here*

*than a lot of other places. Because to some people this project is wonderful place to live.*

- Joanne Mathis

This project looks like a evacuated prison. Not really that bad but where I live is always noisy and every thursday night of about 10:00 a group of little kids come around our way to play socker, they come no matter how cold it is. They look like little tramps and they make noise like they is a thousand. Our project is brownish and orangish. But the halls every thing feels like concrete and whats writen on the walls is awful which I won't mention. Around my way there are mostly fights in the hall around summer. There isn't much I dislike except for the rule all pets have to have a leash. I can understand Dogs and things but even little harmless birds (which I have) as tame as can be. I could say I like living here but I wouldn't want to spend my life here. And I have lots of friends and I wouldn't want to move away from them. I'd rather stay for a while.

- Wanda Chambers

*... The oldlady's are always getting jumped in the hallways + outside at night.*

- Edward McLean

The project is OK of times. But other times it is bad. It good in these ways. We have lots of things to do there and we have a clinic near up in case of a emergency. A brand new shopping mall. It is bad when you have say 6 in your family and they give you a aptment with only 2 bed rooms. And in some aptments there is bugs and mice. But one other thing we don't have any safety because the police who are on duty always go down to the coffee shop and sit down.

## *Public Housing*

So when there is trouble you can never find them. I think a project like this should have safety. We are also lucky to have a beautiful school so close to us. It is one of the best school I ever went to. It is clean + neat and the teacher's are alright. But at times they are not so nice. Well that is what I think of the project it is where I lived all my life. So really not to many things bad about it.

- Cheryl McCoy

*I think the project is just a place to dump a lot of people and get paid for it. Maybe I'm being to strong on them, because it wasn't that bad when we moved in the projects. The trouble here, isn't the project itself, it is we, the people it up to us to have it made (if not make it ourselves.) into a reasonable place to live by destroying "vandalism" our most trouble.*

- Koren Mears

Scale people broadcast their record players. You be trying to sleep and all you hear is all this good, good music. Sometimes when you get ready to get in the tub and the water be all rusty. Gangs hanging in halls smoking reefer. The good things are you get to meet people of all walks of life. But garbage is all in the hallways and on the roof tops. When the tide goes out it smells like, well it smells so bad I can't describe it. What makes me so mad is that theres so many Dog gone roaches and rats.

- Zona Sullivan

*I think the project is a terrible place to live in because smell tots may grow up being bad....*

- Andrea Byrd

Years ago there use to be a lot of rats but now there are not rats in every house.

The streets are filthy about time the kids get out of school. Down by the water where the dogs use the bathroom and kids that are to young to go to the bathroom at home, smells like horse's mess. (and that really stinks.) The people man their really awful some of them. I see this ladies kids looking like (HE--it self with there dirty faces and roggy clothes. And there mother looking like Miss America with her bad bell bottoms and nyru. The neighbors are all right if you can get along with them and their sons. All day and all night all you can hear is the mothers arguing with their sons. Fathers coming home from work and irating the mothers. Husband and Wife get out in the streets and start getting loud on each other. Talking about their private affairs or something. Their improving the projects now butt the roaches, rats and other insects are a pest.

- Diane Allen

The snoring sound of someone sleeping sounds like Stanleys Stomach before lunch. Some of the "rats" in the project get a better feeding than some of the people. From a far off distance the project looks like leftovers from world war "one". The rooches are such a dark brown that when they go by on the floor some people think there Candy. There are some animals in the project that look like a relation to twiggy in the long run.

- William Gunderson



## LIVING IN COLUMBIA POINT

It's not that new people are moving in and making it bad, but the project itself started out wrong. I can't really express my feelings about Columbia Point the way I'd like to. The B.H.A. doesn't seem to care about what goes on, once in a while light bulbs come around and before their in a good hour same kid has taken them out. The urinating and sex going on in the hallways and elevators is another thing, people must think they have their own private home where they can carry on in whatever manner they please. Sometimes I think the kids know more swear words and more about sex than the adults do. The shopping mall is another convenient thing that Columbia Point has but if stealing goes on the way is has been there won't be anything left, some kid might go over to Zayre's or Stop 'n Shop with a dollar and come out with a dollars worth of merchandise but still have the dollar. To speak of rats and roaches are just out of the question there are so many that I wouldn't be surprised if they formed a committee and decided to take over Columbia Point. Maybe there wouldn't be so much trouble if there was a large recreation area.

- Patricia Bass